THE SAME GOD?

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Category: Observations

Recently, Wheaton College in the US sacked an assistant professor who, among other things, claimed that Christians and Muslims worship the same God (story here). Twitter immediately went into meltdown, with people arguing vociferously on both sides of the argument. A lot of heat and a little bit of light was generated in the process.

Normally, I leave these internet storms to run their course, no one needs yet another opinion on the question of the day. However, I thought I'd pick this one up because it fits in with the brief look we've been taking at John's Gospel.

So, do Christians and Muslims worship the same God? In my view, the best way to answer this is actually to take a look at the God that Christians worship and then say whether that is the God that Muslims worship. I'm qualified to do the former, less so to do the latter.

Back to John's Gospel

> *In the beginning the Word already existed.*
> *Â Â Â Â The Word was with God,*
> *Â Â Â Â and the Word was God.*
> *He existed in the beginning with God.*

In his introduction, John calls Jesus of Nazareth "the Word" and says that he has existed before time, he was with God and that (crucially) he is God. A few verses later he adds this

> *God created everything through him,*
> *Â Â Â Â and nothing was created except through him.*

So John is claiming that Jesus of Nazareth, a young man born in Bethlehem and executed by the Romans was the eternal creator God. Paul underlines this in his introduction to Colossians (Col 1:15,16).

> *Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.*
> *Â Â Â Â He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,*
> *for through him God created everything*
> *Â Â Â Â in the heavenly realms and on earth.*
> *He made the things we can see*
> *Â Â Â Â and the things we canâ€™t seeâ€"*
> *such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.*
> *Â Â Â Â Everything was created through him and for him.*

For the writers of the New Testament, Jesus Christ was God. It gets a bit more complicated, because

they also realised that the Holy Spirit was God, too. There is one God in three persons; Father, Son and Spirit. This isn't the place to try and explain the Trinity (were I so bold), but this is the God that the Bible reveals to us.

One of the great paradoxes of the faith is that almighty God, the creator of the universes took on human form (while remaining fully God), was born as a baby and laid in a manager, because there was no where else to put him. In fact he was so humble, that he even allowed himself to be arrested, tried and executed by people that he had created. This is the God of the Bible, the God of the Christian faith.

I can't speak for other religions, but if your God was not born into a human family and laid in a feeding trough, then you don't worship the God that Christians worship. Whatever the similarities between different religions, Jesus changes everything.

> *Though he was God,*
> *Â Â Â Â he did not think of equality with God*
> *Â Â Â Â as something to cling to.*
> *Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;*
> *Â Â Â Â he took the humble position of a slave*
> *Â Â Â Â and was born as a human being.*
> *When he appeared in human form,*
> *he humbled himself in obedience to God*
> *Â Â Â Â and died a criminalâ€™s death on a cross.*

> *Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour*
> *Â Â Â Â and gave him the name above all other names,*
> *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,*
> *Â Â Â Â in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
> *and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,*
> *Â Â Â Â to the glory of God the Father.*

By the way, if you would like to read more about the Trinity, I can't recommendÂ Delighting in the TrinityÂ by Tim Chester andÂ The Good God: Enjoying Father, Son and SpiritÂ by Mike Reeves highly enough. Both are excellent, accessible introductions to the Trinity and I would argue that every Chrisitan should read at least one of them.