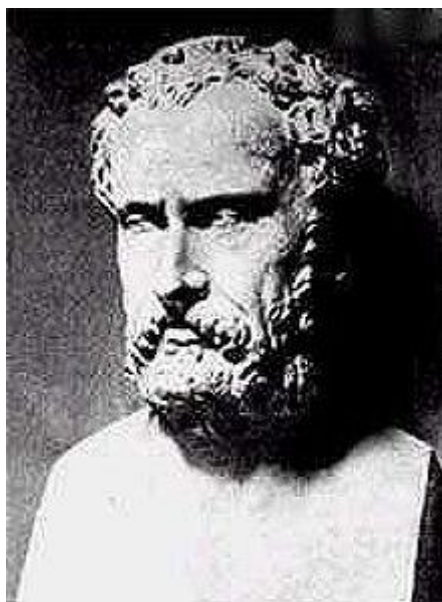


Islamic anti-anthropomorphism owes more to pagan [Xenophanes of Colophon](#) and his heirs than to Divine Inspiration.

The relationship between Islam and Greek philosophy is just as complex and entangled as that between external Christianity and Greek philosophy. There is a wide spectrum of positions on Greek philosophy within Islam - from the deep affection and admiration expressed by Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al Kindi, Al Farabi and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who prided themselves in being Muslim philosophers, to the strong and often searching critique of Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah and their disciples like Hassan al Banna, founder of the Muslim brotherhood and Sayyid bin Qutb, theological mentor of the takfir movement which undergirds many extreme jihadists. Yet there is compelling evidence that even the most stringent critics of Greek philosophy have absorbed poisonous and theologically lethal doses of heresy into their systems of doctrine. I seek to illustrate this from the writings of the Qur'an and Hadith itself, as well as from mainstream and widely representative Sunni writers like Al-Ghazzali, his followers and some of his more ascerbic critics.

In a time when anthropomorphisms were rife in the pagan narratives of the petty, lying, bickering, carousing gods of the Greeks, a philosopher called Xenophanes (c.570 – c.475 BC) introduced a healthy but caustic satire for Homer and Hesiod's myths.



Few fragments of his writings remain, mainly in citations by others, but here are two samples:

'The Ethiopians say that their gods are flat-nosed and black, While the Thracians say that theirs have blue eyes and red hair.

Yet if cattle or horses or lions had hands and could draw, and could sculpt like men, then the horses would draw their gods

Like horses, and cattle like cattle; and each they would shape bodies of gods in the likeness, each kind, of their own.'

([Clem. Al. Strom. vii. p. 841.](#))

'Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods all things which are disreputable and worthy of blame when done by men; and they told of them many lawless deeds, stealing, adultery, and deception of each other.'

([Zeller, 525, n. 3. Cf. Diog Laer. ix. 18; Sext. Emp. Pyrrh. i. 224.](#))

So far, so good, and in many ways, Xenophanes' words are reminiscent of the scathing words of the prophets. Listen to Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal:

'Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.'

[1 Ki.18.27](#)

Or Isaiah's ascerbic denunciations of idolatry:

'To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.' [Isa.40.18-23](#)

Or his extended treatment on the sheer blindness of worshipping an inanimate object: (even though *all* idolaters *always* insist their particular [idol](#) is just a guide and help and *not* the actual object of worship - Isaiah rubbishes the claim).

'They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with

the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?' [Isaiah 44.9-20](#)

Or the chilling verdict of Psalm 115.4-8a:

'But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.
Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:
They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:
They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.
They that make them are *like* unto them'

and concludes, v.17-18, of the Zombie-like state of idolaters, in contrast with genuine spirituality:

'The dead [in this life] praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.
But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.'

Which psalm has often been used to challenge idolaters who hide their wickedness under the guise of a Christian [pretence](#), whether Roman, Orthodox, or even supposedly Protestant, but applies equally well to Muslim and Hindu [idolators](#).

The vast contrast between sterile philosophical speculation and the true nature of God:

But Xenophanes and with him many Greek philosophical reactionaries to anthropomorphisms go much further than these reproofs, to the extent they denied the scriptural doctrine of the Personality, relationality of the living God, the friend of Abraham and the Father of His chosen people.

Xenophanes for example also wrote, 'One God, the greatest among gods and men, not at all like mortals in body or mind.'

([Clem. Alex. Strom. v p.714. Euseb.Praep.Ev. xiii. 13, p.678.](#))

1 εἰς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,
οὔτε δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίους οὔτε νόημα.

In and of itself the words sound reasonable, and they seem reminiscent of Isaiah's grand statement of Divine superiority:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa. 55.8-9.

However there appears to more here than a mere ascription of unfathomable superiority to Deity, he expresses a precise and rigid view of the Divine mind, 'As a whole he sees, as a whole he thinks and as a whole he hears.' ([Sexc. Emp.Math.ix.141](#))

οὐλος ὄρα, οὐλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὐλος δὲ τ' ἀκούει.

This statement goes some way beyond merely expressing omniscience, it carries important implications for how God thinks and senses. It can only be approached as a negation of what man is and how he thinks, 'not at all like mortals'.

The problem is that this flies directly in the face of the express declaration of God's own mind. The Law of Moses, a Jewish volume written many centuries before Xenophanes, at the inspiration of God, repeatedly condemns the making of God in our image. On the other hand, it expressly asserts that God has made man *in His own image*. God is not our analogy, but we are *His* - a distinctive created analogy of Him!

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Gen.1.26-27)

And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. (Gen. 9.5-6)

Unique amongst all the visible works of His hands, man is created *like* and in the image of the Almighty. So to start by assuming that the only we can understand God is by negating what we are or who we think is to deny His own wisdom, and walk in darkness. This, of course, doesn't deny that an infinite and unbridgeable distinction exists between Creator and creature, but on the other hand, frail man has had placed within him the Divine breath, a peculiar honour not recorded of all other creatures, not even of the angels:

'The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul' (Gen.2.7)

Xenophanes entertains another curiously defective view of God's being, 'And always he stays in the same place, not moving at all, nor is it fitting for him to travel in different directions at different times.'

([Phys. 6. v 23,20](#))

αἰεὶ δ' ἐν ταυτῷ μέμνει κινούμενον οὐδέν,
οὐδὲ μετέρχεσθαι μιν ἐπιπρέπει ἄλλοτε ἄλλῃ.

Instead of Holy Scripture's lofty and exalted view of God's immanence and omnipresence, His being present in all places, yet at all times distinct from Creation, Xenophanes admires a shrunken Deity. One who is fixed and immobile, in 'the same place', One who it seems is curtailed and restricted in abode, albeit a vast and unmeasurably great expanse. One Who senses and observes, but is not always immediately present.

This theme of unmovable locality is also taken up and developed by other philosophers, in particular Parmenides, a strikingly original if rather [incoherent thinker](#), who Aristotle suggests was a pupil of Xenophanes ([Metaph.i.5; 986 b 18](#)). Aristotle critically cites Parmenides [on several occasions](#) and he may well have inspired the famous Aristotelian proposition of the First Cause as the unmoved Mover, 'The first principle must be one, unmoved, as Parmenides and Melissos say, . . .' ([Arist. Phys. i. 2; 184 b 16.](#))

There is an indication of this local confinement of the Divine Being in some expressions also in the Qur'an and the Hadith - though their implications have been contested. For example:

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۚ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۚ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۚ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۚ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۚ﴾
٢٤:٣٥

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass: the glass as it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light: Allah doth set forth Parables for men: and Allah doth know all things.

Sura An-Nur (24.35)

Though attractively allegorical, the text alludes to the constrained location and confinement of God's light, which is equated to His essence.

God is described as being 'in Heaven' suggesting He might not also be actually present on Earth, except by the exercise of His power and by His perception.

٦٧:١٦ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ مَنْ أَمِنْتُمْ

Do ye feel secure that He Who is *in Heaven* will not cause you to be swallowed up by the earth when it shakes (as in an earthquake)?

٦٧:١٧ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ۗ أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ فِي

Or do ye feel secure that He Who is *in Heaven* will not send against you a violent tornado (with showers of stones), so that ye shall know how (terrible) was My warning?

Sura Al-Malik 16,17

The 47th Name of God is oft cited to prove Omnipresence and certainly implies measureless breadth, but not necessarily omnipresent immanence throughout all Creation.



A mainstream exponent of Islam, [in Al-Ghazzali's mantle](#), carefully omits omnipresence from the list of Divine attributes, preferring instead to describe God as 'over His glorious throne', and describing His omnipresence in terms *merely* of His perception, 'He is everywhere *by His knowledge*' [emphasis mine].

The detailed [Aqidah al-Tahawiyya](#) by Imam Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi al-Hanafi (239-321 AH), an eminent disciple of Imam Shafi'i, head of the most eclectic school of Sunni Law, also omits mention of Omnipresence.

Some mainline Sunni [Muslims](#) claim of Ibn Taymiyyah and the Salafis who follow him, 'The Salafis have stripped Allah Ta'ala of His Attribute of Omnipresence and have assigned Him into a specified section of created space.'

Sufis, [like Qunyawī, Jandi, Tilimsani, Qayshari, and Jami](#) on the other hand often slip into or verge on pantheism or panentheism (God is the soul of all) - wahdat al wujud (وحدة الوجود) God is One with His creation. Reconciliation of these two heretical positions is possible.

How very different from the inspired writings which preceded the Qur'an !

'Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.' (Psalm 139.7-12)

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? (1Kings 8.27)

How vastly different from the doubtful ruminations and rigid but impersonal dogmas of Greek unbelief!

Scriptural anthropomorphisms.

There are passages in the Bible that seem to speak of God's locality, as in the Qur'an, as there are other anthropomorphisms, of His hand, His eyes, His eyelids, His back, His heart, His repentance and so on. These need to be interpreted carefully to be faithful to the true sense of

the Author.

For example:

Gen.11.5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

Or v.7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

Or again,

The LORD God says to Abraham in Gen.18.21 'I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.'

But the very next verse clarifies exactly what is intended,

v.22a And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom...

The two men, clarified later to be angels (19 v.1,15) were sent into the city. Their presence provoked a reaction which exposed the utterly godless character of the inhabitants. The LORD said, 'I will go down', the angels were the only visible, local manifestation of this. They were His representatives - the LORD was already present by His omnipresence, His 'going down' is a figure of speech for His intervention and judging. We will return to the fascinating sense of the second half of v.22 later.

A similar expression takes place after the apostasy of the golden calf. After Moses intercession and Israel's acts of contrition, God says, 'And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for **I will not go up in the midst of thee**; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.' Exod.33.2-3. An angel will be sent to deliver and conquer, but *not* God's presence, there will be a technical fulfillment of promise only.

Moses protests the promises with the Lord, 'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' (v.15) The Lord is prevailed upon and graciously promises, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' (v.14). Does this mean God's being is somehow confined in place or time? Of course not, He speaks of the presence of His power and favour, a sensed and known presence of communion and friendship, which Israel has unworthily betrayed. Moses then goes on to request and receive a unique experience of this communion with God's glory, (v.18-19). So these expressions are wholly compatible with God's omnipresence, 'Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.' (Jer.23.24).

An area of distinction between Xenophanes and both Islam and Judeo-Christian revelation: the method of Creation.

Frag 3. But without effort he sets in motion all things by mind and thought. ([Phys. 6. v.23,20](#))

ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθε πόροισι νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει.

Xenophanes identifies no agency between Creator and creation, no mediation of Creation.

This is a large subject, but it is a position which leaves Xenophanes prone to pantheism and a blurring of spirit and matter.

Frag 9. For we are all sprung from earth and water. [[Zeller, 541, n. 1. Cf. Sext. Emp Pyrrh. ii. 30.](#)]

9 πάντες γὰρ γαίης τε καὶ ὕδατος ἐκγενομένεσθα.

10 γῆ καὶ ὕδωρ πάντα' ἐσθ' ἅσα γίνονται ἤδη φύονται.

Frag 10. All things that come into being and grow are earth and water. [[Joh. Philoponus Phys. i.186](#), though another attributes this to Anaximenes]

This generation of Creation straight from thought fuels Aristotle's assertion that Xenophanes considers all being as one , as though, with the Sufis, God is the soul or mind of all being: 'Xenophanes first taught the unity of these things (Parmenides is said to have been his pupil), but he did not make anything clear, nor did he seem to get at the nature of either of these things, but looking up into the broad heavens he said : The unity is god.' (*Metaph.* i. 5; 986 b 10.)

An unmediated creation is properly rejected both by the Bible and by the Qur'an.

Gen. 1.2 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
God's command and Word mediates and generates His conception.

Ps.33.6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۝١١٧

To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: "Be," and it is. (2:117)

It is by God's Word that all things came into being. The mode of creation is an important aspect of true faith in God, to which philosophers are blind.

Heb.11.3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

The failure to perceive this distinction leads to the downward slope of confusion between Creator and creation, to idolatry and godlessness.

Rom.1.25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

This prompts the important question, for which the [Mu'tazilah](#) (المعتزلة) were properly condemned, is God's word part of the Creation or an aspect of the Creator?

However the most telling and resonant rejection of anthropomorphism by Xenophanes is found in another passage:

'But mortals suppose that the gods are born (as they themselves are), and that they wear man's clothing and have human voice and body.'

[\(Clem. Alex. Strom. v. p.714\)](#)

ἀλλὰ βροτοὶ δοκέουσι γεννᾶσθαι θεοὺς,
τὴν σφέτεράν δ' ἐσθῆτι τ' ἔχουσιν φωνήν τε δέμας τε.

Now of course, Xenophanes' human wisdom seems very reasonable. The crucial question is whether it wholly agrees God's own unfathomable and mysterious mind, not just with our own foolish and darkened suppositions about God.

The answer from manifold passages in both the Jewish Tenach (the Old Testament) and the New Testament is a resounding no!

Can the sublime and ineffable God appear before men in human form?

It is doubtless lawless idolatry for men to compose their own abominable images of God (Deut. 4.16), but since man is created in the image of God, not God in the image of man, can God manifest Himself before men as man? It would be reckless and dangerous for us to speculate. The Scriptures leave us no room for doubt. Again and again, the Lord appears before men as man.

Take Abraham, for example, in confirming the promise of the miraculous birth of a son to the ageing parents, it is written:

Gen.17.1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

There is no doubt that the person speaking with Abraham was Himself Divine.

v.3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying....

At the conclusion of the meeting,

v.22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

These appearances are called theophanies, and they abound in the Tenach (the Old Testament).

In the next recorded instance, the Lord accompanied by two angels, condescends to eat with Abraham.

Gen.18. 1 And the LORD appeared unto him[Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

v.8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

This is the One of Whom Abraham says later in the passage, v.27 Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.

On another occasion, God condescends to make Himself known to Isaac (Gen.26.2), to Jacob (Gen.32.20,35.9), to Moses (Exod.3) and Aaron (Exod.24.10), to Samson's parents (Judg.13.22), and to other prophets in similar ways. In many instances the Person appearing is described as *the* Angel or Messenger of God, distinguished from an angel, He is marked out as the Word or Agent of God.

Now we ask again, that most myterious question, is the Word of God a creation of God or Himself the Creator?

The Scriptures say,

Jn.1.1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Or again,

1 Jn.1.1-2 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

The Qur'an also bears some testimony to this truth:

٤:١٧١ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْفَاهَا إِلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ

Christ Jesus the son of Mary was a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him

Of course the context of the verse includes an attack on tritheism (say not three), but the construction **كَلِمَتُهُ** is telling, it implies not a word but the (definite article) Word, it is the title *uniquely* used of Christ in both the Bible and the Qur'an.

Here is the kernel of God's revelation:

1 Tim.3.16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

In John's Gospel, the Spirit puts it this way:

Jn.1.14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

This is what the Bible means when it speaks of the Eternal Son, not One procreated from Mary (from whom the Word only received His human nature), but the Preexisting Wisdom and Word of God, mysteriously sent to reveal God's being:

Jn.1.18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Human minds may stumble at this possibility, indeed we are warned very plainly, that this is a truth only God can reveal to our hard and blinded intellects.

Matt.16.17 Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Mt 11.27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Yet here is the heart of the most profound mystery:

Col.2.9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Gainsayers and doubters are warned that they are forfeiting life itself,

1 Jn.4.1-3 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:

because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

1 Jn.5.10-12 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Which side does Xenophanes fall of these warnings?

In the issue of Divine generation, the Arabian prophet has also [unconsciously swallowed](#) the poisoned chalice of pagan Greek philosophy whole. He reacted, as Xenophanes did before him, against the banal and superstitious polytheism of his ancestors with a zealous rigour that runs far *beyond* what God had revealed. Islam in as much as it differs from God's word, is at root a strange synthesis of [Arabian paganism](#) and its [fertility cult](#) with Greek paganism.

In this Islam has tragically followed their sterile and chilling view of a new god who is not much more than a negation of anthropomorphisms. One who can best be defined by what He is not - an apophatic deity - a subtle philosophical idol. This was most evident in the heretical Mu'tazili school, which with rigorous neo-Platonic consistency, went so far as to deny distinction of God's attributes from His essence, but its influence is pervasive in other branches of Islam as well.

Scriptural reproof

Paul's response to Athen's idolaters *and* philosophers,

'For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.' (Acts 17.28-29).

Here is the balance of truth: Divine transcendence *and* Divine immanance - He is altogether above and separate from mankind but not less personal not less real, on the contrary He is *more* present, *more* personal, *far more* real than we. His presence is in every place, sustaining, upholding the minutiae of Creation - observing, interacting, reacting - in all things His glory will be displayed, and in whatever ultimately derogates from Him, He restrains or removes. (Ps 76.10)

Paul utterly rejects the banality of worshipping stone or metal as Divine images, and retains the truth of the majestic Creation passages that we are the offspring of God. We bear His sacred image in our spirits, we bear His distinctive likeness - however defiled and damaged it has become by our sin - it remains His distinctive hallmark in mankind.

Xenophanes has overreacted to serious error, and in doing so has neglected and wounded this

vital balancing truth. In so doing has himself fallen into the heresy of depersonalising and demeaning God - like his successors he has sterilised the Godhead,

....and Islam has followed him.

At crucial watersheds which side does Islam take? The Prophets or the pagan philosophers?

Fatherhood of God

Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. Isa 63.16
Does Islam recognise the fatherly nature of the Almighty - is His friendship, the friendship for which Abraham is named the khalil of God, realisable in Islam - or has it been neutralised by the tauhid?

Tenderness of His love compared to a mother's for her suckling child

Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Isa. 49.15
Does Islam, for all its emphasis [on the womb and on procreation](#), recognise the tender motherliness of God's nature - His tender lovingkindness, of which the deepest and fiercest maternal instincts are but a pallid shadow.

Marriage is God's own intended analogy for His wonderful devotion and covenant to His dear but unworthy people.

Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. Ezek 16.6

Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? Isaiah 50.1

Does Islam recognise the intimacy and closeness of God to His people, His minute interest in their affairs and concerns?

Can Islam say of His chosen ones, they are the apple of His eye? (De 32.10, Ps.17.8. Zech.2.8)

Can a Muslim recite as every true Christian of the Beloved, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' (Ps.73.25) or 'I am My Beloved's and He is mine!' ?

Hosea's extraordinary mission to demonstrate God's jealous love for His adulterous (idolatrous) people:

The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD. Hosea 1.2

Hosea the holy prophet was required to marry a women of vice, in order to give the most graphic demonstration to the people of how they had demeaned and insulted God, the Holy One with Whom they had entered into covenant, by the idolatry and apostasy.

She went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the LORD. Hos. 2.13

And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. Hos.2.19-20

Despite the unfaithfulness and waywardness of the people, and God's severe chastisements for sin, He pursues them and woos them, just as He commands Hosea to pursue and purchase back his foolish and adulterous wife.

Could such a picture of patience and lovingkindness ever be found in the Greek philosophers? On the contrary Socrates' disdain and unkindness to his wife is well known, and their lives were commonly full of sexual vice. Could it be found in Islam?

Solomon's Song

The whole of Solomon's Song of songs is the most extraordinary and passionate demonstration of God's love to His people and their sometimes lukewarm, sometimes devoted response to His love. The book can be understood cogently in no other way. Here is the very best of loves - a love that makes even the best human passions look jaded, selfish and narcissistic by comparison!

'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.' Song 8.5-7

The strongest of human affections are cold and dim images of the fire of God's holy and jealous love for His people - does Islam here side with the stoic Greek philosophers abstractions of Deity, or the covenanted and unchanging fire and passion of His Holy Word?

Why did God require Abraham to endure the horror of the command to sacrifice his dear and only son?

Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. Gen. 22.12b

Here was not just a test of faith, but the gift by the test of an insight into God's own heart, and His great sacrifice for us.

And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; Gen. 22.16-17

This is precisely why Jesus said, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.' Jn.8.56

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 Jn. 4.9-10

Jesus prayed:

...That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. Jn.17.23b-24

But like pagan Greek philosophy, Islam knows nothing of this love, for it knows nothing of God's real Name.

[Home](#)
[Theology](#)
[Ministry of God's Word](#)
[Evolution](#)
[Islam/ The Satanic verses](#)
[The land of Israel](#)
[Christian anti-Semitism](#)
