

## **Kaaba & Sanctuary: Qur'anic and Biblical Cosmic Centers—Ontological and Existential Worldviews**

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### **Introduction**

The Qur'anic Kaaba<sup>1</sup> and the Biblical heavenly sanctuary articulate respective cosmic centers with corresponding ontological and existential worldviews. Numerous parallels exist. Each cosmic center presents a paradigmatic system toward an understanding of reality. Each unfolds a view of God which brings significant implications for theology and practice. Each effects worldview reflection and formation. Each indicates the direction of prayer. Each comprises the place of spiritual gathering for the believing community. And, each defines the pathway to salvation, the cleansing of worshipers, the promise of divine blessing and peace, as well as oneness with God. It comes as no surprise that the Qur'anic Kaaba and the Biblical sanctuary create unique worldviews.

Despite such parallels, significant dissimilarities exist between the two cosmic centers. Each has its own inner logic. Each contains a basic core of values and assumptions, notions and beliefs that integrate all other elements into a coherent whole, and which determines their true meaning. Thus, meaning diverges in a radical difference of meanings, understandings, and implications within their respective worldviews.

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<sup>1</sup> Also spelled Ka'bah, Kabah, and sometimes referred to as al-Ka'bah al-Musharrafah. A square stone building elegantly draped in a silk and cotton veil and located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Together with its adjacent sacred tomb of the prophet Muhammad, it is the holiest shrine in Islam.

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This study explores the ontological and existential worldview nuances of Islam’s Meccan Kaaba (*Bait Allah*, Mecca literally means “the place of assembly” and Kaaba means a “cube” in reference to the building shape) together with its corresponding heavenly Kaaba (*al-Bait al’-mamu*). It does so against that of the Biblical worldview of Christ’s High Priest ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as presented in the New Testament book of Hebrews. It considers the spiritual impact that these respective worldviews have on the daily lives of those who live and breathe them. It asserts that Islam’s Kaaba/heavenly Kaaba system offers a Neoplatonist transcendent view of God together with a meticulous ritual regimen of achievement-based assurance of salvation,<sup>2</sup> while the book of Hebrews presents the Biblical heavenly sanctuary, which unfolds a relational view of God and engenders an objective-based hope, confidence, boldness, and assurance—where worshipers are truly cleansed from a consciousness of sin through faith alone rather than through any ritual performance.

In the process, we would imagine the existential impact which the Qur’an’s Kaaba engendered worldview might have on the Muslim soul. We would understand more deeply the inner soul need of a Muslim as nuanced by his/her belief and ritual practice in relation to the Qur’an’s cosmic center—the Kaaba. These insights can provide a helpful starting point for mission.

### Thinking Biblically about the Qur’an’s Kaaba

The importance of this study reflects the central role which the Kaaba plays in Muslim worldview and everyday lives.<sup>3</sup> So also, the

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<sup>2</sup> I.e., at the “end of circumambulation and putting the chain of sincere repentance around one’s neck inside the Kaaba to get salvation from the evil sins.” See, Sultan Bahoo, *Kaleed-ul-Tauheed Kalan (The Key of Divine Oneness): English Translation* (trans. Ambreen Moghees Sarwari Qadri; Lahore, Pakistan: Sultan ul Faqr, 2017), 138. As in the Qur’an, Allah says: “Whoever enters it [Ka’ba], is safe” (Surah 3:97).

<sup>3</sup> El-Sayed El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2012), 24-34; Afnan H. Fatani, “Ka’ba | Al-Bayt Al-’Atiq,” *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia*:336-338; Dale F. Eickelman, “Shrine,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* 4; Juan Eduardo Campo, “Mosque,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* 3:133-135; Diane Morgan, *Essential Islam: A Comprehensive Guide to Belief and Practice* (Praeger, 2009), 57-96; Simon O’Meara, *The Ka’ba Orientations: Readings in Islam’s Ancient House* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020); Nurjan Mirahmadi, *Secret Realities of Hajj* (Naqshbandi Center of Vancouver, 2017).

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centrality of the heavenly sanctuary in the Biblical metanarrative<sup>4</sup> and, in particular, the central role which the heavenly sanctuary plays within Adventist hermeneutics and worldview.<sup>5</sup>

The doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary is unique to the Seventh-day Adventist church.<sup>6</sup> While much has been written by Christian theologians on Scripture's sanctuary motif, it appears that only Muslims and Adventists offer developed macro-hermeneutical and theological thought in relation to their respective worldviews. Our inquiry and analysis then, offers an introductory conversation as there is little scholarly discussion regarding either the Qur'anic Kaaba in relation to the Biblical heavenly sanctuary as respective cosmic centers, or the exploration into their

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<sup>4</sup> Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple And The Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of The Dwelling Place of God* (ed. D. A. Carson; vol. 17; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 102-119; Gregory K. Beale, "Eden, The Temple, And the Church's Mission In The New Creation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 48, no. 1 (2005): 5-31; "Appendix E: Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary (Consensus Document)," in *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey (1845-1863)* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989), 225; Richard M. Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experience God's Presence in Shadow and Reality* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2020); Richard M. Davidson. "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies—Book I* (ed. Frank B Holbrook; Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 99-130; Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 11, no. 1-2 (2000): 102-119.

<sup>5</sup> Norman R. Gulley. "God's Plan: Unfolded in the Sanctuary," in *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (ed. Norman R. Gulley; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 437-464; Frank B. Holbrook, "Sanctuary of Salvation," *Ministry Magazine*, (January, 1983): 14-17; Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, "Sanctuary and Proclamation," in *The Great Controversy and the End of Evil: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Angel Manuel Rodriguez in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. Gerhard Pfandl; Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 137-147; Marc Rasell, *Exploring the Heavenly Sanctuary: Understanding Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2011); eds Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner ed. *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (ed.; Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981); Davidson. "Sanctuary Typology," 99-130; Elias Brasil de Souza, "Sanctuary: Cosmos, Covenant, and Creation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 24, no. 1 (2013): 25-41; Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," 102-119; Fernando Canale, "Vision and Mission—Part 1: Historical and Methodological Background," *ibid.*, 26, no. 2 (2015): 120-132.

<sup>6</sup> Adventist Christians are the only denomination holding a doctrine of the sanctuary (Canale, "Vision and Mission—Part 1: Historical and Methodological Background," 130). See also, Rasell, *Exploring the Heavenly Sanctuary: Understanding Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 4.

worldview impact—especially for Adventist Gospel work in Muslim contexts.

Some orienting principles are helpful as we would think Biblically about the Qur'an's Kaaba in contrast with Hebrews' heavenly sanctuary ministry of Jesus: 1) the difference between a Muslim and Islam;<sup>7</sup> 2) the hermeneutical priority of a Biblically informed worldview with its cosmic conflict narrative;<sup>8</sup> 3) the revelation of God's character of love;<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> What is the difference between a Muslim and Islam and what difference would that distinction make? Islam is an entity beyond its people. It exists beyond experience per se. Muslims are not Islam and Islam is not Muslims. "Muslims are adherents of Islam, and Islam is the worldview of Muslims, the two are not the same as many uncritically believe" (Nabeel Qureshi, *Answering Jihad: A Better Way Forward* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 27. This is from a cultural perspective. Culture and Qur'anic beliefs are intertwined. This distinction allows for objectivity in critically exploring Qur'anic worldview from Biblical theological and ethical perspectives, while at the same time nurturing genuine respect and love for Muslims as people of faith, piety, and moral values: not to mention implications of disparate Muslim worldviews. Understanding the difference between a Muslim and Islam also enables sensitivity to the very personal existential realities of individual Muslims with respect to the worldview narrative that lay deep within the inner recesses of their self and which provides the presuppositions and foundation on which they live. Recent writers who make this important distinction include (Christian, former Muslim, and Muslim writers): *ibid.*, 25-28; Don Little, *Effective Discipling in Muslim Communities: Scripture, History and Seasoned Practices* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 120; Ida Glaser, *Thinking Biblically About Islam: Genesis, Transfiguration, Transformation* (Langham Global Library 2016), 10; AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, *The Qur'anic Worldview: A Springboard for Cultural Reform* (Washington, D.C.: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2011), 59, 60.

<sup>8</sup> Adventist understanding of God, the Great Controversy, the heavenly sanctuary, Creation, the nature of man, the fall, salvation, ecclesiology, eschatology, etc., are critical in engaging Islam as a historical phenomenon within the great controversy narrative in relation to the emergence of the final conflict between good and evil (Gen 1-3; Job 1:6-2:7; Isa 14:3-21; Ezek 28:1-19; Daniel chapters 2, 4, 7, 10-11; Rev 12:1-17; cf. Rev 9:1-20). In the hidden, spiritual battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan the very truth of things is at stake (1 John 4:1-3; 2 Thess 2:5-12; Eph 6:12; 1 Tim 4:1; Rev 16:12-16). This is important in view of the prevalence of self-instruction and evangelical influence that occurs in Islamic Studies and ministry to Muslims. A clear understanding of the distinctives of a Biblically informed Adventist worldview and faith is critical to Adventist identity and mission in the world. The numerous bridging—yet surface—values, practices, and beliefs, which Adventists hold in common with Muslims do not adequately plumb the depth of worldview, let alone the radical difference of meanings, understandings, and implications within their differing worldviews. Nor do they touch the heart of a Muslim's deepest orientation, identity, and spirituality. Adventist practitioners must first grasp the Biblical implications of their distinctive worldview and faith before they can effectively engage Muslims—either on the level of their internal narrative or their exterior practice. Biblically sound contextualization begins with worldview narrative and faith rather than with culture or cultural practice (Rom

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and 4) the finality of God's revelation in the person and work of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>

The Qur'anic and Biblical sanctuary motifs will be explored consecutively. First as cosmic centers within the respective worldviews which each sacred text asserts. This includes ontological, epistemological, and theological implications.

Secondly, existential nuances are highlighted in the context of the meticulous rituals related to the Kaaba, i.e., daily obligatory ritual prayer (*salat*) facing the *Qibla* and the *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). So also, the tacit uncertainty of salvation and its inferred impact on the Muslim soul. Similarly, referencing the book of Hebrews, existential nuances are highlighted in the context of non-ritualized faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ who now appears in the presence of God for us together with the explicit absolute confidence which one can have through faith in Him.

Finally, comparisons and contrasts are drawn by way of summary and conclusion. Reflections and implications for touching a Muslim's soul will be suggested.

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12:1-2; Phil 3:17-21; Col 2:8-15; 3:1-17; Eph 1:3-23; 2:1-22). It is necessary to understand the Islamic and Muslim worldview and faith's understandings of given culture and practice.

<sup>9</sup> Biblical eschatology places the question of the character of God in the forefront of the Great Controversy. This is at the heart of Adventist eschatology. Surprisingly, the question of the character of God is at the heart of Islamic eschatology as well. So the question: "What God?" "What vision of God is to be lifted up for the world to behold?" "God is love," the Bible declares (1 John 4:16). Those words comprise the opening sentence of *Patriarchs and Prophets* and the final words of *The Great Controversy* books by Ellen G. White (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2002), 33; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2002), 678. The revelation of God's character of love is to be at the heart of Seventh-day Adventist personal life, witness, and mission in the world, a key understanding and element in Islamic Studies and ministry to Muslims. See Larry L. Lichtenwalter, "The Biblical Witness of the Character of God in Relation to the Qur'an," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 22, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>10</sup> The Person of Jesus has been at the center of the Great Controversy since it began in Heaven (John 1:1-14; Eph 1:1-23; Col 1:13-29; Heb 1:1-13; Rev 12:1-13). It is a critical issue in Adventist understandings of Islam. The heart of the Everlasting Gospel to all people groups of the world is to invite them to know Jesus Christ, to confess Him as Savior and Lord, and to worship Him. How the Qur'an and Islam testify to Jesus determines its ultimate credibility. The person and work of Jesus is both a bridge and a barrier. Muslims in general have a strong attraction to Jesus.

### Qur'anic Cosmic Center—The Kaaba

The word Kaaba is mentioned only twice in Qur'an (5:95, 97), but is assumed in several other verses (2:125, 158; 3:96; 22:26). The Kaaba, literally "the cube," is a square stone building located in the main mosque in Mecca, i.e., Masjid al-Haram. It is Islam's *Qiblah*, the direction of Muslim prayer.<sup>11</sup> The Meccan Kaaba and its adjacent sacred tomb of the prophet Muhammad are Islam's foremost holy sanctuaries.<sup>12</sup>

The Qur'an asserts that the Meccan mosque is God's "sacred house," a setting for ritual activity and a meeting place for the people (2:125; 3:96). It is venerated for its universal symbolism as the first house built on earth exclusively for the worship and praise of the One God (3:96),<sup>13</sup> built after the flood by Ibrahim and Ismail on Allah's instructions (2:127; 22:26).<sup>14</sup>

The Kaaba is revered as the House of God (*Bait Allah*) or sanctuary toward which Muslims turn in prayer five times a day, and around which

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<sup>11</sup> Sheikh Husain Wahid Khorasani, *Islamic Laws: As-Samahat al-Marje' Sheikh Husain Wahid Khorasani* (Newington, VA: Yasin Publication, 2014), 136. Regarding the pre-requisites of *salat* and praying facing the Qibla/Mecca, see Youssry Guirguis, *Islamic Culture and Society* (Saraburi, Thailand: Institute Press, 2019), 175-197.

<sup>12</sup> The Muslim worldview includes a "spatial paradigm" which envisions certain sacred and universally unifying places on earth. These include Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. But Mecca, the city in which the Ka'ba (qibla), the sacred sanctuary and pilgrimage shrine is located, is considered the holiest place on earth. It is a sacred and pure place that entices angels and benevolent spirits as opposed to polluted and impure places believed to attract malevolent unseen creatures. Muslim notion of sacralisation of space is reflected in the history of the Kaaba. See, El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, 28-31; Aslam Farouk-Alli, "A Qur'anic Perspective and Analysis of the Concept of Sacred Space in Islam," *Journal of the Study of Religion*, 15, no. 1 (2002): 63-78.

<sup>13</sup> Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazālī, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur'an* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000), 359.

<sup>14</sup> I.e., "Verily, the first House (of worship) appointed for mankind was that at Bakkah (Makkah), full of blessing, and a guidance for mankind" (3:96); "Behold! We gave the site, to Ibrahim, of the (Sacred) House, (saying): "Associate not anything (in worship) with Me; and sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or stand up, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer)" (22:26); "And remember Ibrahim and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House (With this prayer): 'Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing'" (2:127). "Local tradition had it that Hagar and Ismail had settled in Mecca, that Abraham had visited them there and that together Abraham and Ismail had rebuilt the Kabah (which had originally been erected by Adam but had fallen into disrepair). This was music to Muhammad's ears. It seemed that the Arabs had not been left out of the divine plan after all, and that the Kabah had venerable monotheistic credentials" (Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2002), 17.

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they circulate during the pilgrimage (Hajj).<sup>15</sup> It is viewed as “an earthly replica of a divine prototype in heaven called *al-bayt alma 'mur* (literally, the Ever-inhabited House).”<sup>16</sup> This heavenly reality is “an invisible cosmic center located above the Kaaba” where unseen entities as angels, spirits, and divine grace are believed to exist.<sup>17</sup> As such, the Kaaba is thought to be at the center of the world, with the Gate of Heaven directly above it.<sup>18</sup>

Viewed with cosmological proportions,<sup>19</sup> the Kaaba marks the spot where the earth was created and is an earthly image of the divine throne in heaven.<sup>20</sup> It marks the location where the sacred world intersects with the profane. The embedded Black Stone, either a meteorite that had

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<sup>15</sup> Fred M. Donner. “Muhammad and the Caliphate: Political History of the Islamic Empire Up to the Mongol Conquest,” in *The Oxford History of Islam* (ed. John L. Esposito; Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Fatani, “Ka’ba | Al-Bayt Al-‘Atiq,” 337.

<sup>17</sup> El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> The Hadith, Islamic Tradition, and the internet provide colorful insight into the centrality of the Kaaba in Muslim worldview. The Kaaba was first constructed in heaven, 2,000 years before the creation of the world. After the fall, Adam and Eve were cast out from Paradise, where Adam landed on a mountain in Ceylon and Eve fell at Jiddah, on the western coast of Arabia. After a hundred years of wandering they met near Mecca. Adam, the first man, build the Kaaba on the earth exactly under the spot occupied by its perfect model in heaven. Because of the Flood, the Kaaba was destroyed. It was later rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael on God’s instructions. At the same time that Adam rebuilt the Kaaba. Thus, there is the Black Stone and the Station of Abraham at the Kaaba. After the Kaaba was rebuilt, God commanded the decedents of Ishmael to perform an annual pilgrimage: the *Hajj*. After Ishmael’s death, his decedents and the local tribes gradually turned to polytheism and idolatry and profaned the Kaaba with hundreds of idols. Pagan rituals were adopted during the annual pilgrimage (Hajj) including naked circumambulation. One of the first things Muhammad did when he returned from exile and triumphantly entered Mecca was to cleanse the Kaaba of 360 idols and restore the religion of Abraham in order to worship the one and only God.

<sup>19</sup> “Cosmology is among the central themes of the Qur’an” (El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, 25). See 2:22, 117; 3:188-190; 6:2-3, 14, 73, 97, 103; 7:54, 121; 10:5; 13:2; 14:33; 15:26; 16:12, 16; 21:33; 22:18, 65; 23:17; 24:35; 25:45; 29:44, 61; 31:10; 35:43; 36:38, 40, 82; 37:5-6, 40; 39:5; 41:37; 51:47; 53:1, 49; 55:5-8; 67:3-5; 71:15-16; 75:9; 78:12-13; 81:2; 82:2; 85:1; 86:3; 91:1-10. See also, Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur’an* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 65-79. It regards “the whole universe as ‘Muslim,’” (ibid., 65). Often the revelation of the Qur’an and the creation of the universe are coupled, paralleled (ibid., 71).

<sup>20</sup> Campo, “Mosque,” 133.

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fallen from the sky or delivered by an angel, symbolizes this intersect which links heaven and earth.<sup>21</sup>

As the most sacred space in the Muslim world, the Kaaba is the point to which all Muslims turn to pray, and the direction to which their heads point in burial. It is the spiritual center of the earth, where actions at the Kaaba, such as its circumambulation, are duplicated in the heavens and at the throne of God.<sup>22</sup> The ideal of community is central to the cult of the Kaaba. All Violence is forbidden in Mecca and the surrounding countryside at all times.<sup>23</sup> Non-Muslims are barred from its sacred space.<sup>24</sup> In relation to the *Qibla*, “the Kaaba itself is astronomically aligned.”<sup>25</sup>

In effect, the Kaaba is an earthly sacred space that has assumed gigantic spiritual and cosmological proportions.<sup>26</sup> It is an “an inseparable component of Muslims’ ontological and existential worldviews and is a symbol of the real unity of all Muslim communities.”<sup>27</sup> It is the focal point for Muslims dispersed all over the world. The “citadel of *Tawhīd*”<sup>28</sup>—where metaphysically, the Qur’an’s monotheism further nuances the correlation between the Oneness of God and the oneness of existence, i.e., *Tawhīd*.<sup>29</sup> Where the universe is perceived and experienced as a place of visible and invisible spheres.<sup>30</sup> Where the transcendent invisible bestows meaning to the visible. Where Allah is the

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<sup>21</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2011), 221.

<sup>22</sup> Eickelman, “Shrine,” 70.

<sup>23</sup> Armstrong, *Islam: A short History*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Shawkat M. Toorawa, “Pilgrimage,” *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*:417.

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad Dallal. “Science, Medicine, and Technology: The Making of a Scientific Culture,” in *The Oxford History of Islam* (ed. John L. Esposito; Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 179. To determine the direction of the Kaaba, Muslims developed the astronomical science in the Middle Ages. 20<sup>th</sup> Century worshipers can use a *Qibla* compass. See Vincent J. Cornell. “Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge: The Relationship Between Faith and Practice in Islam,” in *Oxford History of Islam* (ed. John L. Esposito; Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 78.

<sup>26</sup> Phil Parshall, *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions: A Guide for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 84.

<sup>27</sup> El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, 25.

<sup>28</sup> al-Ghazālī, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur’an*, 359.

<sup>29</sup> Zulfikar Ali Shah, *Anthropomorphic Depictions of God: The Concept of God in Jusaic, Christian and Islamic Traditions Representing the Unrepresentable* (Herndon, VA: The International Institute Of Islamic Thought, 2012), 402.

<sup>30</sup> El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, 27, 28.



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singular, ultimate, invisible, unseen and unknowable divinity.<sup>31</sup> Where reality divides into two generic realms: God and non-God in which God “remains forever transcendental Other devoid of any resemblance, similarity, partnership and association”<sup>32</sup> and, essentially timeless. This Oneness, Unity and Unicity of God forms the essence of the Islamic vision of reality<sup>33</sup> to which the Kaaba and its attending rituals correspond. As such, Muslims look at the world as a “living reality or lively cosmos.”<sup>34</sup> This insistence upon God’s absolute transcendence and perfect unity has unique implications for questions about the nature of God, free will and predestination, the relationship of good and evil, and of reason to revelation.<sup>35</sup>

The foregoing vision of *Tawhīd*—including visible/invisible spheres where the transcendent invisible bestows meaning to the visible and where Allah is the singular, ultimate, invisible, unseen and unknowable divinity—implies a tacit Neoplatonism. Greek philosophical presuppositions—both Platonic and Aristotelian—have had a significant influence (directly and indirectly) on Islamic thought.<sup>36</sup> In a milieu

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>32</sup> Shah, *Anthropomorphic Depictions of God: The Concept of God in Judaic, Christian and Islamic Traditions Representing the Unrepresentable*, 451.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 454. The Islamic unitarian formula—“your God is One God: there is no god but He” (Q. 2:163; cf. 3:2, 18; 2:255)—occurs 41 times in the Qur’an along with numerous other forms that negate godhead or divinity.

<sup>34</sup> El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, 25.

<sup>35</sup> Shah, *Anthropomorphic Depictions of God: The Concept of God in Judaic, Christian and Islamic Traditions Representing the Unrepresentable*, 464.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Warraq, *Why I Am Not A Muslim* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003), 1-3, 261-275; Robert R. Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2017), 11-39; Andy Byng, “The Influences of Neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism on Early Islamic Thinking,” (2010), 1-10. Reilly notes that “Almost without exception, they [Muslim philosophers] were supporters of neo-Platonic notions of emanationism, materialistic pantheism, the eternity of the universe, and the immortality of the soul, but not of the body” (Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis*, 38). Some Muslim scholars suggest that the phenomenon of Neoplatonist influence on Islam became a reality only after the time of Mohammad and the four rightly guided caliphates and represent a regression of Islam from its purity (AbuSulayman, *The Qur’anic Worldview: A Springboard for Cultural Reform*, 120-130). Rahman asserts that the Qur’an nowhere indorses the doctrine of radical mind-body dualism of Greek philosophy: “The Qur’an does not appear to endorse the kind of radical mind-body dualism found in Greek philosophy, Christianity, or Hinduism; indeed, there is hardly a passage in the Qur’an that says that man is composed of two separate, let alone disparate, substances, the body and the soul (even though later orthodox Islam,

already saturated with Plotinus and Aristotle thought,<sup>37</sup> it occurred unintentionally at least during Islam's formative years as Muhammad both engaged and absorbed Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian religious thought.<sup>38</sup> The metaphysical beliefs of the Arabian pagan environment and Bedouin culture of Muhammad's day likewise shaped philosophical and epistemological understandings in keeping with Neoplatonic thought.<sup>39</sup>

### **Kaaba-related Rituals—the *Qiblah* and *Hajj***

Two obligatory Kaaba-related rituals open a window into the Muslim's existential worldview—daily ritual prayer facing the *Qibla* and the once-in-a-lifetime Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca.<sup>40</sup>

Twenty-seven elements are necessary for the validity of a ritual prayer.<sup>41</sup> They are called the “stipulations of ritual prayer.”<sup>42</sup> Four are regarded as pillars of a ritual prayer: standing, reading the Qur'anic

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particularly after al-Ghazali and largely through his influence, came to accept it). The term *nafs*, frequently employed by the Qur'an and often translated as 'soul,' simply means 'person' or 'self'” (Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 17). These positions however, overlook how much the Qur'an drew from Rabbinic literature as well as Christian apocryphal literature, both of which are steeped in Neoplatonist thinking of the day. Hellenization had an incredible influence on both Jewish and Christian philosophical and theological endeavor. Likewise, these positions overlook the Qur'an's descriptions of judgment in hell where people do not die, descriptions of God in relation to time and space, as well as God's knowability and unclear and tacitly denied personhood. See Lodahl for implications regarding anthropomorphic language and one's view of God, Michael Lodahl, *Claiming Abraham: Reading the Bible and the Qur'an Side by Side* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 9-24.

<sup>37</sup> Ian Richard Netton, “Neoplatonism in Islamic Philosophy,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. By then, also both Jewish and Christian religious thought had absorbed Platonic thinking: the former through Philo and Hellenistic influences via LXX, etc.; the latter as Augustine incorporated Platonic philosophical categories into his theological apologetic of Christianity.

<sup>38</sup> Sahaja Carimokam, *Muhammad and the People of the Book* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2010), 18-22.

<sup>39</sup> See Anderson, Mark Robert Anderson, *The Qur'an In Context: A Christian Exploration* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 15-49. Ultimately, Neoplatonist influence would become more nuanced as Islam conquered Alexandria a century later (642CE) becoming overt and systematic during the Abbasid Caliphate in 9-10<sup>th</sup> century Muslim scholarly projects.

<sup>40</sup> Islamic obligatory devotional acts include: ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), fasting, divine tax (*Zakat*), and the pilgrimage (*Hajj*). See Muhammad Abul Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Research Publications, 2011), 37.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-93. There are fifty-one Sunna acts in a ritual prayer (*ibid.*, 97).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

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verse, bowing, and prostration.<sup>43</sup> Additionally there are five designated times of “obligatory” ritual prayer.<sup>44</sup> There are ten “praiseworthy” acts (*mustahabb*) in ritual prayer,<sup>45</sup> formulaic guidance for composing a ritual prayer,<sup>46</sup> formulaic praises of God after ritual prayer,<sup>47</sup> and about sixty-eight acts which corrupt ritual prayer.<sup>48</sup> So also acts “requiring” the nullification of a ritual prayer and acts “permitting” it.<sup>49</sup>

As already noted, facing the direction of the Holy Kaaba is one of the stipulations of ritual prayer:<sup>50</sup> “So turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque, and wheresoever you be, turn your faces towards it” (2:144). Those unable to face the Kaaba or have become uncertain of its direction can face whatever direction is possible. However, if one senses the wrongness of their decision while still engaged in ritual prayer, he or she must turn to the correct direction immediately. If one started the ritual prayer without thinking much about the direction of the Kaaba, and after completing the prayer has come to know that he/she faces the correct direction, his/her ritual prayer is correct. But if one knows it while he/she is still engaged in the ritual prayer, his/her prayer is corrupted.<sup>51</sup>

The *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) means a visit to Mecca and the performance of a special type of devotional acts during the time of pilgrimage.<sup>52</sup> It is

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>44</sup> Sara Ashencaen Crabtree, *Islam and Social Work: Culturally Sensitive Practice in A Diverse World* (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2016), 20; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 85.

<sup>45</sup> Albert Habib Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 148; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 100-101.

<sup>46</sup> Jamal Rahman, *Out of Darkness Into Light: Spiritual Guidance in the Qur'an with Reflections from Jewish and Christian Sources* (New York, NY: Morehouse, 2009), 180-182; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 101-105.

<sup>47</sup> Christiane J. Gruber. “A Pious Cure-All: The Ottoman Illustrated Prayer Manual in the Lilly Library,” in *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition* (ed. Christiane J. Gruber; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 116-153; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 111-112.

<sup>48</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 112-116.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 121-122.

<sup>50</sup> Alfred Warren Matthews, *World Religions* (Eagan, MN: West Publishing Company, 1994), 416-417; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 95.

<sup>51</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 95.

<sup>52</sup> Afzal-ur-Rahman, “Muhammad,” *Encyclopedia of Seerah* 4:162-163; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 207; David E. Long, *The Hajj Today: A Survey of the Contemporary Pilgrimage to Makkah* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1979), 11-22; Pnina Werbner. “Sacrifice, Purification and Gender in the Hajj: Personhood,

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obligatory once in a person's life (3:91), if an individual meets eight "obligatory" pilgrimage stipulations, satisfies five "necessity of performance" of pilgrimage stipulations, and satisfies at least two stipulations for the "validity of performance" of pilgrimage.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, there are eighteen "required acts" in Pilgrimage.<sup>54</sup>

As already noted, the Kaaba is central to the *Hajj* experience. The Qur'an asserts that the Kaaba is a setting for precise ritual activity and a meeting place for the people (2:125). Once in Mecca, "the first act is the *tawaf*, which consists of seven counterclockwise circumambulations of the Kaaba with pauses of obeisance to the Black Stone."<sup>55</sup> Altogether, at least three circumambulations of the Kaaba are prescribed: the circumambulation upon arrival in Mecca, the circumambulation in conjunction with the rite of running between *Safa* and *Marwa*, and the farewell circumambulation—the last of the ritual circling of the Kaaba performed just before the pilgrim's departure for his or her homeland.<sup>56</sup> When circumambulating, each pilgrim is required to be in a state of purification from both minor and major legal impurities.<sup>57</sup>

One final act remains however, before the pilgrim's departure: the offering of a sacrifice of an animal to commemorate the lamb that Allah accepted in place of the son of Abraham. This final act of the *Hajj* is celebrated as the *'Id Al-Adha* (Feast of Sacrifice) throughout the Muslim world.<sup>58</sup> The *'Id Al-Adha* "is supposed to be the act of giving up

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Metonymy, and Ritual," in *Hajj: Global Interactions Through Pilgrimage* (ed. Mols Luitgard and Marjo Buitelaar; Leiden, Netherlands: Sidestone Press, 2018), 27-39.

<sup>53</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 207-209.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 209-210. The Sunna acts in pilgrimage are thirty-four in number (*ibid.*, 210-214).

<sup>55</sup> John Alexander Hutchison and Rhona Robbin, *Paths of Faith* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 407; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 211.

<sup>56</sup> Malise Ruthven and Azim Nanji, *Historical Atlas of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 138-140; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 210, 211.

<sup>57</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 210.

<sup>58</sup> Werbner. "Sacrifice, Purification and Gender in the Hajj: Personhood, Metonymy, and Ritual," 30; Long, *The Hajj Today: A Survey of the Contemporary Pilgrimage to Makkah*, 21. Unlike the other Hajj rites, *'Id Al-Adha* (Feast of Sacrifice) is celebrated "throughout the Muslim world, where it is a happy occasion generally accompanied with visits to family, friends, and colleagues, giving and receiving gifts, and special prayers at the mosque" (*ibid.*).

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something one cherishes, rather than a blood sacrifice, and even money may be given to charity in lieu of a sacrifice.”<sup>59</sup>

The Qur’an asserts: “*Truly Safa and Marwah are among the rituals of God, so whoever performs the hajj to the House or makes the umrah [minor pilgrimage] there is not blame on him in going to and fro between them*” 2:158.<sup>60</sup> The Arabic word translated rituals (*sha‘ā’ir*) is derived from the Arabic word *sha‘ar*, meaning the one who preserves religious rituals. The word can refer to ritual places, symbols, or sacred actions and carries the sense of “that by which God is known.”<sup>61</sup> One of the meanings of *sha‘ā’ir* in the Qur’an is its unique connection with the Meccan pilgrimage, denoting various rites and sacred places that are associated with it. In addition to the spatial sanctity of Mecca, and in particular the Kaaba and the *haram* that surrounds it, there is also the temporal sanctity of the sacred month to which the pilgrim worshiper must relate.<sup>62</sup> Formulaic guidance as to how to perform each of the activities of pilgrimage one after another is also provided.<sup>63</sup>

The *Hajj* as a ritual of purification and sacred exchange is highly elaborate.<sup>64</sup> It comprises a moral allegory in relation to its sacred pretexts—the binding of Ishmael and the banishment of Hagar—and a series of identifications with exemplary persons (Adam, Abraham, Ishmael, Hagar, and Muhammad).<sup>65</sup> The ritual counter-structure “cycle of rites achieve symbolic transformation in the person of the pilgrim through a series of significant alternations and reversals in time.”<sup>66</sup> There is a symbolic movement from the present to the past “effecting both a metonymic and metaphoric transformation.”<sup>67</sup> It is a process “through which the pilgrim gradually sheds her or his sins by moving backwards

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<sup>59</sup> Long, *The Hajj Today: A Survey of the Contemporary Pilgrimage to Makkah*, 21.

<sup>60</sup> *Safa* and *Marwah* are two hills near the Kaaba in Mecca.

<sup>61</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr ed. *The Study Qur’an: A New Translation and Commentary* (ed.; New York, NY: Harper One, 2015), 69-69, n verse 158. See also 5:2; 22:32; 22:36. Thus, *sha‘ā’ir* means: (1) anything by means of which another thing may be known; (2) a sign; (3) anything which is considered or is performed as a mark of submission to God; (4) the rites of pilgrimage and practices pertaining thereto.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 272-274 n on verse 2.

<sup>63</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 214-225.

<sup>64</sup> Werbner. “Sacrifice, Purification and Gender in the Hajj: Personhood, Metonymy, and Ritual,” 27, 30.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-33.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

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in time, becoming as pure and innocent (*ma'sum*) as a newborn infant.”<sup>68</sup> This includes throwing stones at the devil (stone the *Jamarah*) whereby he/she repudiates their inner devils and cast aside their own low desires and wishes: action which brings closeness to Allah.<sup>69</sup>

Together with its Kaaba circling, the Hajj is said to have “a cleansing effect on the pilgrim and brings him to the position of an innocent infant. This is to be understood in light of Islam’s not holding to the doctrine of original sin; thus the new status is one of purity and innocence.”<sup>70</sup> It most assuredly is “an emotional and spiritual highlight of Muslim’s lives.”<sup>71</sup> The *Hajj* not only leaves the pilgrim with memories, but the sense and testimony of personal accomplishment.<sup>72</sup> “Every *hajji*, as the pilgrim is known, believes that his total act of dedication in pilgrimage is the supreme means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>73</sup> Even the *‘Id Al-Adha* (Feast of Sacrifice) is an act of giving up something one cherishes, rather than a blood sacrifice with redemptive implications. Throughout, the pilgrim is on his or her own, never quite sure whether they have arrived or not. It is achievement-based assurance of salvation.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 31; Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 221. The stone throwing is a reenactment of the temptation of Abraham against sacrificing Ishmael, the temptation of Hagar to stop Abraham from doing so, and the temptation of Ishmael to avoid being sacrificed. It symbolizes one’s self-attack against their own internal temptations or base desires, and signals their moving away from the self and towards further submission to Allah’s will. If one has been successful to push away the *Shaitan* within one’s self, there is only a single step between them and Allah. For discussion of Satan’s person, the principle of evil as coeval of man and the weakness of man, see Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur’an*, 121-131.

<sup>70</sup> Parshall, *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions: A Guide for Christians*, 89.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>72</sup> Luitgard Mols. “Souvenir, Testimony, and Device for Instruction: Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Printed Hajj Certificates,” (ed. Mols Luitgard and Marjo Buitelaar; Leiden, Netherlands: Sidestone Press, 2018), 185, 202.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Challen, *Love Your Muslim Neighbour: Understanding Islam in Today’s World* (Leominster: Day One, 2006), 35. “Among the many traditions there is one which says that every step taken by the pilgrim in the direction of the Ka’aba blots out a sin. Also one who dies on this pilgrimage is enrolled among the martyrs and goes straight to heaven” (ibid.).

### Biblical Cosmic Center—The Heavenly Sanctuary

Scripture presumes the existence of a heavenly sanctuary and asserts its centrality within the Biblical metanarrative.<sup>74</sup> So also, the heavenly sanctuary's cosmic import.<sup>75</sup> "Heaven is God's dwelling place (1 Kgs 8:30b). God's throne is in His sanctuary (Jer 17:12). God's 'Splendor and majesty' and 'strength and glory are in his sanctuary' (Ps 96:6)."<sup>76</sup> The sanctuary in heaven however, is not simply the dwelling place of God. From the beginning, it has been the place of worship, doxology, and praising the Lord (Jer 17:12).<sup>77</sup> With the entrance of sin, it has become the great center of redemptive activity by means of Christ's priestly ministry.<sup>78</sup> As such it is God's "command center" of the universe and the cosmic conflict. The sanctuary message unfolds God works and acts, assuring God's followers that God is with and for His people (Exod 25:8). And so, they praise Him for His goodness and redemption.<sup>79</sup>

As such, the sanctuary is "the oldest teaching device in Scripture," "a visual aid to teach about the plan of salvation"<sup>80</sup>—unfolding the eternal gospel, yet not mere illustration of the gospel.<sup>81</sup> Rather, the structural components of the Biblical metaphysics it articulates touches cosmic, ecclesiological, and individual existential realities where atonement unfolds as a historical process (rather than an event) and in which the integration of past, present and future concerns every soul living on

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<sup>74</sup> See also Pss 11:4; 102:19; Dan 7:9, 10; Mic 1:2, 3; Heb 8:3; 9:13; Rev 4:2; 7:15; 11:19; 15:5-8; 16:17. See Beale, *The Temple And The Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of The Dwelling Place of God*, 102-119; Beale, "Eden, The Temple, And the Church's Mission In The New Creation," 5-31; "Appendix E: Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary (Consensus Document)," 225; Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experience God's Presence in Shadow and Reality*; Davidson. "Sanctuary Typology," 99-130; Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," 102-119.

<sup>75</sup> Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," 102-119; Canale, "Vision and Mission—Part 1: Historical and Methodological Background," 120-132; Souza, "Sanctuary: Cosmos, Covenant, and Creation," 25-41.

<sup>76</sup> Gulley, "God's Plan: Unfolded in the Sanctuary," 439.

<sup>77</sup> Jiří Moskala, "Introduction," in *Women and Ordination: Biblical and Theological Studies* (ed. John W. Reeve; Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), x.

<sup>78</sup> Holbrook, "Sanctuary of Salvation," 15. The book of Revelation makes it clear that the heavenly sanctuary is central to God's plan for our salvation (Rev 1:12, 13; 3:12; 4:1-5; 5:8; 7:15; 8:3; 11:1, 19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17).

<sup>79</sup> Moskala, "Introduction," x.

<sup>80</sup> Gulley, "God's Plan: Unfolded in the Sanctuary," 463.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

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earth.<sup>82</sup> It provides a “hermeneutical vision” which “interprets (explains) the totality (metaphysics) of reality (ontology).”<sup>83</sup> The heavenly sanctuary reveals the Creator God as “a resident God, acting in time and space.”<sup>84</sup> He is “not the timeless God of traditional theology” (or that of Islam).<sup>85</sup> It reveals how God treats sin and saves those who believe in Him.<sup>86</sup>

“The book of Hebrews is impregnated with the language of sanctuary.”<sup>87</sup> It asserts a real sanctuary in heaven, presenting it as a real place and not mere metaphor or abstraction (8:2; 9:24).<sup>88</sup> Referencing the Israelite’s profound ritual types of sanctuary space and ritual imagery,<sup>89</sup> Hebrews “addresses the very real human need for purification from sin. It does not deal with the cosmological concerns of a Philo but with the great themes of human redemption through the sacrifice and priesthood of Jesus Christ—a redemption foreshadowed, but never accomplished, in the ritual types of the earthly sanctuary.”<sup>90</sup> To that end, the Epistle to the Hebrews “sets out a series of bases for Christian confidence—*real* deity, *real* humanity, a *real* priest, a *real* covenant, a *real* sacrifice, *real* purification, *real* access, and in keeping with these, a *real* heavenly sanctuary and ministry.”<sup>91</sup>

Thus, Hebrews confronts its readers with a world, which most would consider imaginary. It asserts the heavenly sanctuary as a *real* place with a *real* God involved in *real* activity dealing with *real* cosmic conflict and

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<sup>82</sup> Canale, “Vision and Mission—Part 1: Historical and Methodological Background,” 120-132.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 123, 129. See Psalm 73:1-28, 17. See also White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, 423.

<sup>84</sup> “Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Exod 25:8); “May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion” (Ps 20:2).

<sup>85</sup> Gulley, “God’s Plan: Unfolded in the Sanctuary,” 463.

<sup>86</sup> Moskala, “Introduction,” x.

<sup>87</sup> William G. Johnsson. “The Heavenly Sanctuary—Figurative or Real?,” in *Issues In the Book of Hebrews* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989), 36.

<sup>88</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Boice, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 349.

<sup>89</sup> “The writer of Hebrews clearly indicates that the Levitical priesthood foreshadowed the grand priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in the presence of God” (Holbrook, “Sanctuary of Salvation”), 15.

<sup>90</sup> Johnsson. “The Heavenly Sanctuary—Figurative or Real?,” 36.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* See full discussion of assurance in the book of Hebrews, William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence: The Book of Hebrews Speaks to Our Day* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1979).



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soteriological issues, providing *real* connection between heaven and earth. It promises *real* hope and *real* help.

The book of Hebrews offers a vision of reality, an understanding of Jesus Christ, and a sense of identity and hope in a world of ambiguity and uncertainty.<sup>92</sup> Its readers are invited to see beyond the realities of this visible world and take refuge in the promised certainty of the ultimate triumph of God in Jesus Christ (chapters 1, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13). In doing so, Hebrews posits a unique worldview.<sup>93</sup> At the heart of this heavenly sanctuary worldview is Jesus who ever intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25).<sup>94</sup>

**We Have Come . . .**

Hebrews repeatedly invites its readers to freely come to the heavenly sanctuary:

*“So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.”* (4:16)

*“We who have fled to him [God] for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest.”* (6:18-20)

*“For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf.”* (9:24)

*“We can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving*

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<sup>92</sup> See James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (ed. Mikeal G. Parsons and Charles H. Talbert; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 7, 20-21; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (ed. C. Clifton Black; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1-3.

<sup>93</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 2; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 20-21. Readers are confronted with a real world, which most would consider imaginary.

<sup>94</sup> Rasell, *Exploring the Heavenly Sanctuary: Understanding Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 5.

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*way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean." (10:19-22)*

*You have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai . . . No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering. You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect. You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel." (12:18, 22-24)*

This final passage (12:18-24) comprises "the rhetorical climax" of the book of Hebrews,<sup>95</sup> i.e., "You have come" (12:22). It casts seven images which create a vision of the spiritual realities in which we participate when we experience the gospel through the mediatorial work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. At the center of these seven images is the phrase that underscores God as the "Judge of all" (12:23). It's as if one were standing blamelessly in the immediate presence of God as Judge.<sup>96</sup> On the one side of these seven images are sacred space, festal gathering of angels, the redeemed people of God. On the other side are soteriological realities of justification, vindication, sanctification, the mediatorial work of Jesus, and the power of His applied blood (12:23c, 24). The imagery speaks of incredible assurance. Confidence. Hope. Something absolutely unshakable. The use of the perfect participle "made perfect" (Greek *teteleiōmenōn*) implies the stable and definitive character of the believer's condition.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 477.

<sup>96</sup> William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* (Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 470.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 471.

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Seven images create a vision of the spiritual realities  
in which we participate when we experience the gospel  
through the mediatorial work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary.

These four passages contrast sharply with the Qur'anic Kaaba as a place of pilgrimage open only to a few who meet ritual requisites.<sup>98</sup> Rather the Biblical heavenly sanctuary is a place of joyful worship—which according to Hebrews is open to every believer at all times and wherever one finds his or her self-amidst life's vicissitudes.

Furthermore, although this heavenly city is still the goal of Christians' pilgrimage (Heb 13:14), those who believe have already come to this heavenly city with its grand assembly.<sup>99</sup> While proleptic, it is nevertheless a contemporary and real experience: "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). God's followers are described as "made perfect" (Greek *teteleiōmenōn*), which indicates that nothing is lacking in their relationship with God.<sup>100</sup>

Wonderfully, God Himself is present at this festival where His presence is fully enjoyed by the people of faith. In presenting God as "Judge of all," Hebrews asserts the surpassing importance of God's evaluation of one's life in this world.<sup>101</sup> However, the perfect tense of the verb (Greek *proserchomai*) implies that the readers have entered a permanent place of eternal relationship with God. The phrase "sprinkled blood" refers to Jesus' atoning blood which established the new covenant and which is the means of salvation. The genitive noun "sprinkling" indicates what was done with the blood, i.e., as in Hebrews 10:22 which speaks of "having our hearts sprinkled clean." It also tells what the blood

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<sup>98</sup> As per above, the Qur'an does assert that the Kaaba was a setting for pilgrimage ritual activity (*Hajj*), obligatory canonical prayer and a meeting place for the people (2:125; 3:96).

<sup>99</sup> O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 486.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>101</sup> David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistles "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 467.

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has accomplished: purification.<sup>102</sup> Such is the transforming power of the mediatorial work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary.

In concluding this section, we ask: How does one “come” to this grand heavenly sanctuary assembly? On what basis is one cleansed, perfected, worthy? Through precise formulaic ritual regimen? On the basis of those rituals or their action? Their fulfillment? Or the precision with which it has been done or on the basis of personal human merit?

Our pointed passages in Hebrews profoundly speak to the deficit of any ritual cleansing regimen—even the possibility of inner cleansing and the assurance of salvation through ritual at all. Referring to the first covenant earthly sanctuary ritual regimen,<sup>103</sup> Hebrews asserts:

1) *“both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience”*(9:9);

2) *these meticulous rituals “are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.”* (9:9, 10 NIV);

3) *“Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.”* (9:13, 14 NLT)

4) *“The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for*

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<sup>102</sup> David L. Allen, *Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 591, 592.

<sup>103</sup> “The writer of Hebrews clearly indicates that the Levitical priesthood foreshadowed the grand priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in the presence of God” (Holbrook, “Sanctuary of Salvation”), 15.

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*all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (10:1-4 NLT)*

In effect, Hebrews asserts that ritual is unable to make a worshiper perfect in conscience (9:9). Each rehearsal of a ritual brings tacit reminder of one’s sin and uncleanness (10:3). Consciousness of sin remains in spite of and no matter how often ritual is performed (10:2). Once a person experiences full inner cleansing there is no longer need of ritual, nor will there be desire to perform it any longer (10:2). Ritual can never, will never, expiate sin (10:4).<sup>104</sup> Human performance/rituals and devotional acts will ever be inadequate.

The existential depth to which Christ’s heavenly sanctuary ministry reaches is that of one’s thought and the intentions of the heart (4:12, 13; cf. 10:1-4). Something no ritual can ever accomplish. The application of Christ’s blood touches the soul, “purifying our consciences from sinful deeds” so that we can truly worship the living God (9:14). There is no human way to relieve the consciousness and feelings of guilt and shame (10:1-4, 11). Such comes solely through the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus: “for by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (10:14). God’s act alone through Jesus, performed by Him and as His gracious gift to humans/believers, can cleanse the soul and remove the haunting consciousness of sin (9:14; 10:10, 14-18).

How then, do we come to this grand heavenly sanctuary assembly—there into the presence of God Himself, the Judge of all—if not through precise ritual regimen? Hebrew’s answer is simple, profound, amazing: by faith alone. “My righteous one shall live by faith” (10:38), it declares. The envisioned faith “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (11:1). In this definition of faith, there is no mention about evidence. It centers on and takes hold of the unseen, something that God alone does (6:17-20). Apart from faith, no one can be made perfect (11:40). Thus, one is encouraged to fix their gaze upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (12:2). The promise of grace is extended to all (13:25). Yes, we come to the grand heavenly sanctuary assembly

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<sup>104</sup> Ritual sacrifices could never “sanctify” the worshipper because they were intrinsically insufficient to atone for moral guilt (Heb 9:9-13; 10:1-4). However, the one offering of “the body of Jesus Christ,” at once and for ever “sanctified” all for whom the offering was made (Heb 9:27-28; 10:10, 14).

through faith, and we can come boldly to the Judge's throne of grace with absolute assurance (4:16).

### **Qur'anic Kaaba & Biblical Sanctuary for Everyday Lives**

Numerous parallels exist between the Qur'an/Islam's Kaaba and the Bible's Heavenly Sanctuary. Each presents a paradigmatic system toward an understanding of reality. Each unfolds a view of God which brings significant implications for theology and practice. Each effects worldview reflection and formation. Each indicates the direction of prayer. Each comprises the place of spiritual gathering for the believing community. And, each defines the pathway to salvation, the cleansing of worshippers, the promise of divine blessing and peace, as well as oneness with God.

Despite these parallels, significant dissimilarities exist between the two cosmic centers. The parallels are phenomenological and present functional similarities and commonalities. Their dissimilarities are philosophical. Each has its own inner logic. Each contains a basic core of values and assumptions, notions and beliefs that integrate all other elements into a coherent whole, and which determines their true meaning. Here meaning diverges in a radical difference of meanings, understandings, and implications within their respective worldviews. As we have observed, the gulf between the two becomes impassable.<sup>105</sup> We briefly note three such core philosophical dissimilarities which reflect each cosmic center's assumptions, true meaning and foci: 1) the nature and character of God; 2) the means by which one experiences salvation and the inner cleansing/assurance it promises; and 3) the center of worldview reality—power or Person.

First, the Qur'an's Kaaba offers a tacit Neoplatonic view of God where Allah is the singular, transcendent, ultimate, invisible, unseen,

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<sup>105</sup> “There are similarities of words between the Biblical revelation and Islam that hide the fundamental difference. In Islam, it is a question of God, the All Powerful, a God *alone*, creator, and spirit, with sin and judgment followed by a resurrection, all of which is contained in a revealed book. Therefore, the idea has arisen that all this closely approximates the Biblical revelation. However, this is only because of the *words*, the meaning of which must be clarified, at which point we notice the impassible gulf between the two. The resemblance of the words completely hides the differences between the *meaning* and the *being*” (Jacques Ellul, *Islam and Judeo-Christianity: A Critique of Their Commonality*, trans. D. Bruce MacKay; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 39.

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timeless and unknowable divinity.<sup>106</sup> While the Bible also asserts that there is only one God (cf. Deut 6:3-5), its revelation of God is that He is eternal rather than timeless, that God's transcendence and immanence are balanced, and that as Holy Creator, God is in covenant relationship with His creation and human beings.<sup>107</sup>

In view of this contrast, God's existence, for the Qur'an, is strictly functional.<sup>108</sup> While intensely theocentric to the core, it is not about God per se, but rather man and his behavior.<sup>109</sup>

In stark contrast Hebrews' heavenly sanctuary presents a personal, relational view of God who loves us, speaks to us and graciously acts in human time and history in our behalf. It does not tell us *what* God is, but *who* God is. In addition to a clear "God-with-humans" perspective,<sup>110</sup> the heavenly sanctuary worldview offers a window into a clear "God-with-God" perspective as well, i.e., the triune God.<sup>111</sup> Its Father-Son-Holy Spirit unity is ontological<sup>112</sup> and is expressed in themes of creation, revelation, grace, atonement, judgment, divine sanctuary activity in behalf of human beings and its exhortation to believe and take firm hold of so great a salvation.<sup>113</sup>

Second, the Kaaba's obligatory ritual tradition—both daily ritual prayer and the once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage (*Hajj*)—prescribe a meticulous ritual regimen which offers an achievement-based assurance of salvation or cleansing of the soul. From a Muslim perspective,

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<sup>106</sup> El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, 28. See above discussion of Neoplatonic influence on Islamic theology, ritual and Muslim everyday lives.

<sup>107</sup> Jiří Moskala, "The Old Testament Trinitarian Thinking and the Qurlan: Dialoguing with Muslims," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*, 8, no. 2 (2012): 163-187; Lichtenwalter, "The Biblical Witness of the Character of God in Relation to the Qur'an," 111-115.

<sup>108</sup> Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 1.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. While Fazlur Rahman's thought here is debated by some, it nevertheless reflects a tacit reality in light of the Qur'an's absence of divine self-revelatory anthropomorphic language which would draw human beings into a knowledgeable, personal relationship with God. See, Lodahl, *Claiming Abraham: Reading the Bible and the Qur'an Side by Side*, 9-24, 81, 85, 86, 114-116; Lichtenwalter, "The Biblical Witness of the Character of God in Relation to the Qur'an," 115-120.

<sup>110</sup> Heb 1:1-4; 2:10-18; 4:14-16; 6:17-20; 7:25; 9:24; 13:20-21, etc.

<sup>111</sup> Heb 1:1-13; 5:5, 6; 8:1, 2; 9:11-14; 12:2, 22-29; 13:8, 20-21, etc. Hebrews speaks of the "the living God" (10:36), the "eternal Spirit" (9:14) and Jesus as Creator, sharing the glory and character of God as well as eternity and unchangeableness (1:3, 10-12; 13:8). His is the "power of an indestructible life" (7:16).

<sup>112</sup> Ellul, *Islam and Judeo-Christianity: A Critique of Their Commonality*, 26.

<sup>113</sup> Heb 2:1-3; 3:12-14; 4:11-16; 6:11-20; 10:19-25, 36-39; 12:1, 23, etc.

salvation is limited to the acts of obedience,<sup>114</sup> i.e., performing religiously Islam's Five Pillars of which two, as we have seen, are Kaaba focused. As per the foregoing, the first and foremost purpose for Muslims to do the *Hajj* is "Individual salvation." The Muslim's endeavor to purify his/her self from sins and return after the rituals of *Hajj* is to be saved, free of trespasses and sins (innocent like the day they were born) and hoping to enter Paradise and deliverance from Hellfire.<sup>115</sup> Hebrews' heavenly sanctuary, however, unfolds the once-for-all sacrifice and mediatorial work of Jesus, which brings unearned hope, confidence, boldness, and assurance—and where worshipers are cleansed from a consciousness of sin through faith rather than religiously performed ritual.

The Qur'an teaches that the means to salvation on the human side comprise both faith<sup>116</sup> and devotional acts (religious performance of Islam's Five Pillars).<sup>117</sup> While it views salvation as primarily deliverance from sin, human beings are not sinful by nature and do not need to be redeemed.<sup>118</sup> Correct performance then, of both God-directed and man-directed acts becomes the focus—a tacit means to salvation.<sup>119</sup> Muslim devotional acts facilitate intercession and divine mercy, thus making salvation possible.<sup>120</sup> The Muslim's "correct performance" is closely linked with salvation:<sup>121</sup> "Meticulous, detailed formulation of methods of

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<sup>114</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 36-37. "The 'saving' merit of . . . obligatory devotions accrues from their perfect performance which, of course, is impossible in the case of most people" (ibid., 38). Quasem's observation here reveals the tacit subjectivity and uncertainty of achievement-based assurance.

<sup>115</sup> From a Christian perspective, the idea of purification from sins after performing the *Hajj* is little different from the idea of indulgences that the Catholic Church used to distribute to guilty Christians after they confessed their sins and paid in return for money.

<sup>116</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 29-47. Three basic elements of faith are needed for salvation: belief in the oneness of God; belief in the prophecy of Muhammad; and the belief of life after death (ibid., 31-35).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 35-43.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 36. God-directed acts include: cleanliness, ritual prayer, fasting, divine tax (*Zakāt*), and pilgrimage. Qur'an recitation, formulaic remembrance of God and formulaic supplication (*Du'ā*) are also considered devotional acts. See Quasem's extended and detailed discussion, (ibid., 50-272).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 274, 276; Peter Hussein, *Islam in its Own Words: Selected Quotations from Islamic Scriptures* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu, 2018), 20-22.

<sup>121</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 274. "The prerequisite to such performance, in the case of most of them, is physical and legal purity which has two aspects, namely, that of things which purity of the body, clothes, etc. can



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correct performance of ‘obligatory’ devotions is owing to the fact that without these devotions salvation, even though of the lower grade, cannot be achieved.”<sup>122</sup>

Functionally, the Muslim’s “Kaaba related faith and salvation link” simply means: 1) faith in the Qur’anic view of reality (God, man, sin, salvation); 2) faith in the stipulated Kaaba ritual and its efficacy as a means to salvation; 3) faith in one’s own ability to adequately perform specified ritual in the quest to salvation; and 4) faith that one’s devotional acts in relation to the Kaaba might be enough to facilitate human intercession and divine mercy before the judgment. These existential realities exist for both Kaaba related daily ritual prayer and the *Hajj*.<sup>123</sup>

The book of Hebrews however, assures that those who have believed enter the rest of salvation which the good news of the Gospel promises (4:2, 3). It denies the efficacy of ritual regimen in relation to salvation and experiencing the peace of God’s intended salvation rest: “*for the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His*” (4:10; cf. 10:1-4, 11). According to Hebrews, ritual is unable to make a worshiper perfect in conscience (9:9). Each ritual rehearsal unwittingly engenders existential reminder of one’s sin and uncleanness (10:3). Such consciousness of sin remains in spite of and no matter how often ritual is performed (10:2). Ritual can never, will never, bring a full inner sense and experience of cleansing where one would no longer desire to perform ritual any longer (10:2, 4).

Furthermore, Hebrews’ “sanctuary related faith and salvation link” receives from God the unmerited blessings He graciously gives through the person and work of Jesus Christ. The “faith” word-group is significant in Hebrews.<sup>124</sup> Through Jesus Christ, God offers forgiveness, inner peace, a cleansed conscience, hope, full assurance, accesses to His

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be achieved and that of the methods by which such purity can be effected” (ibid., 274, 275).

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>123</sup> See Quasem’s extended and detailed discussion of the meaning of faith and the efficacious power of devotional and ritual action in his *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion* (ibid., 50-272).

<sup>124</sup> Matthew C. Easter, “‘Let Us Go to Him’: The Story of Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews” (PhD Dissertation, University of Otago, 2011), 15-18. “Faith” occurs more often in Hebrews than in any other New Testament book (Donald A. Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 142.

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presence, new hearts, spiritual provision and spiritual empowerment, festal gathering with the redeemed, and an eternal city.<sup>125</sup> Christological, soteriological, ethical, eschatological, and ecclesiological dimensions and nuances unfold.<sup>126</sup> Faith is the assurance of these hoped for realities in our lives, the conviction that draws strength from them—though unseen—to follow God (11:1).<sup>127</sup> Faith is the objective grounds upon which subjective confidence may be based.<sup>128</sup> Such faith springs from a personal encounter with the living God where one lives by faith (10:38) and ventures into the future by faith (11:8) “supported only by the word of God.”<sup>129</sup> God alone is ultimately and ever the object of such faith (11:2-6).<sup>130</sup> Such faith believes that God exists and that God rewards those who seek Him (11:6). And so, faith compels one to come in full assurance and hope believing that the God who has promised is faithful (10:23). Faith ultimately rests on the faithfulness of Jesus Christ (10:19-23).<sup>131</sup>

Third, the Qur’an’s Kaaba related rituals and traditions are Geocentric, while Hebrews’ heavenly sanctuary perspective is decidedly Christocentric. The former reflects a spatial paradigm<sup>132</sup> replete with tacit spiritual power-related implications (sacramental,<sup>133</sup> animistic<sup>134</sup>). The

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<sup>125</sup> 2:18; 4:14-16; 6:4, 5, 17-20; 8:10-12; 9:14; 10:18; 12:22-24; 13:20-21.

<sup>126</sup> Easter, “‘Let Us Go to Him’: The Story of Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews,” 24-25. Christological—the understanding of faith is inseparable from Jesus. Soteriological—faith brings full assurance of salvation through the work of Christ alone. Ethical—the understanding of faith reflects characteristics of obedience, endurance, and/or perseverance. Eschatological—faith is directed in hope toward the eschaton. Ecclesiological—the corporate dimension of faith.

<sup>127</sup> Hebrews offers the clearest and most concise definition of faith in the Bible: “There is scarcely any verse of the New Testament more important than this, for it states what is the nature of all true faith, and is the only definition of it which is attempted in the Scriptures. Eternal life depends on the existence and exercise of faith” (Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*, Alamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2006), paragraph 29463.

<sup>128</sup> Allen, *Hebrews*, 543.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 567.

<sup>131</sup> See discussion of faith in relation to the faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews, i.e., “Jesus’ faithfulness in sacrifice enables humans to exercise faith.” See, Easter, “‘Let Us Go to Him’: The Story of Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews,” 221-264.

<sup>132</sup> See discussion, footnote n. 12.

<sup>133</sup> Sacrament is a religious ceremony, ritual, sign or symbol, especially associated with Catholic and Orthodox Christian tradition, in which a sacred or spiritual power is believed to be transmitted through ritual actions or material elements and which are

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later points to the person and work of Jesus, which is relational and personal:<sup>135</sup> “we see Jesus” (2:9); “consider Jesus” (3:1); “Fixing our eyes on Jesus” (12:2); “let us go out to Him” (13:13).

The Qur’an’s spiritual cosmology envisions the Kaaba as the gateway to its heavenly counterpart—an undivided cosmic geography. Its spatial paradigm thus implies that for all Muslims, there are certain sacred and universally unifying and spiritually empowering places on earth and in the cosmos (i.e., the *al-bait al-ma‘mūr*) of which the Meccan Kaaba and attending rituals are central.<sup>136</sup> The tacit sacramental/animistic supernatural causality implications of the Kaaba-related ritual regimen and spatial focus should not be naively dismissed as they reflect a

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viewed as channels for imparting divine grace. The outward sign and inward reality unite so that the sign necessarily includes the desired sacred or spiritual power. See, Alan Cairns, “Sacrament,” *Dictionary of Theological Terms*:394.

<sup>134</sup> I use animistic in its broad meaning of spiritual-powers related belief systems which include supernatural power in the other-worldly realm. Surprisingly, and almost contradictorily in relation to the Qur’an’s orthodox monotheistic assertions, an underlying animistic belief system (worldview), which deals with fear, power and magic, remains apparent in Islam including superstition, magic, jinn, dreams and a whole intermediate range of powers. There are evil powers: ghosts, jinn, demons, evil eyes, curses and sorcery. Undoubtedly, this is inconsistent with orthodox Islam’s radical monotheistic stance, which eschews any such notion. Yet, beneath this theological/orthodox veneer is a world of power(s): power people, power objects, power places, power times and power rituals. See, Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam: An Account of Popular Superstitions*. (Macmillan, 1920), 1-21, 43-66, 146-162; Rick Love, *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 19-36; Bill Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2003), 167-178; Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 53-88; Phil Parshall, *Bridges to Islam: A Christian Perspective on Folk Islam* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 61-104; Bill A. Musk, *Touching The Soul of Islam: Sharing the Gospel in Muslim Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2004), 221-246; Gene Daniels. “Conclusion: Learning From the Margins,” in *Margins of Islam: Ministry in Diverse Muslim Contexts* (ed. Gene Daniels and Warrick Farah; Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2018), 211-212.

<sup>135</sup> 2:9-18; 3:1-6; 4:14-16; 5:5-11; 7:23-28; 9:13-15, 24-28; 10:19-21; 12:1-3; 13:8, 12-14, 20-21.

<sup>136</sup> Mecca as the holiest on earth, Medina as second holiest, and Jerusalem as the third most sacred city. El-Aswad, *Muslim Worldviews and Everyday Lives*, 28-29. Within this spatial paradigm, “the universe is conceptually ordered in spatial and temporal terms and imbued with values of superiority and inferiority, the sacred and the profane, and benevolence and malevolence” (ibid., 28). “As opposed to sacred and pure places that entice angels and benevolent creatures, polluted and impure places are believed to attract malevolent unseen creatures” (ibid., 31). Accordingly, places are believed to be invested with invisible, powerful beings and forces (ibid., 29).

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Muslims' attempt to change their destiny.<sup>137</sup> Ritual similarities between the pre-Islamic pagan (*Jahiliyyah*)<sup>138</sup>—"Time of Ignorance"—the Kaaba and the Muslim *Hajj* regimen at the Kaaba suggests the resilience and adaptation of Bedouin animistic customs that were heathen in nature,<sup>139</sup> some which Muhammad modified, or repurposed when he cleansed the Kaaba of its many idols and categorically rejected polytheism. While Muhammad may have cleansed the Kaaba of its idols, the fundamental philosophical and cultural core of Kaaba power-related worldview and ritual remains.<sup>140</sup> An animistic substrate underlies most of what Muslims believe and do.<sup>141</sup> Both Islam's sacred sources (the Qur'an and Hadith) and the Prophet Muhammad's practice portray an animistic worldview.<sup>142</sup>

Our point is that the Geocentric focus of the Kaaba with its meticulous ritual regimen and implied spatial power is tacit sacramental (from a Christian perspective) and animistic (from a non-Christian perspective). Both ritual and holy space are viewed as necessary power-related vehicles for salvation—a means by which a Muslim can change his or her destiny. They are means of receiving assurance of salvation. Means of receiving human intercession and Divine grace. The appeasing of other-worldly powers. They assume that there are efficacious ritual

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<sup>137</sup> See, Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam: An Account of Popular Superstitions.*, 1-21, 43-66, 146-162; Love, *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God*, 19-36; Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 167-178; Parshall, *Bridges to Islam: A Christian Perspective on Folk Islam*, 61-104.

<sup>138</sup> *Jahiliyyah* is an Islamic concept referring to the period moral and spiritual ignorance and otherwise pagan state of affairs in Arabia before the advent of Islam in 610 CE.

<sup>139</sup> Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam: An Account of Popular Superstitions.*, 146-162; Parshall, *Understanding Muslim Teachings and Traditions: A Guide for Christians*, 84. This includes the *Hajj* and ritual of circumambulating the Kaaba naked.

<sup>140</sup> Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam: An Account of Popular Superstitions.*, 1-21, 43-66, 146-162; Daniels, "Conclusion: Learning From the Margins," 211-212.

<sup>141</sup> Warren Larson. "Ordinary Muslims in Pakistan and the Gospel," in *Margins of Islam: Ministry in Diverse Muslim Contexts* (ed. Gene Daniels and Warrick Farah; Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2018), 84.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-85; Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam: An Account of Popular Superstitions.*, 162-165. "In no monotheistic religion are magic and sorcery so firmly entrenched as they are in Islam; for in the case of this religion they are based on the teaching of the Koran and the practice of the Prophet . . . the book itself, as we have seen has magical power" (*ibid.*, 163).

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acts and holy places. The Kaaba's related rituals and its assumed strategic place in the cosmos both signify and make something that is spiritually empowering, functionally present and experienced within a moment of time (i.e., the time of each ritual action).

With decided contrast, Hebrews directs attention toward the person and work of Jesus Christ (to God Himself), rather than to any supposed holy place or through any purifying or spiritually empowering ritual. As per the foregoing, God alone is ultimately and ever the object of faith (11:2-6).<sup>143</sup> The faithfulness of Jesus Christ is in view. Faith believes that God exists and that God rewards those who seek Him (11:6). Faith compels one to come in full assurance and hope believing that through Jesus Christ, the God who has promised is faithful (10:23). There is personal encounter with a Person. Hebrews thus invites us to fix a steady gaze upon Jesus (12:2). Why? Because Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God's love and mercy and is worthy of our confidence (1:1-4). Jesus alone can save completely those who come to God through Him (7:25).<sup>144</sup> The heavenly sanctuary is about Jesus and what Jesus is doing for us there, NOW, in the presence of God in our behalf (9:24). It is not about what we must do for Jesus or even for ourselves except to place our trust in Him. There is no power encounter implied whether via space or praxis. Faith holds on to the faithfulness of God through Jesus Christ. It is neither mystical or sacramental. But it is internal—transformational, assuring.

These dissimilarities—1) view of God; 2) the means and assurance of salvation; and 3) the center of worldview reality—power place and ritual or the Person of Jesus Christ—enable a clearer understanding of the Kaaba engendered worldview. These enable further reflection on the macro-hermeneutical level of the Biblical cosmic conflict metanarrative.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ellingworth, *The Epistle to Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 567.

<sup>144</sup> Hebrews celebrates how Jesus has entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf (9:24). It elevates Jesus above all as He brings a better revelation (1:1-4; a better sacrifice (9:23); a better priest (7:11-28); a better hope (7:19); a better covenant (7:22; 8:6); better promises (8:6), a better resurrection (11:35); and a better future (11:40).

<sup>145</sup> "Islam has achieved something that has always been unusual: an integration of the religious, the political, the moral, the social, the juridical, and the intellectual, thus constituting a rigorous whole of which each element forms an integral part" (Ellul, *Islam and Judeo-Christianity: A Critique of Their Commonality*, 69).

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A Biblically informed understanding of God, the cosmic conflict, the finality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, the heavenly sanctuary, the nature of man and sin, as well as the means of salvation are critical in engaging Islam as a historical phenomenon within the prophetic apocalyptic cosmic conflict metanarrative's emergence of the final conflict between good and evil.<sup>146</sup> More specifically, Hebrews 8:1, 2 asserts "*we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man*" (cf. 9:23, 24).

Given the profound and exclusive Christocentric worldview which Hebrews' sanctuary reality enunciates therein, the Kaaba's earthly/heavenly soteriological paradigm is unmistakably counterfeit. Its view of God, means of salvation, and spiritual empowerment philosophically cut against the grain of everything which the Biblical heavenly sanctuary articulates. The Kaaba's noticeable parallels with the Biblical sanctuary remain merely phenomenological. Their substance and core unable one to articulate a deep and meaningful redemptive bridge to the Biblical realities. Unable to bring objective assurance of salvation.

These stark realities however, enable us to better intuit the existential impact which Islamic worldview has on the heart, soul, and everyday life of a Muslim.

### **Implications for Mission**

We have explored the ontological and existential worldview nuances of the Qur'anic Kaaba against that of the Biblical heavenly sanctuary as presented in the New Testament book of Hebrews. We have considered the spiritual impact that these respective worldviews have on the daily lives of those who live and breathe them. We have asserted that Islam's Kaaba/heavenly Kaaba offers a Neoplatonic view of God and meticulous ritual regimen with only a self-achievement-based assurance of salvation. In contrast, we have shown how the book of Hebrews presents the true heavenly sanctuary, which unfolds a relational view of God where

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<sup>146</sup> Gen 1-3; Job 1:6-2:7; Isa 14:3-21; Ezek 28:1-19; Daniel chapters 2, 4, 7, 10-11; Rev 12:1-17; cf. Rev 9:1-20. As Alain Besancon writes in his forward to Jacques Ellul's *Islam and Judeo-Christianity*, "Any clear discussion with Islam requires an in-depth understanding of Christian theology and . . . the best way to warn faithful Christians is to educate them in their own religion, which they generally do not know well. Any controversy with Islam which is unaccompanied by religious instruction is ineffective" (ibid., 86).

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worshippers are cleansed from a consciousness of sin through faith alone and experience true assurance of salvation.

Furthermore, our study offers an introductory, comparative study of the Qur'anic Kaaba and Biblical sanctuary cosmic centers toward understanding a larger set of worldview and soteriological assumptions within Islamic faith and to know how best to relate to a Muslim as a person. We would better imagine the existential impact which Islam's Kaaba engendered worldview has on the Muslim soul—not to denigrate or engender prejudice. Rather, we would understand more deeply the inner soul need of a Muslim as nuanced by his/her belief and ritual practice in relation to the Kaaba as Islam's spiritual and cosmic center.

The numerous phenomenological similarities and commonalities between the Kaaba and the Sanctuary, as well as significant functional and philosophical dissimilarities that exist between the two cosmic centers, provide for fruitful dialogue and sensitivity to a Muslim's soul need. This is especially so between Muslims and Seventh-day Adventists who both have a developed sanctuary related worldview (although the average Muslim may have only a vague understanding of their cosmic center paradigm, as perhaps do many Adventists). These insights can provide a helpful starting point for mission.

The following reflections are offered toward touching a Muslim's soul with the hope and assurance of salvation which Jesus's heavenly sanctuary ministry brings:

1. As numerous parallels clearly exist between the Kaaba and the Biblical heavenly sanctuary, redemptive analogies that can be used as bridges to present Biblical faith are distinct possibilities. The phenomenological similarities and commonalities can at least provide the opportunity for understanding through questions and the personal sharing of one's assurance of faith. On the other hand, their significant functional and philosophical dissimilarities can enable deeper conversation especially with respect to the three areas we have discussed above—one's view of God, the means to the experience and assurance of salvation and spatial realities and efficacious acts or faith in the person and work of Jesus.
2. A clear understanding of the Kaaba, the core of Islamic worship, helps us recognize how uniquely meaningful the Biblical heavenly sanctuary teaching can be in our outreach to the Muslim. It is, in fact, an antithesis of the Biblical picture of the role of Jesus Christ in our lives. While the Kaaba is the height of engulfing, detailed works,

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the sanctuary teaching is a detailed portrayal of Jesus' all-sufficient role in our salvation by faith.

3. As the Kaaba rituals demand correct ritual performance, they engender relentless personal striving and create a heavy existential burden. There is the need for relief and assurance which only the full Biblical truths can bring both the devout and the secular Muslim. We must intuit this deep existential burden with increased compassion and the burden of our own heart to find positive, personal ways to point struggling hearts to the better Biblical hope in the mediatorial work of Jesus.
4. To the same degree that the Kaaba rituals create an all-consuming focus on external behaviors, they provide a false sense of personal achievement and credit that is distinctly different than the Biblical message of grace. The Biblical message of grace can be liberating. But the Gospel agent who proclaims such liberating grace must have first for themselves existentially experienced in their own life how wanting and empty external behaviors and personal achievement really are.
5. There is need to identify and develop our unique Adventist teachings that can powerfully speak to a Muslim's heart in relation to their experience with the Kaaba system and its ritual regimen. Not by way of denigrating contrast, but as understandable and relational paths into a burdened heart.
6. Many Muslims believe that Jesus is alive, in heaven, with Allah and will someday return. There is also a vague understanding of some form of intercession/mediation (human and angelic) relative to the eschatological Day of Judgment.<sup>147</sup> Sharing truth about what Jesus is presently doing in the heavenly Sanctuary—now appearing in the presence of God for us (9:24)—could lead a Muslim to look beyond their traditional theological reticence and rejection of whether or not Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead towards their more existential troubled view of the coming eschatological Day of Judgment. The presentation of the work of Jesus as it's portrayed in the heavenly sanctuary can be uniquely adapted to the Muslim understanding and soul need.

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<sup>147</sup> Quasem, *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Acts of Devotion*, 43-47, 234-237, 240; 271, 274. Quasem notes that both "intercession and divine mercy" are evident on the Day of Judgement and after sinners enter into Hell, but are appropriate for believers only. "Intercession will be made by human beings and the angels" (ibid., 274).



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7. If the Kaaba represents a counterfeit to the Biblical message of the sanctuary, it is imperative that we identify the essential elements of the Biblical teaching that would positively supplant the rationale and “message” of the Kaaba with real hope and real assurance (i.e., salvation by faith, God’s personal presence, God’s offer of forgiveness, etc.). It rests on Biblical thought leaders and theologians to carefully identify the insidious teachings of Islam that dismantle brick by brick the very biblical truths for our day.
8. The sense of peace that many Muslims feel as a result of observing Kaaba-related ritual prayer or *Hajj* pilgrimage can be credited to the personal investment and accomplishment required in its conscientious observance. But it also speaks of the high motivation for divine approval—an assurance that only the Biblical sanctuary service provides through the priestly ministry of Jesus.
9. The truths about God and salvation from the heavenly sanctuary can express to the Muslim soul how God has provided everything possible so that they can be accepted before Him without the exorbitant personal investment demanded by the prayer and *Hajj* rituals around the Kaaba. This includes Heaven’s acceptance of our shame. There is also the honor of God’s presence. The mercy seat of His grace. One who brings our lives into God’s presence without shame or fear or uncertainty. As Christians we understand that it is all possible through Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, high priestly ministry, and second coming. Unlike a Christian world that focuses almost exclusively on the death/cross, the Muslim soul may be opened as much with the multiple pictures of Jesus found in the sanctuary. But the first heart-need which the Kaaba professes to meet—and doesn’t—is that earning Allah’s approval, is met in the sanctuary by being given the honor of standing unashamed in God’s presence because of what He has provided in Jesus.

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