

God who is Trinity: speaking with Muslims, reflections on an Anglican contribution by Archbishop Rowan Williams.

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Abstract:

This paper (written in 2005) examines the possibility of dialogue between Muslims and Christians on God as Trinity through an analysis of a lecture given at al-Azhar, Cairo by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2004.

It suggests that the theme of divine plenitude provides an appropriate language, which could serve to sustain such a dialogue.

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The revival of interest in a Trinitarian understanding of God as central to Christian theology has happened at much the same time as a growth of interest in the possibilities and problems raised by encounter with different religions. Recently, theologians have begun to bring together the two themes of Trinitarianism and inter faith dialogue, and they have done so in a number of different ways.¹ What is notable about many of these attempts to relate Trinity to inter faith dialogue is, that in practice they have been expressed primarily within an internal Christian context. Given that Trinity is a way of understanding God which has grown up within the heart of the Christian tradition, this is unsurprising. Nevertheless, it raises some obvious questions: What would it look like to speak of God as Trinity within the context of another faith? And what kind of dialogue might grow from such a discourse?

These are questions which I have tried to explore recently in relation to the historical encounters of Christianity with Greek philosophical religion in the patristic age, and with Islam in the medieval period.² In this article, I want to test out the conclusions I arrived at in that exploration by applying them to one urgent and highly profiled area of the contemporary inter faith world: the dialogue of Christians with Muslims. More specifically, I shall look in some detail at an Anglican example of this – a lecture delivered by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, at al-Azhar al-Sharif in Cairo on 11th September 2004.³

An Archbishop at al-Azhar

The first point to note about Archbishop Rowan's lecture is simply its location. Unlike most expositions of the Trinity, this was actually delivered in an Islamic setting – indeed, in a place which is widely perceived as the foremost centre of Sunni Islamic scholarship in the world. Moreover, the occasion was one highly charged with significance: the third anniversary of the al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington which precipitated a crisis in, amongst other things, Christian-Muslim relations. Relating Trinitarian doctrine to Islamic belief in a context like this is a very different exercise to doing so within the environment of a Christian theological institution, fitting well the eirenic and exploratory tone of the presentation.

The Archbishop introduces himself to his Muslim audience as one who has been 'invited to address you in this place as a guest and, I hope, as a friend.'⁴ This is a very different dynamic from that which has so often marked Christian discussions of the Trinity in relation to Islam. These have generally been conducted either in isolation from, or as a polemic against, or at best as an apologia directed towards, the actual views of Muslims. The contextual dynamic of an encounter will shape the content of the communication which takes place within it,⁵ and so we may expect that if any

situation can open up new and creative ways of understanding the Trinity in Christian-Muslim dialogue, it will be a situation such as this.

Speaking together of God

Within this highly charged, and highly profiled, situation, it is remarkable that the Archbishop should choose to address what he describes as ‘the greatest theme of both Muslim and Christian faith, the doctrine of God’.⁶ Already this assumes the propriety, even the necessity, of cross-referencing between the divine as understood in Christianity and in Islam, and this becomes still more explicit a few words later in the Archbishop’s text, when he speaks of ‘our belief about Almighty God’:⁷ the ‘our’ here is inclusive of both Christians and Muslims, and clearly indicates a common object of that belief in the identity of the one God.

This seems to me to be remarkable on three counts. Practically, it can often seem rather easy for the divine to be squeezed out of dialogue between Christians and Muslims. While God may be invoked as a basis for shared statements or co-operative action, serious discussion of His nature and personality does not often form a primary focus of internationally arranged Christian-Muslim dialogues; yet this is precisely the place that God occupies in the Archbishop’s al-Azhar lecture.

Theologically, many Christians and some Muslims would be hesitant about assuming the identity of the God of Christian faith with the Allah of Islamic faith; they would insist that the differences in character between the two scriptural portrayals of the divine are such that the same reality is not at the heart of either faith.⁸ Against this, modern Roman Catholic theology as formulated in the Vatican II declaration *Nostra Aetate* clearly assert the identity of God in Islam and in Christianity (and in Judaism),⁹ and I have argued elsewhere that a case can be made out that such official Anglican documentation as there is points in the same direction.¹⁰ Archbishop Williams unhesitatingly and confidently takes this route too in his lecture. Without such a mutual recognition of one another as relating to the one God, it is hard to see how a dialogue of Christians and Muslims could proceed on a strictly theological level.

There is a more general level also at which the correlation of talk about God in diverse religions has to justify itself. To suggest that theological systems of different traditions can have any common reference point, it has been claimed, is fundamentally to misunderstand the nature of theological language, which functions in a way inseparable from the holistic context of a given faith wherein alone it is meaningful.¹¹ Indeed, some would argue that, not only are different apprehensions of the divine indissolubly wedded to the distinct totalities of particular religions, but even within the field of one religion it is a mistake to objectify doctrinal statements into ontological claims about reality.¹²

I am persuaded for myself that such arguments are unduly pessimistic, and I have suggested that the philosophical semantics of ‘radical interpretation’ pioneered by

Donald Davidson offers some indications of how cross-referencing across the boundaries of totalities might be usefully applied to inter faith dialogue.¹³ More importantly, the Archbishop himself, despite his evident and sensitive awareness of the extent to which the meaning of any theological term is constituted by its context in an overall theological landscape, is not hesitant in developing a discourse about God which can be intelligibly shared by Christians and Muslims. This is an aspect of his approach which can perhaps be more widely linked to his emphasis on the extra-linguistic reality of the existence of God.¹⁴

Presenting the Trinity

On the basis of this shared reference to God, the Archbishop's lecture concisely but unabashedly outlines some of the distinctive features of Trinitarian doctrine, as that has developed within the Christian theological tradition. He locates the doctrine within a basic assertion of the oneness of God according to Christian belief. Doubtless here he has in mind popular Muslim imputations of associationism and tritheism, for he insists that 'we do not mean one God with two beings alongside him, or three gods of limited power'.¹⁵ Within this framework of unity, the distinctive lines of the Trinitarian differentiation are unapologetically presented in the statement that the life of God 'is lived eternally in three ways which are made known to us in the history of God's revelation to the Hebrew people and in the life of Jesus'.¹⁶

It might perhaps appear that Williams falls short of the normative way of delineating the Trinitarian faith in one important respect: his failure to use in his presentation the language of 'persons' in relation to Father, Son and Spirit. However, this silence needs to be set within the context of engagement with an Islamic monotheism that has naturally heard 'three persons' to mean, in Williams' characterisation of the common misapprehension, 'three different individuals, separate from each other as human individuals are'.¹⁷ On one level, then, the avoidance of 'person' language follows as an outworking of his dialogical aim to present Trinitarian faith in terms that would be intelligible to Muslim dialogue partners.

However, there is of course a Christian antecedence to this reticence also. Williams' favoured analogy for the threefold differentiation, that 'there is a source of life, an expression of life and a sharing of life',¹⁸ is in fact continuous with that tradition of Trinitarian theology which runs from Augustine's 'psychological' analogies through to Barth's 'circle of self-revelation'. As can be seen from both Augustine's question '*Quid tria vel quid tres*'¹⁹ and from Barth's coinage of *Seinsweise*,²⁰ that tradition has been consistently reluctant to use the language of 'personality' in relation to the Trinitarian *hypostaseis* precisely in order to avoid any suggestion of a distribution or division of the divine among three distinct and potentially competitive candidates for divinity.²¹ This has been a perceived danger of the 'social analogy' which has been so favoured within Anglicanism,²² and Williams' usage would not be easy to reconcile with some of the forms in which that analogy has been expressed. Yet this is not at all to say that it is in some way less fully Trinitarian than that tradition. On the contrary,

his threefold analysis of the divine life leads him firmly to assert the essential content which the use of *persona* is intended to convey when he argues that ‘Since God’s life is always an intelligent and purposeful life, each of these [three] dimensions of divine life can be thought of as a centre of mind and love.’²³

Creating space for difference

The robustly Trinitarian exposition of the doctrine of God which the Archbishop presents is indeed expressed in a language which is intended to be accessible and comprehensible to Muslims, but he is under no illusions that it will elicit their consent, in the strong sense that they will come to adopt this way of understanding God themselves. This is apparent at three points in the lecture. Firstly, at the very outset he repeats a methodological principle which has run through the various Christian-Muslim dialogues with which he has been involved: that ‘better understanding means understanding our differences as well as our common vision.’²⁴ Of course, any honest engagement in Christian-Muslim dialogue will in any case be obliged to recognise the reality of substantial divergences between the two faiths. The Archbishop, though, is calling not so much for the mere recognition of difference, as for its positive exploration. Indeed, it is for this very reason that he puts the doctrine of God at the centre of his lecture: because it has been so controverted, the nature of God’s unity must be able to become a learning point for Christians and Muslims alike.

Building on this general principle, he then highlights what he describes as the ‘suspicion’ with which Muslims have looked at Christian doctrines of God by citing three of the several passages in which the Qur’ān powerfully delivers a simultaneous affirmation of God’s unity and a negation of his association with any other reality – particularly through the supposed relationship of paternity, since this would imply a limitation of some kind being imposed on God’s absolute self-sufficiency.²⁵ As his argument develops, he will go on to point out that some of the anxieties which Muslims express in this way are in fact shared by Christians, who consequently have sought to formulate their account of divine generation in a way that renders it immune to such criticism. Before doing this, though, he frankly recognises both the extent of the disagreement which Muslims feel from Christians on this point, and also the sense in which this disagreement is rooted in the core scriptural datum of Islamic faith, and therefore has about it a certain character of irreducibility.

The final, and in some ways the strongest, reference to differences between the two faiths comes towards the end of the Archbishop’s lecture. Having sought to develop an account of the Trinity which is at least intelligible to Muslims, and having moved on from that to draw some general principles about the ethical commonalty which Muslims and Christians can discover living in the contemporary world, he remarks, perhaps rather to his audience’s surprise: ‘There is, as you will have seen, a great difference between what I as a Christian must say and what the Muslim will say.’²⁶ The language of constraint (‘what I ... must say’) is notable here, as is the positioning of the comment within the lecture as a whole. It is as if Williams is concerned, having

outlined his belief in the most persuasive way he can find to Islamic hearers, to step back and reassure them that he does recognise their continued right to dissent. The language which he has deployed has been for the purpose of clarification and explication; it has not been used with an ulterior motive of subverting their beliefs so that they find that their core convictions are in a different place afterwards than where they were when the discussion began.

This points, I believe, to an important principle which should govern the discourse used by Christians to talk about God as Trinity. The terms by which such beliefs are presented need to be such as to illuminate, not to obliterate, the real differences which distinguish Christian belief from that of other ways of understanding the divine unity. It is only when a language of this kind, which allows for real divergences or disagreements while still providing some measure of shared discourse, has been identified that a genuine dialogue can be developed. The alternative, of looking for a harmonisation of different views – for example, by regarding them all as merely particular instances of a more general truth which is really shared by all, as they would realise if they could but attain to a more impartial view of religious plurality – does justice neither to the distinctiveness of the Christian belief in Trinity, nor to the forcefulness of the Muslim objections to that view, and therefore is ill-equipped to offer a credible environment for an honest exploration of the divine truth.²⁷

A discourse of plenitude

What then is this area of discourse within which Williams seeks to expound the Trinitarian belief of Christians to Muslims, while still guaranteeing space for dissent to the latter? Its key motifs are summed up in the statement that ‘this is God, the One, the Living, and Self-subsistent, but what God does is not different from the life which is eternally at the same time a source and an expression and a sharing of life’.²⁸ As mentioned above, the second part of this rather dense sentence expresses the ways in which Williams analogically defines the Trinitarian differentiation, but it is the first part which sets the parameters of the discourse within which that differentiation is to be justified. The core argument of the lecture is, in short, that Trinitarianism is a distinctive way of safeguarding the themes of divine unity, life and self-subsistence, which are as central to Christianity as they are to Islam.

These three themes, therefore, provide for Williams a unified theological framework within which the *hypostaseis* of Father, Son and Spirit can be distinguished. They are not, though, to be respectively identified with – or, in the traditional language of Trinitarian theology, ‘appropriated to’²⁹ – those *hypostaseis*. In illustration of this, the Archbishop remarks that ‘Just as we say, “Here is my hand, and these are the actions which my one hand performs”, but it is not different from the actions of my five fingers, so with God’.³⁰ The point here is that the ‘hand’ corresponds to language which stresses the divine unity, life, and self-sufficiency, while the ‘fingers’ would be analogous to the differentiated discourse of Trinitarianism. The two ways of speaking, while quite different in their structure, are identical in the reality to which they refer.

Of the three themes which form the parameters of his presentation, it is the divine 'life' which for Williams has the dynamism which is generative of the Trinitarian differentiation. The other two, divine unity and self-subsistence, act rather as regulative principles which ensure that the way in which that dynamism develops is not such as to compromise God's freedom by suggesting that he is 'affected or limited by physical processes', nor to reduce his transcendence by depicting him as 'a process like the processes of the world', nor to imperil his unity by implying that 'the life and action of God could be divided into separate parts, as if it were a material thing'.³¹ Unity and self-subsistence, it is clear, are here being stressed as themes which Christians wish to safeguard as strongly as Muslims, to ensure that God can be truly God in their theological understanding.

In speaking of the dynamism of the divine life, by contrast, Williams presents a distinctively Christian perspective of differentiation, arising from the communication of that life to humans through Jesus and the Spirit: 'Christians believe that this life enters into ours in a limited degree'.³² It is interesting that when he explains this in more detail he does not begin, as is customary, with Christology, but with pneumatology: 'God breathes new life into us, as he breathed life into Adam at the first. That breathing into us we call the "Spirit"'. From this Christian awareness of sharing in the divine life that he then works back to the prior communication that enables this: 'As we become mature in our new life, we become more and more like the expression of divine life, the Word whom we encounter in Jesus'. The third ascending theological step is then to trace that communication in turn back to its primordial origination: 'Jesus prayed to the source of his life as "father" ... and so we too pray to the source of divine life in the way that Jesus taught us, and we say "Father" to this divine reality'.³³

The epistemological sequence, derived from analysis of the religious experience of Christians, thus runs: 'sharing' (Spirit) – 'expression' (Son) – 'origin' (Father). On the other hand, the very terms the Archbishop uses indicate an ontological current which, as it were, flows in the opposite direction, from 'source' through 'expression' to 'sharing'. In reality, of course, the *ordo cognoscendi* and the *ordo essendi* are just different sides of the same coin, complementary attempts to capture the one reality of a ceaseless and mutual interchange which can also be pictured in the perichoretic terms of circularity: 'The three centres of divine action, which we call Father, Son and Spirit, pour out the divine life to each other for all eternity, a sort of perfect circle of giving and receiving'.³⁴ Yet, perfect as it is, this circle is not completed without us, since 'the only word we can use for that relationship of pouring out and giving is love', and the Christian experience is that of being invited and enabled to enter that circle of love.³⁵

In both its 'upward' argument from human experience to the character of the divine and its 'downward' unfolding of the implications of the divine life and love, Williams' presentation is thus distinctively Christian in a double sense: that it relies

on what Christians have known in their own spirituality, and that it delineates the Christian understanding of God as Trinity. However, this way of explaining Trinitarianism is not insulated from other patterns of talking about God, and in particular not from Islamic theological discourse, because the concept of the divine ‘life’ can also be found there. An equivalent way of expressing this is suggested by Mark Heim’s identification of the theme of divine ‘plenitude’, the abundance of God’s life which is communicated to creation without being exhausted or diminished in its divine origination.³⁶ The New Testament in several passages speaks in this way of a *πλήρωμα* which overflows from the heart of the divine reality into the created order through Christ, and is transmitted in some measure to Christians.³⁷ Heim takes this motif as the basis for his exposition of the Trinity in relation to other religious ends: ‘Plenitude points to this dynamic exchange in communion as the very nature or “fullness” of God’.³⁸ I have argued that the discourse of ‘plenitude’ provides a linguistic arena within which the distinctive theological visions of Christianity and Islam – and those of other traditions, such as Hellenistic philosophical religion or Hinduism – can be brought into dialogue with one another.³⁹ An Islamic way of speaking of ‘plenitude’ (or, equivalently, an analysis of the unfolding of the divine life within the parameters of the divine unity and self-subsistence) will be different from, and may at some points be irreconcilable with, a Christian discourse of Trinitarian differentiation. Nevertheless, the sense of addressing the same underlying issues can mean that ‘plenitude’ language provides a way of making the two conversations more mutually intelligible, and so of respectfully and creatively exploring the differences between them.

Cross-referencing with Islam

In the course of his presentation at al-Azhar, the Archbishop does not draw out from Islam the kind of resources which might serve to sustain a discourse about divine plenitude which could be brought into dialogical engagement with Christian Trinitarianism, other than in the most general terms. I mentioned above how near the beginning of his argument he cites Qur’ānic verses which affirm the unity and self-subsistence of God. He then links these together rhetorically in putting into an imagined Muslim interlocutor’s mouth the question, raised out of a suspicion of Christian belief in the Trinity: ‘How can we call God *al-Qayyūm*, the Self-sufficient, if he is not alone?’⁴⁰ ‘Unity’ and ‘self-subsistence’ are what I have called the regulative principles in Williams’ Christian argument, and their corresponding importance in Islam is also clearly emphasised. The dynamic principle of ‘life’, by contrast, is only barely acknowledged in the lecture as an Islamic concept: ‘For us as for you, it is essential to think of God as a life that has no limit, a life that is free’.⁴¹ Yet despite the brevity of this reference, it is crucial for Williams’ project of developing an account of Trinitarianism that is comprehensible to his Muslim audience. It is because he can recognise that they too share a concern to understand the fullness and the communication of the life of God that he can usefully adopt it as a key motif in setting out what Christians mean by speaking of the Trinity. For the

patristic theologians, he explains, ““God” is the name of a kind of life – eternal and self-sufficient life, always active, needing nothing. And that life is lived eternally in three ways which are made known to us in the history of God’s revelation to the Hebrew people and in the life of Jesus’.⁴²

The time constraints of the Archbishop’s visit to Cairo, and perhaps also the particular sensitivities needing to be observed by a Christian leader invited to lecture in an Islamic setting, mean that he is not able in this context to draw out the motifs in the Islamic theological tradition which might serve to cross-reference a dialogue around the themes of plenitude. It is noticeable, though, that while (as in the words quoted just above) he can use concrete, particular and experiential language when explaining what the Trinity means to Christians and how their belief in the doctrine has been reached, when he turns to the exposition of that belief in terms accessible to Muslims he deploys more abstract terminology (‘source’, ‘expression’, ‘sharing’) and avoids, as seen, the technical vocabulary of Trinitarian *personae*.

In adopting this approach, the Archbishop is opening a way to exploration of resources within Islam which have spoken of a certain differentiation discernible within the life of the one God, since those resources too have been expressed in highly abstract terms. Within Islamic theology (*kalām*), two areas of discussion in particular have generated concepts of this kind. One has been the specific question of the status of the Qur’ān in relation to God.⁴³ If, as Islamic orthodoxy came to affirm, the Qur’ān is the eternal and uncreated Word of God, then some account needs to be given of how that Word can be related to the sole reality of the God who speaks it without compromising the divine unity and uniqueness. This in turn can be seen as a specific instance of the more general question of how the divine attributes (*ṣifāt*) are to be understood in relation to the divine essence – a question which provides the second set of Islamic discussions of differentiation within God.⁴⁴ Ash‘arite orthodoxy identified seven *ṣifāt* in particular (‘life’, ‘knowledge’, ‘power’, ‘speech’, ‘will’, ‘hearing’, and ‘sight’) which had a substantial existence inseparable from, yet not susceptible of reduction to, the divine essence.⁴⁵ The formula in which the relationship between the *ṣifāt* and the essence was summed up was that they were ‘not He nor other than He, *lā huwa wa-lā ḡayruhu*’.⁴⁶

The resonances of formulae like this with Trinitarian language are very suggestive. From the standpoint of most Muslims, any suggestions of a parallel have generally been strongly denied, though it is interesting to note that those who hold different views of the status of the Qur’ān or of the relationship of the *ṣifāt* to God sometimes taxed their orthodox co-religionists with the charge of crypto-Trinitarianism: ‘Those who believe in the uncreatedness of the Qur’ān are like Christians when they claim that Jesus the son of Mary was not created because he was the Word of God’.⁴⁷ On the other hand, medieval Christian theologians living under Islamic hegemony and working in Arabic did on some occasions adopt the Islamic theology of the *ṣifāt* to demonstrate the compelling logic, even the necessity, of Trinitarian faith.⁴⁸ Such

attempts met with indignant repudiation from Muslim writers, and in the strongly apologetic form in which they are presented do not carry much conviction today.

However, the historical paucity, and to some extent sterility, of this kind of dialogue about the Trinity between Christians and Muslims need not imply that it has no future potential to be unlocked. The discussion of differentiating motifs in divine plenitude has in the past usually been embarked on by Muslims and Christians either out of a desire to prove that the other is either utterly wrong to show that in reality they are in agreement with oneself without admitting it. If such combative attitudes can be replaced by a spirit of engaging in a shared exploration of acknowledged difference within a common framework of discourse, the doctrine of the Trinity could perhaps become the focus of intelligible and creative dialogue. There is indeed ample historical precedent for Muslims and Christians (and Jews) seeing themselves as ‘fellow travellers in an arduous intellectual attempt’⁴⁹ to explore the rationally accessible knowledge of the divine unity in medieval discussions of natural theology. Williams’ approach could perhaps be seen as an opening of the door in our own time to similar endeavours in understanding the differentiated unfolding of the divine life.

Drawing the consequences

After his exposition of Trinitarian theology in relation to Islam, the Archbishop turns to speak of the ‘practical consequences of this belief about the One Living God’.⁵⁰ The remainder of the presentation in fact consists of reflections on the attitudes that followers of monotheism are to adopt in response to the violence and injustice of the contemporary world. This second, ethical, part of the Archbishop’s speech, which was quite extensively reported in the media, may at first appear to be rather disconnected from the first, strictly theological, section, which was largely ignored by the press.

The key linkage, however, is in fact provided by the expression ‘this belief’. The demonstrative pronoun here, while it denominates the tenets of both Muslims and Christians, is not intended to minimise theological differences by suggesting an identity of belief between the two faiths. Rather, it indicates the way in which Muslims and Christians (and Jews) agree in recognising the principles of divine unity and self-sufficiency as regulative for their discourse about the unfolding of the divine life. Williams’ argument from self-sufficiency is that: ‘If God is truly not a part of the world, truly self-sufficient, then his will never depends upon how things turn out in the world’.⁵¹ Consequently, the just and the good have an objective and immutable character, derived from their grounding in the divine will: ‘no amount of worldly success can make bad things good, because nothing in the world can change the will of God’. Although he does not explicitly develop the point, there seems to me also to be an implicit argument of similar structure from the divine unity to the universality of the just and the good discernible by Muslims and Christians alike.

This argument from the theological to the practical, then, starts from what I have described as the ‘regulative’ motifs in Williams’ theology, divine unity and divine

self-subsistence, rather than from the ‘dynamic’ motif of divine life in identifying an ethical validation for Muslims and Christians to act in the world. Nor is this at all surprising, since the Archbishop’s aim is to provide a basis for practical cooperation between followers of the two religions. This is a clear example of the linkage of shared discourse and shared action, *colloquium* and *collaboratio*, which is stressed in most contemporary accounts of dialogue.⁵² Yet this argument from what is shared in word to what may be shared in deed also points to another interesting theme to explore: given Williams’ emphasis also on differences in the ways in which Muslims and Christians speak of God, what effect might these have on the way in which they seek the good and the just in the world? To recognise and respect difference in this practical area may be very important in preventing unnecessary discord between Christians and Muslims who are jointly seeking the good and the just willed by God.

Conclusion

The Archbishop’s presentation at al-Azhar is a concise yet highly suggestive piece of theology, pointing to ways in which a dialogue between Christians and Muslims about the Trinity could be developed. It is not itself yet part of a dialogue, but it sets out the ground on which a dialogue could happen through identifying an appropriate arena of discussion, that which concerns divine ‘plenitude’. This is regulated by common parameters shared by the two faiths – Williams mentions specifically ‘unity’ and ‘self-subsistence’ – yet it allows for real differences in the dynamic according to which each unfolds their understanding of God – for Williams, the key motif here is ‘life’. The way in which Trinitarian doctrine is presented to a Muslim audience thus becomes more than either explanation or apologetic. It positively invites a response from Muslims, though it does not pre-empt that response by suggesting with which Islamic motifs Trinitarianism might be cross-referenced for comparison and contrast. Rooted in theology *sensu stricto*, in a discourse about the nature and the life of God, this way of thinking about the Trinity leads to immediate and practical ethical imperatives for Christian-Muslim co-operation, and raises intriguing questions also about the ways in which Christians and Muslims might sincerely differ from one another in the ways in which they seek the common good. It will be fascinating to see to what extent the arena the Archbishop has delineated for dialogue is entered by Christians and Muslims, and with what theological and practical outcomes.

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1. An excellent and up to date survey is provided by KÄRKKÄINEN, 2004.
 2. IPGRAVE, 2003a.
 3. WILLIAMS, 2004 – for ease of reference, I have added paragraph numbers to the text posted on www.archbishopofcanterbury.org
 4. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 1.
 5. IPGRAVE, 2003a, pp 303–314.⁵
 6. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 2.
 7. *ibid.*

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8. For a careful discussion of the question of the identity of ‘God’ and ‘Allah’ from a generally conservative Christian position, see CHAPMAN, 1994, pp228ff.
 9. *Nostra Aetate* cap. 3: ‘They [the Muslims] worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men.’
 10. IPGRAVE, 2003b, p231.
 11. Cf IPGRAVE, 2003a, pp 329ff, discussing LINDBECK, 1984.
 12. A radical example of this is provided by O’LEARY, 1996.
 13. IPGRAVE, 2003a, pp332–335.
 14. This is a point somewhat grudgingly conceded in his favour in an otherwise highly critical account of his theology from a conservative evangelical perspective: ‘It is encouraging that ... Williams appears willing to foreclose the question of realism in a way that he was not [previously]’ – G WILLIAMS, 2003, p 20.
 15. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 7.
 16. *ibid.*
 17. *ibid.*
 18. *ibid.*
 19. *De Trinitate* VII.7.
 20. *Church Dogmatics* I:1, p 355.
 21. Augustine famously declared that ‘the formula “Three Persons” was employed, not so that that might be said, but so as to avoid having to say nothing at all’ (*De Trinitate* VII.7).
 22. The classic exposition of the ‘social analogy’ in twentieth-century Anglican theology was that by HODGSON, 1943.
 23. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 7.
 24. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 2.
 25. *al-Baqara* (2) 255; *al-Ikhlās* (112) 1–4; *al-Baqara* (2) 115–117.
 26. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 19.
 27. IPGRAVE, 2003a, p 70.
 28. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 7.
 29. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a 39, 7.
 30. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 7.
 31. WILLIAMS, 2004, §§ 6, 9.
 32. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 8.
 33. *ibid.*
 34. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 10.
 35. *ibid.*
 36. HEIM, 2001, pp248ff.
 37. The key texts are: Jn 1.14–18; Eph 3.14–19; Col 1.15–20; Col 2.8–10. Cf discussion in IPGRAVE, 2003a, pp 63–67.
 38. HEIM, 2001, p 253.
 39. IPGRAVE, 2003a, pp 62–79.³⁹
 40. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 4. Islamic scholars have differed as to whether the primary meaning of *al-Qayyūm* is in fact (as Williams takes it) ‘the self-sufficient’, or alternatively ‘the eternal’ – GIMARET, 1988, pp 188–190.
 41. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 11.
 42. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 7.

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43. IPGRAVE, 2003a, pp 205–240.
 44. *ibid.*, pp 241–266.
 45. al-Ash‘arī, *Risāla ilā Ahl al-Thaghr* – cf ALLARD, 1965, pp191ff.
 46. IPGRAVE, 2003a, pp 251ff.
 47. Third Letter of the Caliph al-Ma‘mūn to Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm (827) – PATTON, 1897, p 69.
 48. The most influential such attempt was that of the twelfth-century Melchite bishop Paul of Antioch, *Letter to a Muslim*. On Paul’s text and Muslim responses, see MICHEL, 1984.
 49. BURRELL, 1993, p 60.
 50. WILLIAMS, 2004, § 13.
 51. *ibid.*
 52. IPGRAVE, 2003a, p 311. *Colloquium* and *collaboratio* are brought together in *Nostra Aetate* 2.3.

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