

***Title:*** The *first* essay should critically examine two worldviews of your choice with a Christian response to them. Among the various worldviews are Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Panentheism, Deism, Naturalism, Nihilism, Existentialism, Post-modernism, Secularism and Atheism. This essay should not be more than **1500 words in length. (30%)**

*Course:* Christian Apologetics

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**DECLARATION**

I certify that this ASSIGNMENT is my own work. I have acknowledged all material and sources used in it, and that I have not plagiarised in part or whole the work of others without stating the references.

## **Introduction**

Christianity exists among the many faiths throughout human history – yet it is fundamentally exclusive in nature (John 14:6, Acts 4:2 & 17:30-31). How do Christians respond to other religions which purport alternative paths? In this essay, I shall address two of these worldviews from a Christian standpoint.

## **Islam – A replacement of Christ**

At first glance, Islam bears many similarities to JudeoChristianity. It affirms there is one true God (Sura 21:22) who created everything (Sura 7:54); whom alone is to be worshiped (Sura 16:1-3 & 51:56) and forbids idols (Sura 16:20-21); who communicated with Abraham and other Biblical characters to guide humanity (Sura 14). This is why many refer to Judaism, Christianity and Islam as the ‘Abrahamic religions’<sup>1</sup> – though others strongly disagree with this nomenclature<sup>2</sup>.

Superficial similarities aside however, Islam affirms several key beliefs that are at odds with those of Christianity. Chief among these would be its insistence that Jesus wasn’t crucified unto death:

And their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allāh." And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain. – Sura 4:157

This goes against the witness of all four canonical Gospel accounts that state Jesus died by crucifixion (Mark 16:24-27, Matthew 27:35-66, Luke 23:32-56, John 19:16-42), as well as statements by Paul (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) and Peter (1 Peter 2:24).

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur G. Gish, *Muslim, Christian, Jew* (Ore./USA: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012) Perlego Edition, Introduction

<sup>2</sup> Michael Knowles, “The Galatian Test: Is Islam an Abrahamic Religion?” *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 92, No. 1039, May 2011, 318-321. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43251518>

Islam also denies other essential Christian doctrines such as the Trinity, Jesus' divinity and Jesus being the Son of God – all three of these linked concepts are opposed in just Sura 4:171 alone.

With such opposition to the very core of the Christian faith, how should a follower of Christ respond? One method is to appeal to the Muslim's own authoritative scriptures. The Quran itself testifies that the Bible contains Allah's very own words:

He has revealed to you 'O Prophet' the Book in truth, confirming what came before it, as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel – Sura 3:3

Further to that, the Quran also states that Allah will preserve those words:

Recite what has been revealed to you from the Book of your Lord. None can change His Words, nor can you find any refuge besides Him. – Sura 18:27

This leads Christian apologists to point out that Islam faces an internal dilemma<sup>3</sup> – either the Bible is *true* and Jesus died by crucifixion (which means Sura 4:157 is wrong)... or else the Biblical accounts *have been corrupted* (which means Sura 3:3 & 18:27 are wrong).

Christians can also appeal to the wealth of evidence supporting the fact of Jesus' crucifixion. Even apart from the New Testament (which come from eyewitness accounts<sup>4</sup>), multiple non-Christian contemporary sources attest to the event<sup>5</sup>. It is "One of the most certain facts of history"<sup>6</sup> even according to non-Christian scholars.

From the Christian standpoint, there is no dilemma – Jesus died by crucifixion and was bodily resurrected, as the Bible states repeatedly. The falsehood lies with the Quran, also as plainly stated by

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<sup>3</sup> David Wood, "The Quran, the Bible, and the Islamic Dilemma (David Wood)", *Acts17Apologetics* (accessed 26-Jun-2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNAS0aaViM4>

<sup>4</sup> J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity* (CO/USA: David C Cook Publishing Company, 2013), 78-86

<sup>5</sup> Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (TN/USA: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 119-126.

<sup>6</sup> Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: An Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (NY/USA: Oxford University Press, 2011), 261-262.

the Bible: “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. – 1 John 2:2”. As described earlier, Sura 4:171 denies both that God is a Father and that Jesus is the Son of God.

Islam indeed demonstrates the spirit of the antichrist – that is, a replacement<sup>7</sup> for Christ’s finished work on the cross (John 19:30, Acts 16:30) and final message (Hebrews 1:1-2) with a works-based religion (Sura 7:8-9 & 23:99-104) and ‘new’ final messenger (Sura 33:40). Islam is no Abrahamic faith – for the patriarch looked to Jesus (John 8:56), not Muhammad.

### **Hinduism – Many gods, many lives**

In stark contrast to Islam’s superficial similarities to Christianity, Hinduism is the polar opposite of Biblical faith. It expresses worship of many gods – who are manifestations of one god<sup>8</sup> (due to their pantheistic<sup>9</sup> view). Some even purport that Jesus is just one of these many gods<sup>10</sup>. This is directly opposed to the Bible which declares only YHWH is to be worshiped (Deuteronomy 6:13, Luke 4:8) and condemns worship of any other (Exodus 20:35 & 34:14). Note that worship of Jesus (Mathew 14:33, John 9:38, Revelation 5:8-14) doesn’t fall under this sanction, as Jesus is the incarnate YHWH (Mark 1:1-4, John 1:1-14 & 12:41 & 20:28)<sup>11</sup>.

Hinduism also affirms repeated reincarnation of souls based on deeds done in the preceding life, a system called Karma<sup>12</sup>. By contrast, the Bible states that people have one chance at life –

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<sup>7</sup> J. D. Douglas & C. Merrill, *Zondervan Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids/USA: Zondervan, 2009), Perlego Edition, ANTICHRIST.

<sup>8</sup> Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism Third Edition* (NY/USA: State University of New York Press, 2010), Perlego Edition, CHAPTER SEVEN.

<sup>9</sup> Amrutur V. Srinivasan, *Hinduism For Dummies* (NY/USA: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2011), Perlego Edition, Chapter 3, Brahman: The one true (real) entity

<sup>10</sup> Subhamoy Das, “The Christ-Krishna Connection”, *Learn Religions* (accessed 26-Jun-2022): <https://www.learnreligions.com/christ-krishna-connection-1770450>

<sup>11</sup> I provide a treatment of John’s portrayal of Jesus as the one same YHWH who is to be worshiped by the Jewish people. See my essay 2021 essay submitted to Rev. Dr. Tan Jin Huat: How does John portray the Person of Jesus Christ in his Gospel? Why does he do so?”

<sup>12</sup> William Walker Atkinson, *Reincarnation and the Law of Karma* (Perlego, 2008), Perlego Edition, Chapter V. The Hindus, Chapter XII. The Law of Karma

followed by judgment (Hebrews 9:27) based on their confession of Jesus Christ as Lord (Romans 10:13, Acts 16:30-31).

Clearly, Hinduism and Christianity are at odds – so how should a Christian approach a Hindu? In the past, some heavy-handed evangelists might have erected stumbling-blocks by deriding the Hindu pantheon as demons<sup>13</sup> (which *does* have support from 1 Corinthians 10:20).

I propose that the ‘Divine Council Worldview’<sup>14</sup> explains how YHWH placed ‘Sons of God’ in charge of guiding the post-Babel divided nations. However, some of these stewards abrogated their duty and led people into polytheism. YHWH then took matters into His own hands – quite literally, by reclaiming all the world by the crucified hands of Jesus.

Hence, whatever the prior arrangements for the nations, they are now to adopt YHWH’s new covenant. Paul, who was similarly confronting polytheism in Athens, put it best: *“And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God ... The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”* – Acts 17:26-27,30-31

Christians can explain that the Bible already addresses the issue of ‘many gods’ in Hinduism: “... if you're widening this out to a world religions question, if we believe in a spiritual world - again, we have these multiple entities ... Only the Biblical description actually makes sense of all this. It affirms one creator deity, not only just the creator of the physical world but the creator of the spiritual world and everything in it.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jack T. Chick LLC, “The Traitor”, *Chick Publications* (accessed 26-Jun-2022): <https://www.chick.com/products/tract?stk=0070> [page 19]

<sup>14</sup> I provide a brief overview of YHWH’s allotment of nations to different ‘gods’ in my 2021 essay submitted to Rev. Dr. Tan Jin Huat: “Discuss the significance of a high Christology in Paul’s letter to the Colossians in the light of its purpose.” For a thorough treatment, see the major influential work: Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham/USA: Lexham Press, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Michael S. Heiser, “Questions Aloud w/ Dr. Heiser | Who is God? Is it Allah, Buddha or Jesus?”, *AWKNG TV* (accessed 26-Aug-2021): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n-RYzSze0> [08:54 to 11:00]

It is not some sort of betrayal of identity<sup>16</sup> to follow the truth of Christianity. The true Creator of the universe who determined the circumstances of our nationality also demands that we be obedient to Jesus Christ.

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<sup>16</sup> TRT World, "Most Indians believe only a Hindu can be an Indian", *TRT World* (accessed 26-Jun-2022): <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/most-indians-believe-only-a-hindu-can-be-an-indian-47967>

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