



Concept of Sanctification (Purification) in Semetic Religions: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Sanctification—encompassing the interconnected themes of purification, holiness, spiritual refinement, and moral elevation—occupies a central and enduring place in the religious frameworks of the three major Semetic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Deeply rooted in their theological foundations and embodied in daily religious practice, the concept of sanctification represents not only a personal and communal journey toward nearness to the Divine, but also a structured process of aligning one's inner state and outward conduct with sacred precepts and divine expectations. This study undertakes a comprehensive comparative analysis of sanctification across these Abrahamic traditions, seeking to understand both the commonalities and the doctrinal distinctions that inform the religious life and spiritual aspirations of their adherents. Drawing on a diverse range of primary sources—including the Torah and Talmud in Judaism, the Bible and patristic writings in Christianity, and the Qur'an and Hadith in Islam—this research explores how each tradition has developed its own theological, historical, and practical interpretations of sanctification. In Judaism, sanctification is deeply intertwined with the covenantal relationship between God and the people of Israel. Religious festivals plays a significant role of jewish spiritual conciousness. Sanctification, in this tradition, is both an individual and communal responsibility, enacted through a lifelong commitment to Torah observance and participation in sacred rituals that maintain communal purity and divine proximity. Christianity offers a distinctive interpretation of sanctification that is both theological and experiential. Grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sanctification in Christian theology is understood as a divine initiative made possible through grace. Sacraments such as baptism, Eucharist, and confession serve as tangible means through which divine grace is mediated, while spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting, and moral living support the believer's transformation. Early Christian monasticism and ascetic movements emphasized the renunciation of worldly attachments to attain purity of heart, although modern theology tends to advocate a more integrated view of sanctification within everyday life. Islam presents sanctification as a holistic process encompassing the purification of the body, heart, mind, and soul. Central to this process is the concept of tazkiyah al-nafs which involves constant self-reflection, moral discipline, and conscious remembrance of Allah (dhikr). The Qur'an and the Sunnah provide detailed guidelines for cultivating both spiritual and physical purity, framing every action within the broader objective of attaining God's pleasure. Unlike monastic traditions, Islam emphasizes balance and moderation, encouraging believers to remain engaged in society while striving for spiritual excellence (ihsan). This interdisciplinary inquiry reveals that, while each tradition frames sanctification within its unique theological and ritual system, several shared motifs emerge—such as the indispensability of divine guidance, the role of intentional devotion, the importance of moral character, and the support of a religious community in the spiritual journey. Furthermore, sanctification is shown to function not merely as a theological ideal but as a lived and practical mechanism for cultivating individual virtue, reinforcing social cohesion, and preserving religious identity. Through its comparative lens, the study contributes to interfaith dialogue by identifying both convergence and divergence in the understanding of sanctification, ultimately offering deeper insight into how Semetic religions inspire, shape, and regulate the pursuit of holiness in the lives of their followers.

Keywords: Purification, scriptures, Sanctification, Sacrifices, repentance, confession, biptisma, monasticism, Abrahimic faith, divine proximity, Moral development.

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➤ Introduction to Semetic Religions:

Judaism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, stretching back almost 3,000 years to God's covenant with the ancient Hebrew people. Kabbalah is a Jewish term for mysticism. Although Judaism's beliefs were founded on the concept of one God, beyond the first few years, the concept of God in Jewish history did not remain monotheistic for long, as proven by Moses' worship of the calf. Atonement is a notion in Judaism that refers to cleansing oneself of sins and achieving spiritual purity, which was historically accomplished by the practice of sacrifice, particularly during the First and Second Temples of Jerusalem. The sacrifice of animals, including lambs and bulls, was central to these sacrificial rituals, with specific rituals such as the sacrifice of the red heifer - a flawless heifer taken into the wilderness; they believed that by carrying it on its back, we had laid all our sins and left it to walk in the wilderness with God, so that we were now sinless. These sacrifices were a symbol of repentance and a way to reconcile the faithful with God, supporting the belief that sin necessitates confession and atonement. Although animal sacrifices were abolished with the fall of the Second Temple in 70 CE, the core ideas of repentance, moral accountability, and spiritual rebirth remain deeply ingrained in Judaism, impacting religious traditions and ethical teachings in contemporary Jewish life.¹

The followers of Jesus are referred to as Christians, and a comprehensive understanding of Christian history necessitates an appreciation of Jewish history. Christianity developed in the first century CE, emerging from Jewish traditions and centered on the teachings of Jesus Christ, whom adherents recognize as the Son of God and the Messiah anticipated in the Hebrew Scriptures. This religion emphasizes salvation through faith in Jesus, particularly through his crucifixion and resurrection. The Bible, which includes the Old and New Testaments, is regarded as the sacred text of Christianity and outlines fundamental beliefs, such as the Trinity and the concept of grace.²

The third and final religion among the Semitic religions. Islam, founded in the 7th century CE in Arabia which was revealed through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Born in Mecca in 570 CE, Muhammad received divine revelations over a span of 23 years, which were later compiled into the Holy Quran. Allah Almighty said in the holy Qur'an.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَ اَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَ رَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِينًا

*"Today I have perfected your Din (Religion) for you, and have completed My Blessing upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your Din (a complete code of life)."*³

This declaration highlights Islam's comprehensive guidelines for personal conduct, social justice, and communal harmony, underscoring its role as a complete way of life for its followers. Islam also recognizes previous prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as part of a continuous divine message⁴. Despite theological differences, these religions share ethical principles, such as justice, compassion, and the afterlife, shaping global cultures and histories.

In Judaism, "Kabbalah" is intrinsically linked to Sufism. Like many other religions, Judaism firmly believes that purity is a necessary condition for worshiping God, engaging in prayer, and restoring one's relationship with God. Recognizing that God is pure and holy, it is clear that He demands and desires purity in His followers.

The Torah states:

*"For I am the Lord your God: you shall sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy"*⁵

Sanctification (Kedushah) in Judaism refers to the process of becoming holy and spiritually pure, aligning one's life with God's commandments. This concept is deeply rooted in the Torah, where God commands the Israelites to be holy:

"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy".⁶

The Jewish people are commanded to maintain spiritual sanctity through their obedience to God's laws as articulated in the Torah and the Talmud. This commitment not only nurtures personal holiness but also strengthens the communal bond among the Jewish people, serving as a foundation for a righteous



and just society. By adhering to these principles, individuals can cultivate a deeper connection with the Divine and live a life that reflects the values of faith, respect, and responsibility.

Purification in Judaism involves both ritual and ethical aspects. Ritual purity includes practices such as mikvah (ritual immersion), which is used for conversion, post-menstrual purification, and other spiritual transitions⁷. Ethical sanctification emphasizes moral behavior, observing mitzvot (commandments), and maintaining a life of righteousness and justice⁸. The Sabbath and festivals also play a role in sanctification, setting aside sacred time for worship and reflection. Sanctification is an ongoing process that shapes Jewish identity and spiritual discipline, reinforcing the covenantal relationship between God and His people.

In Judaism, sanctification or spiritual purification can be achieved through several key methods. These practices help individuals maintain holiness, purity, and a closer relationship with God. The main methods include:

In the religious and historical context of Judaism, sacrifice is important because it is a way to worship, atone for sins, and show devotion to God. Rooted in the Torah, particularly in the books of Leviticus, Exodus, and Numbers, sacrificial practices were central to the religious life of the Israelites, primarily conducted in the Tabernacle and later in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. These offerings included animal sacrifices, grain offerings, and incense, each symbolizing different aspects of faith, gratitude, and repentance.

The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE put an end to the practice of offering sacrifices, which were formerly a basic means of requesting heavenly favour and pardon. Judaism has since changed to place more emphasis on prayer, repentance (Teshuva), and good actions (mitzvot) as spiritual alternatives to rituals of sacrifice. This study examines how sacrifices have changed in contemporary Jewish thought and practice, as well as their historical context, forms, and theological importance.

The Holy Bible identifies several types of sacrifices, with five principal categories recognized:

1. **Burnt Offering (olah):** A sacrifice entirely consumed by fire, symbolizing total devotion to God and atonement for unintentional sins.
2. **Vow Offering (Neder):** A vow offering was brought when a person made a personal commitment to offer a sacrifice in gratitude or devotion.
3. **Sin Offering (Chatat):** Offered for unintentional sins against divine commandments. Different types based on the offender: high priest, community, ruler, or individual. Part of the animal was burned, and the rest was eaten by the priests-
4. **Peace Offering (Zevach Shlamim):** An offering that embodies peace and fellowship with God.
5. **Guilt Offering (Asham):** A sacrifice made to atone for feelings of guilt or wrongdoing. Included cases of fraud, dishonesty, or purification from leprosy. Required a ram as a sacrifice, along with possible monetary compensation.

These offerings underscore the intricate relationship between ritual practice, intention, and the pursuit of purity within the Jewish faith.

When a person realises their sin, they are ordered to bring a perfect she-goat as a sacrifice to make amends. This scripture emphasises the value of holiness and integrity in our spiritual activities by stressing the significance of purity and the need to mend one's relationship with God.⁹

The verses make it abundantly evident that the foundation of the Mosaic Law's atonement and sin-repair was sacrifice. God commanded Moses to inform the people that they must send a perfect goat or a young bull to the Lord as a sin sacrifice whenever anybody engages in behaviour that the Lord forbids or inadvertently sins while feeling sincere regret. This clearly emphasises the need to offer a suitable sacrifice in order to make amends with God, confirming that sincerity and atonement are essential components of genuine worship.

No matter what religion you follow, sin is inherent in human nature. Only the prophets are infallible. Apart from them, every person who has come into the world is a victim of sin. Whether serious or minor, sin also damages human relationships and above all, it deprives man of closeness to God. A



sinful man is burdened by the burden of his sins and mistakes. It is written in the Old Testament that God has given us a conscience. When a person commits a sin, the conscience makes us realize it.

*We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.*¹⁰

In the commentary on a verse from the Book of James, it is stated that if an individual is spiritually afflicted—burdened by sin, experiencing inner turmoil, and suffering from spiritual distress—they ought to consult the synagogues' elders for advice. These elders are to pray over the person and anoint them with oil in God's name, acting with confidence and conviction. In addition to being a purification ritual, this act is a way for God to heal and forgive sins, so promoting spiritual rejuvenation.

In the Jewish tradition, the verse emphasises the function of religious leaders in offering spiritual support and direction. It implies that someone who has committed major sins is deemed spiritually ill and, as a result, needs the community's elders to step in and help them. Through their knowledge and commitment, these elders provide guidance, perform holy rites, and compassionately apply God's word to reprimand and console. This interpretation underscores the longstanding belief in Judaism that confession before a religious authority is an essential step toward spiritual purification. By articulating their sins, individuals not only cleanse their conscience but also open themselves to divine grace and the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit.

In a psalm of David it is recorded:

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.*¹¹

*Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*¹²

Here I would like to narrate a famous incident of Hazrat Musa (AS) that one day Hazrat Musa (AS) spoke to Allah Almighty and asked, "O Allah, who is the worst person among my nation?" Allah Almighty said, "The first person you see in the morning is the worst person among your nation." As soon as Hazrat Musa (AS) came out of his house in the morning, his eyes fell on a man who was carrying his son on his shoulder and heading towards the forest. Hazrat Musa (AS) thought in his heart that this man was the worst person among my nation. Then Hazrat Musa (AS) addressed Allah Almighty and said, "Who is the best person among my nation?" Allah Almighty said, "The first person you see in the evening is the best person among your nation." He started waiting for the evening when suddenly his eyes fell on the same person he had seen in the morning. He addressed Allah Almighty and said, "O Allah, what is this matter? How can the person who was the worst be the best?" Allah Almighty said! O Moses, when you saw this man in the morning, his son asked him, "Father, is there anything greater than this forest?" He said, "Yes, son, the mountains are greater than this forest." The son asked, "Is there anything greater than a mountain?" The man said, "Yes, son, the sky is wider than the mountains." The son asked again, "Father, is there anything greater than the sky?" The father sighed and said, "Yes, son, your father's sins are greater than the sky." The son asked, "Is there anything greater than your sins?" The father said, "Yes, my Lord's mercy is greater and boundless than my sins." Allah says, "O Moses, I liked this man's confession of sin and repentance so much that I not only forgave all his sins, but also turned them into good deeds.

This fact makes it clear that the law that Allah Almighty gave to Moses was Deen, and there is only one Deen, which is Islam. Spirituality is not only related to the religion of Islam, but the history of spirituality is very ancient. It is difficult to define the spirituality of religion in a specific way, but it is a life based on sacred beings, transcendence of reason and senses, renunciation of the world, asceticism, and self-control. There is racial pride and religious superiority among the Jews. They consider God as God's favored people and say that we will not receive any punishment, and even if we do, it will be for a very short time. In the Torah or Talmud, apart from sacrifice and worship, there is no specific practice of self-control and avoidance of sins, because it has lost its original status due to distortion and alteration.



Repentance in Judaism, known as **Teshuvah** (תשובה), meaning "**return**" or "**turning back**", is a fundamental spiritual process that enables individuals to reconcile with God and correct their moral failings. Unlike mere regret, Teshuvah requires genuine transformation, self-examination, and commitment to righteousness.

The Torah and Hebrew Bible intricately emphasize the importance of repentance (teshuvah) as a vital pathway to divine forgiveness and spiritual renewal. Throughout these texts, God's mercy is profoundly extended to those who sincerely seek to repent. A powerful illustration of this can be found in 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God articulates a clear promise:

*"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land."*¹³

This verse not only underscores the necessity of humility and prayer but also emphasizes the act of turning away from sinful behavior as a condition for receiving God's forgiveness and restoration. The call to return to God is a recurring and central theme in the Hebrew scriptures, reflecting God's deep desire for His people to reconnect with Him.

*"Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love."*¹⁴

This verse reassures believers that God's capacity for forgiveness is fundamentally rooted in His mercy and love, encouraging them to pursue reconciliation and a renewed relationship with Him, no matter the depths of their waywardness. Importantly, true repentance encompasses more than mere confession; it requires a genuine and intentional change in behavior that aligns with God's commands.

*"But if the wicked turn from all their sins that they have committed and keep all my statutes and do what is just and right, they shall surely live."*¹⁵

This highlights that forgiveness is not a free pass but is contingent upon actively abandoning sinful practices and faithfully adhering to God's commandments, demonstrating a holistic transformation of life. When taken together, these passages affirm that true repentance in Judaism is a comprehensive and transformative process. It requires not only a heartfelt expression of remorse but also a sincere return to God characterized by righteous actions and an unwavering commitment to living in accordance with His divine will. This journey of teshuvah is one of profound significance, leading to personal renewal and a deeper connection with the God.

In Judaism, the Sabbath (Shabbat) is a holy day for worship and repose. It starts on Friday at sunset and finishes on Saturday at dusk. The Sabbath is considered a divine commandment, as stated in the Torah, where God rested on the seventh day after creating the world.

*Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."*¹⁶

Observant Jews take part in religious ceremonies, pray, spend time with their families, and abstain from work during this period. It is a day dedicated to spiritual reflection, gratitude, and disconnecting from daily labor and routine activities. The Pentateuch forbids Jewish followers from doing any work on Sabbath. While the prophets of the Torah make it mandatory to observe the laws of the Sabbath in order to achieve higher levels of spirituality. An incident related to the Sabbath is mentioned in the Book of Numbers of the Torah,

While the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, *"The man must die."* The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp. So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death as the LORD commanded Moses.¹⁷



The most sombre of Jewish holy festivals is Yom Kippur, when people try to make amends with God and atone for their sins. It marks the end of the "ten days of repentance," which start on the first day of Tishri with Rosh Hashana. It is on Yom Kippur that solemnity and cessation of work are most complete. The purpose of Yom Kippur is to effect individual and collective purification by the practice of forgiveness of the sins of others and by sincere repentance for one's own sins against God.

Yom Kippur is marked by abstention from food, drink, and sex. Among Orthodox Jews the wearing of leather shoes and anointing oneself with oil are forbidden. Orthodox Jews may wear long white robes called kittel.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, Jewish congregations gather for prayer and meditation, continuing throughout the next day. The service begins with the Kol Nidre, a solemn declaration that annuls personal vows made during the year, though obligations toward others remain binding. This evening is also a time for seeking and granting forgiveness among friends and family, as human reconciliation reflects divine forgiveness. It is believed that God pardons those who sincerely repent, demonstrating their remorse through righteous actions and good deeds.

On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, religious services run continuously from morning until evening. These services include Torah readings, penitential prayers, and, in some congregations, **Yizkor**—memorial prayers for the recently deceased. The observance concludes with **closing prayers** and the symbolic blowing of the shofar, marking the end of this sacred day of repentance and reflection.

The Concept of Transferring Sins: The Scapegoat in Judaism and Its Connection to Jesus in Christianity

In ancient Judaism, the ritual of **Azazel**, described in **Leviticus** involved transferring the sins of the Israelites onto a **scapegoat** (not a cow, but a goat). On Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), the High Priest would symbolically place the sins of the people onto the goat, which was then sent into the wilderness, signifying the removal of sins from the community¹⁸. This act represented both atonement and purification, as the sins were "carried away" by the scapegoat¹⁹.

In Christianity, Jesus is often seen as the ultimate scapegoat, taking upon himself the sins of humanity. The New Testament describes Jesus as the

*"Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"*²⁰

His crucifixion is interpreted as a sacrificial act that replaces the Jewish atonement system. The Apostle Paul states:

*"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*²¹

Just as the scapegoat symbolically bore the sins of Israel and was sent away, Jesus, according to Christian belief, bore the sins of the world and was crucified outside the city²². His death is seen as fulfilling and replacing the old system of animal sacrifices, offering eternal atonement for believers.²³

➤ **Sanctification in Christianity:**

In the **New Testament**, Sanctification (Greek: **ἁγιασμός - hagiasmos**) is the continuous process by which believers are transformed into the likeness of Christ through the Holy Spirit and obedience to God's Word. It is both positional (already sanctified in Christ) and progressive (growing in holiness).

*"And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*²⁴

*"And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption."*²⁵

Baptism (Greek: **βάπτισμα, baptisma** meaning "immersion" or "washing") is a central Christian sacrament signifying spiritual purification, sanctification, and initiation into the faith. It symbolizes the cleansing of sin, the believer's rebirth, and their union with Christ.

Baptism is considered essential for spiritual purification and entry into a holy life. Christian theology emphasizes. Baptism holds deep spiritual significance in Christianity, serving as a means of forgiveness, rebirth, and unity with Christ. In Catholic and Orthodox traditions, baptism is believed to cleanse individuals from original sin and personal sins as emphasized in **Acts 2** where Peter declares,



*"Repent and be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins."*²⁶

Beyond forgiveness, baptism also signifies spiritual rebirth, marking a believer's transition from an old, sinful life to a new, sanctified existence in Christ, as stated in John.

*"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."*²⁷

Additionally, baptism represents union with Christ's death and resurrection—through immersion in water, believers symbolically die to sin, and as they rise from the water, they partake in Christ's resurrection into righteousness²⁸. Regardless of denominational differences, baptism universally signifies cleansing, renewal, and incorporation into the body of Christ.

Baptism represents the washing away of sins and spiritual purification.

*"And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name."*²⁹

*"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*³⁰

While physical water does not cleanse sin, baptism symbolizes the believer's inner purification and commitment to God.

The practice is rooted in the Bible:

- **John the Baptist** introduced baptism as a sign of repentance:
*"I baptize you with water for repentance..."*³¹
- **Jesus' Baptism** by John sanctified the act as a divine ordinance.
*"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"*³²
This event affirmed baptism's significance, symbolizing repentance, divine approval, and the initiation of a spiritual journey. It set a precedent for believers, making baptism a key sacrament in Christianity as a means of grace, renewal, and commitment to God.
- Jesus commanded baptism for all believers:
*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"*³³

Baptism is practiced differently by various Christian churches, which reflects their traditions and theological views. Immersion, in which the entire body is submerged in water, is one popular technique. Baptists, Orthodox Christians, and some Protestant churches all follow this practice, which represents total purification, death to sin, and resurrection to a new life in Christ³⁴. Affusion is an additional technique that involves pouring water over the person's head. Catholics, Methodists, and some other Christian denominations use this method, which emphasises the purifying nature of baptism and is more feasible for newborns and others who are unable to participate in full immersion. A third method is **aspersion**, where water is sprinkled on the person, a practice common in some Protestant traditions, particularly in Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Despite these differences in practice, all forms of baptism serve as a symbol of spiritual purification, entry into the Christian faith, and unity with Christ and His Church. Baptism serves as the beginning of sanctification, marking a believer's cleansing and dedication to God, but the journey toward holiness continues throughout life. Christians are called to **maintain** holiness through faith and obedience, striving to live righteously in accordance with God's will, as emphasized in Hebrews.

*"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."*³⁵

Additionally, believers must practice prayer and repentance, continually seeking spiritual renewal by confessing sins and receiving God's grace, as stated in **1 John**.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*³⁶

Furthermore, the process of sanctification is empowered by the Holy Spirit, who strengthens and guides believers in their pursuit of holiness, as seen in **Acts**, where Jesus promises,

*"You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*³⁷

Thus, baptism initiates a life of spiritual growth, transformation, and ongoing commitment to Christ through faith, repentance, and the work of the Holy Spirit.



Baptism is not just a ritual but a profound act of spiritual purification and sanctification, marking the beginning of a believer's holy life in Christ. It signifies cleansing from sin, rebirth, and lifelong commitment to God's will.

Monasticism in Christianity:

A prominent feature of the period from the fourth to the sixth century AD was that Christianity divided into two parts. One part consisted of the eastern regions, which included the Balkans, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Abyssinia. The religious leader here was called the patriarch. The second empire was in the west, which was centered in Rome and included the region of Europe. The religious leader here was called the pope.

During this time, monasticism emerged, which believed that in order to gain God's approval, it was necessary to say goodbye to the world's troubles, and the more pain one inflicted on oneself, the closer one would be to God. Monasticism taught simplicity, spiritual purity, poverty, chastity, and obedience. Priests and nuns were taught a life of solitude. The spiritual status of the bearers of monastic beliefs was recognized because they played a key role in the development of monasticism and Christianity. The concept of self-effort in Christianity is against both human nature and reason. The breadth and comprehensiveness of the Islamic and Quranic concept of self-purification is not found in Christian monasticism. In Christianity, man is told the good news of success in the afterlife when he says goodbye to his worldly life and completely cuts off his relationship with the world.

Monasticism in Christianity is a religious way of life characterized by withdrawal from worldly pursuits to attain spiritual purification, sanctification, and a closer connection with God. Rooted in Jesus teachings on renouncing materialism, it developed as a structured practice in the early centuries of Christianity.

*Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'*³⁸

In this verse, Jesus instructs a wealthy young man that true spiritual perfection requires detachment from material wealth, charity, and complete devotion to God. This teaching emphasizes self-sacrifice, humility, and prioritizing eternal rewards over worldly possessions. It aligns with the broader Christian call to discipleship, urging believers to place their faith and trust in God above material concerns. Monastic life is centered on prayer, fasting, celibacy, and asceticism to purify the soul from sin and attain holiness. It is seen as a means of imitating Christ's life of self-denial and striving for spiritual perfection.³⁹

*Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me*⁴⁰
Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.⁴¹

Monks and nuns devote their lives to deepening their connection with God through constant meditation, scripture study, and worship, often choosing a life of solitude or communal devotion to achieve spiritual purity. They believe that withdrawing from worldly distractions allows them to cultivate divine intimacy, as reflected in

*"Be still, and know that I am God."*⁴²

This pursuit of spiritual closeness is particularly evident in contemplative traditions, such as Benedictine and Eastern Orthodox monasticism, which emphasize silence, discipline, and unceasing prayer. The practice of hesychasm, central to Eastern Orthodox spirituality, involves deep inner stillness and repetitive prayer to maintain an ongoing awareness of God's presence. Similarly, the apostolic call to unceasing prayer⁴³ serves as a foundation for monastic life, encouraging constant communication with God. Through these practices, monks and nuns seek to transcend worldly concerns, embracing a life of spiritual reflection, humility, and unwavering devotion.⁴⁴

Monasticism promotes a life that is aimed at resisting sin and achieving spiritual purity. Monks and nuns take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, believing that renouncing worldly attachments



strengthens their devotion to God and helps them overcome earthly temptations⁴⁵. By taking a vow of poverty, they renounce material possessions, opt for a life of simplicity, and rely on divine provision. This detachment from wealth becomes a means of resisting greed and selfishness, allowing them to focus entirely on spiritual development.

The vow of chastity requires celibacy, helping them to maintain purity of heart and mind. By abstaining from marriage and intimate relationships, they turn their love and devotion entirely to God, embodying Matthew, where Jesus speaks of those who have

*"forsaken marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."*⁴⁶

This commitment is seen as a way to foster inner purity and resist the temptations of the flesh. The vow of obedience is another important pillar of monastic life, requiring monks and nuns to submit to the will of their religious superior and ultimately to the will of God. By practicing humility and self-denial, they train themselves to resist the human tendency toward pride and selfishness. This discipline is in line with the teaching of the apostle Paul in Romans, which urges believers to

*"not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*⁴⁷

In monasticism, obedience is not seen as mere subjugation but as a path to spiritual transformation, leading individuals to greater reliance on God's wisdom.

Overall, monasticism views the pursuit of holiness as a lifelong process of repentance and transformation, requiring constant self-examination, prayer, and sacrifice. By following these strict rules, monks and nuns aim to purify their souls, resist sin, and deepen their relationship with God, striving to embody Christ's example of humility and righteousness.

The Concept of Repentance in Christianity:

Repentance in Christianity (Greek: μετάνοια, *metanoia*), meaning "a change of mind" or "turning away from sin," is a fundamental aspect of spiritual purification and sanctification. It involves confessing sins, seeking God's forgiveness, and committing to a transformed life. The Bible emphasizes:

*"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."*⁴⁸

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*⁴⁹

*"Repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."*⁵⁰

Christian tradition outlines various practical ways to express and live out repentance.

In Catholicism, the practice of confession is an essential aspect of spiritual purification and reconciliation with God. Believers confess their sins to a priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession), where they express genuine repentance and seek forgiveness. The priest, acting as a representative of Christ, grants absolution, which is the formal declaration of God's forgiveness. This practice is rooted in John, where Jesus tells His disciples,

*"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."*⁵¹

Catholics believe that through this sacrament, they receive grace to resist sin and restore their relationship with God.

In Protestant Christianity, confession takes a different form, as most Protestant denominations emphasize direct confession to God rather than through a priest. They believe that Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and humanity, as stated in 1 Timothy.

*"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*⁵²

Protestants encourage believers to confess their sins privately in prayer, seeking forgiveness through faith in Christ's atonement. Many Protestant traditions also emphasize accountability within the Christian community, where believers may confess their sins to one another for mutual encouragement and prayer, as instructed in James.

*"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."*⁵³

While Catholicism and Protestantism differ in their approach to confession, both traditions uphold the importance of repentance, divine forgiveness, and the ongoing process of spiritual renewal in the life



of a believer. Forgiveness is a key theme in Christian teachings, emphasizing both divine mercy and the importance of forgiving others. The Lord's Prayer embodies this principle, with Jesus instructing His followers to pray.

*Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us*⁵⁴

This highlights the reciprocal nature of forgiveness and the moral duty of believers to forgive. Psalm 51, known as David's prayer of repentance, further illustrates this theme. Written after Nathan confronted David about his sin with Bathsheba⁵⁵, David pleads for God's mercy and renewal, saying,

*Have mercy on me, O God... Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity*⁵⁶

This psalm serves as a model for genuine repentance, showing that true forgiveness involves humility and a commitment to change. Both The Lord's Prayer and Psalm 51 affirm that while God is merciful, true forgiveness necessitates sincere repentance and the willingness to extend grace to others.

True repentance in Christianity is not simply about feeling remorse; it demands a profound transformation of heart and behavior. Ezekiel makes this clear, urging followers to

*"repent and turn from all your offenses... Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit."*⁵⁷

This directive emphasizes the essential need for inner change. Similarly, Luke asserts that believers must

*"bear fruits in keeping with repentance."*⁵⁸

True repentance is demonstrated through the active rejection of sin and a steadfast commitment to righteousness. This highlights the crucial relationship between internal transformation and outward actions in the Christian faith. Believers are called to embody their faith through genuine change and righteous living.

While the Jewish scapegoat ritual provided a temporary removal of sins, Christianity interprets Jesus' sacrifice as a permanent and universal atonement. This theological shift marks a key difference between the two faiths—Judaism continues to emphasize personal repentance and ethical living, while Christianity centers on Jesus' redemptive death for salvation.

➤ **Concept of Sanctification (Tazkiy-e-Nafs) in Islam:**

Sufism (tasawwuf), the spiritual and mystical dimension of Islam, is firmly rooted in the Qur'an, Sunna and the example of pious predecessors. The Holy Qur'an directs the attention of its readers to a specific branch of Islam, which is a critical component of prophethood, termed as *tazkiya* (spiritual purification). Purifying the soul is amongst the four primary duties of Prophethood. Allah states:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ.

He is the one who sent among the unlettered people a messenger (ﷺ) from among themselves, who recites his revelations to them, purifies them (spiritually) and teaches them the book and wisdom.

*Indeed, they had previously been in clear error.*⁵⁹

The meaning of *tazkiya* is to adorn the lower self (nafs) with the highest of moral values and to purify it from lowly attributes. Taharah refers to both physical and spiritual purification, essential for worship and closeness to Allah. It encompasses removal of physical impurities (Hadath and Najasah) through acts like Wudu (ablution), Ghusl (ritual bath), and Tayammum (dry purification). Cleanliness of body, clothing, and surroundings is fundamental for performing Salah (prayer) and other acts of worship. Beyond physical cleanliness, spiritual purification is equally emphasized. A believer must cleanse the heart from pride, hypocrisy, envy, and other moral impurities, striving for sincerity and righteousness. The Quran states,

*"Indeed, Allah loves those who purify themselves."*⁶⁰

Thus, Taharah is not just an external practice but a means of attaining inner purity and divine acceptance.

The first affinity, Nisba, in Sufism is the path of purity (Tahara). Its essence lies in the inner satisfaction felt after cleansing the body or performing ablution—not due to the physical act, but as a reflection of the angelic light within. When this state is consistently felt, the lower self adopts it as a lasting trait. In contrast, impurity causes mental unrest and distraction. Realizing that purity brings



peace and impurity brings discomfort naturally draws one towards constant inner and outer cleanliness.⁶¹

In every generation, there has always been the need for powerful personalities and propagators embodying all-encompassing qualities, who fulfilled the duties of teaching the Holy Qur'an and the sunna, and of internal purification (tazkiyah). After the termination of the process of prophethood, they became the vicegerents of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). They connected the muslim community (umma) with Allah. And his messenger and helped them to renew the covenant that every muslim and committed to by making the declaration of faith. they taught muslims to take Allah and his messenger as a standard in every matter of life, to be obedient and to oppose the lower self (nafs) and the devil (shaytan). Furthermore, to reject evil (taghut) and to struggle for the sake of Allah Almighty, and to make his renewal of the covenant pledged to the messenger of Allah a way of life.

Types of the lower self (Nafs):

Just as Allah created the intellect, heart, and soul, He also created the lower self (nafs) as a distinct reality with seven levels, each shaping one's temperament and actions. The nafs deeply influences the heart and soul, making its purification (tazkiyah al-nafs) essential for spiritual growth. This is why the Prophet (s.a.w.) called it the greatest struggle — al-jihad al-akbar.

- **The commanding self (Al-nafs al Ammara):**

This is the first of the seven levels. It is the most inciting towards seeing and drags one towards worldly desires. It entices the person towards indecency, immorality, base desires, and evil deeds. In the Holy Quran, it is stated, rewarding it,

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِسُوءٍ

*For the (lower) self strongly commands to evil.*⁶²

- **The condemning self (Al-Nafs Al-Lawwama):**

The second level of the nafs is an-nafs al-lawwama—the self that blames. After rising from the commanding self, a light awakens in the heart, guiding toward good. When one errs, this self rebukes and stirs regret, making it a sign of moral awareness and a step toward purification. Allah has sworn by it in the Holy Qur'an:

وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ

*"I swear by the day of Resurrection! And I swear by the self-blaming soul!"*⁶³

- **The inspiring self (Al-Nafs Al-Mulhima):**

The third level of the nafs is an-nafs al-mulhima—the inspiring self. It awakens the heart with divine inspiration (ilham), guiding it toward piety, taqwa, and righteous deeds. Unlike the blaming self, it not only resents sin but finds inner peace in worship. When good deeds are missed, it causes spiritual discomfort, which can only be eased through obedience and acts of righteousness.

- **The contented self (Al-Nafs Al-Mutma'inna):**

Al-Nafs Al-Mutma'inna, the Contented Self, is the fourth level of the lower self (Nafs). At this stage, the self is completely purified of vices and adorned with virtuous qualities. It has developed a deep connection with the Divine, resulting in a profound inner peace and satisfaction. This internal fulfillment is what earns it the title Al-Nafs Al-Mutma'inna — the Contented Self.

Allah Almighty mentions this elevated state of the Nafs in the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

*'Allah will say to the righteous: 'O contented soul! Return to your lord, well-pleased (with him) and well-pleasing (to him).'*⁶⁴

- **The pleasing self (Al-Nafs Al-Radiya):**

The Fifth Level of the Lower Self – Al-Nafs Al-Radiya. Some Sufi scholars and sheikhs do not identify a distinct fifth level of the Nafs. Instead, they view the pleasing self (Al-Nafs Ar-Rāḍiyya), the pleased self (Al-Nafs Al-Marḍiyya), and the perfect self (Al-Nafs Al-Kāmila or As-Sāfiyya) as advanced states within the contented self (Al-Nafs Al-Muṭma'inna). However, due to the ever-changing conditions, qualities, and spiritual stations of the Nafs, many consider these as independent levels beyond the contented self. Still, some Sufis maintain that there is only one Nafs, and its various states—



commanding (Al-Nafs Al-Ammāra), blaming (Al-Nafs Al-Lawwāma), and contented (Al-Nafs Al-Muṭma'inna)—are merely different phases of the same self, reflecting its inner struggles and growth. It is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

أَرْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

*Return to your lord, well-pleased (with him) and well-pleasing (to him).*⁶⁵

• **The pleased Self (Al-Nafs Al-Mardiyya) :**

The Sixth Level of the Lower Self – Al-Nafs Al-Mardiyya (The Pleased Self). This is the sixth and most perfected stage of the Nafs, where the self remains constantly pleased with Allah in all circumstances, without wavering. Through steadfastness (istiḳāmah), it attains the station of Al-Nafs Al-Mardiyya — the Pleased Self. At this level, not only is the servant content with Allah, but Allah is also pleased with the servant. This mutual pleasure is reflected in the Qur'ān, particularly regarding the companions who took the Pledge of Pleasure (Bay'at al-Riḍwān). The true distinction lies in the reciprocity: the Nafs being pleased with Allah defines Marḍiyya, while Allah being pleased with the Nafs elevates it to this noble station.

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

*'Allah was indeed well pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you under the tree (at al-Hudaybiya).*⁶⁶

In other place:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

*Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with him.*⁶⁷

• **The perfect self (Al-Nafs Al-kamila) :**

This is the seventh self (nafs) and the final station of perfection. The following verses refer to this station:

وَأَدْخُلِي جَنَّتِي فَأَدْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي أَرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ

*Allah will say to the righteous:) O' contended soul! Return to your lord, well-pleased (with him) and well-pleasing (to him)! Then enter among my (chosen) servants! And enter my paradise (the ultimate abode of my pleasure and nearness!'*⁶⁸

In the Holy Quran, the term Tazkiyah refers to purification, which is fundamentally linked to the concept of **Sufism**. Sufism, at its core, is the spiritual purification of the self, emphasizing inner refinement and moral elevation. To attain the highest levels of spiritual conduct and the path of righteousness, one must first undergo self-purification. This process involves cleansing the heart from negative traits such as pride, greed, and envy while cultivating virtues like humility, sincerity, and devotion to God.

The Quran repeatedly emphasizes the importance of Tazkiyah, highlighting that true success lies in the purification of the soul. As stated in Surah Ash-Shams:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

*"He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it with corruption."*⁶⁹

This verse underscores that spiritual progress is only possible when one actively engages in self-purification. Through continuous remembrance of Allah (dhikr), self-discipline, and righteous actions, an individual gradually ascends towards higher levels of spiritual realization and closeness to God. Thus, Tazkiyah serves as the foundation of Sufism, guiding individuals on a path of inner transformation that leads to divine proximity and ultimate success in both this life and the hereafter.

Hazrat Fadal bin Ubaid (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage:

المجاهد من جاهد نفسه في طاعة الله

*"The true mujahid is the one who strives against his nafs in obedience to Allah"*⁷⁰

Given the profound significance of self-purification and the purification of the heart, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) remained deeply mindful of it at all times. On one occasion, upon returning from jihad, he (PBUH) addressed his companions and imparted a profound lesson on spiritual purification.



أَتَيْتُمْ مِنَ الْجِهَادِ الْأَصْغَرِ إِلَى الْجِهَادِ الْأَكْبَرِ

*You have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad.*⁷¹

The companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what is the greater jihad?" The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

مُجَاهِدَةُ النَّفْسِ

struggling against the soul (jihad al-nafs) ⁷²

The Prophetic method of self purification (Tazkiya-e-nafs):

The purification of the soul is an essential human need, highlighting a vital demand for each individual in society, irrespective of religion. The source of this purification is the Book of Allah, with the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) serving as a guiding teacher. Among his significant roles is that of promoting purification and kindness. This process of purification—referred to as kindness in Hadith and the purification of the soul in Sufism—entails removing barriers that hinder the development of our innate abilities. The Holy Quran emphasizes this transformative journey, as Allah and His Messengers have consistently advised people throughout the ages toward success. It encompasses every aspect of life, and understanding its true depth requires exploring its expansive reach. The presence of the Companions in the esteemed company of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was a powerful catalyst for their self-improvement. His teachings, encouragement of righteous deeds, and steadfast commitment to avoiding evil were instrumental in shaping their character. Actively participating in Jihad against the infidels and facing various struggles further propelled their growth. The Companions (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them) directly absorbed the principles of this noble path from the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who provided exceptional training and guidance. Each Companion (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) proudly pledged allegiance to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), demonstrating their unwavering commitment to this transformative journey.

During the time of the Prophet and the Companions, gatherings of remembrance and contemplation flourished. The Companions adorned themselves in woolen clothes, embracing simplicity. Their routine included fasting, less talk, abundant remembrance, and heartfelt weeping, all embodying their journey of self-purification. In the protective presence of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), their hearts were illuminated with divine light. The Holy Quran beautifully depicts the Prophetic method of self-purification.

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

He is the One Who raised for the illiterate 'people' a messenger from among themselves—reciting to them His revelations, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, for indeed they had previously been clearly astray— ⁷³

This verse shows that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) first taught the companions the Quran and then purified them with perfect vision so that their hearts would be purified and they would be able to absorb the light of the Quran. Then, when the soul is purified, the heart is refined automatically and the reflection of the truth begins to be clearly seen in the mirror of the heart and the heart begins to be restless for the reflection of the truth. This restlessness of the heart is the beginning of the love of God which flares up in the company of the saints.

Role of Sufi Shaykhs and Spiritual Companionship

In Sufism, spiritual companionship (Suhbah) with a Shaykh (spiritual guide) is essential for inner purification and self-discipline. The Shaykh guides the disciple through:

- **Dhikr (Remembrance of Allah):** Regular spiritual gatherings include collective remembrance, which helps purify the heart.
- **Tarbiyah (Spiritual Training):** The Shaykh teaches self-control, patience, and sincerity in worship.
- **Islah (Moral Rectification):** The disciple learns to refine character and eliminate negative traits such as arrogance and greed.



Famous Sufi scholars like Imam Al-Ghazali emphasized the role of companionship in attaining divine proximity, stating:

*"Keep company with those whose speech inspires you to good deeds and whose actions remind you of the Hereafter."*⁷⁴

The spiritual Stages of the Sufis:

Sufism emphasizes a structured process of self-purification to attain spiritual closeness to Allah. The journey consists of four key stages:

1. **Tazkiyah (Purification)** – This refers to purification of the soul from sins, arrogance, and worldly attachments. The Quran states, *"He has succeeded who purifies it (the soul), and he has failed who corrupts it."*⁷⁵
2. **Tasfiyah (Refinement)** – After purification, the heart is further refined through repentance, self-discipline, and devotion to remove negative traits like envy, greed, and hypocrisy. This stage deepens sincerity in worship.
3. **Takhliyah (Emptying)** – The seeker empties the heart of distractions and harmful desires, detaching from worldly temptations to make space for divine light. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, *"Indeed, in the body, there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound. If it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart."*⁷⁶
4. **Tahliyah (Adorning)** – After purification, the heart is adorned with virtues like patience, sincerity, love for Allah, and Dhikr (remembrance). The Quran states, *"And adorn yourself with patience and prayer."*⁷⁷
5. **Tajalliyah (Divine Illumination)** – The final stage where the seeker attains spiritual enlightenment, experiencing divine manifestations and a deep connection with Allah. This state brings peace, wisdom, and true submission to divine will. The Quran mentions, *"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth."*⁷⁸

These stages lead a Sufi seeker towards ultimate spiritual enlightenment and nearness to Allah through disciplined purification and devotion.



Comparative Analysis:

Sanctification, or self-purification, is a central spiritual aim in the Semitic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Though they share Abrahamic roots and a belief in one God, their approaches to sanctification differ significantly in methodology, theology, and alignment with human nature. All three traditions recognize that the ultimate goal of sanctification is nearness to God, but the paths they propose reflect different understandings of divine-human interaction, spiritual discipline, and the role of worldly life.

In Judaism, sanctification primarily revolves around obedience to the divine law, as revealed in the Torah. The path to spiritual purity is shaped by the observance of commandments—known as the 613 mitzvot—that govern both ritual and moral behavior. Jewish spirituality is deeply rooted in external practices such as dietary laws, Sabbath observance, ritual purity, and participation in religious festivals. While this structure provides a clear and communal path to righteousness, it tends to focus heavily on external compliance, sometimes at the expense of inner transformation. Although Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) explores deeper introspective dimensions, it remains largely esoteric and not mainstream. Thus, Judaism's approach to sanctification, while rigorous and law-centered, can become intellectually and spiritually limiting due to its emphasis on ritual over inner purification.

Christianity, on the other hand, centers sanctification on faith in Jesus Christ and divine grace. Rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, Christian sanctification is viewed as a transformative process that follows justification (being made right with God). In Catholic and Orthodox traditions, sacraments such as baptism, the Eucharist, and confession play key roles in spiritual cleansing. Early Christianity placed strong emphasis on monasticism and asceticism, advocating withdrawal from worldly life to attain closeness to God. This renunciatory model, while spiritually intense, often conflicts with human nature and practical life responsibilities. In Protestant traditions, sanctification is often seen as the work of the Holy Spirit transforming the believer internally through faith and Scripture. While Christianity excels in emphasizing internal transformation and love, its model may sometimes rely too heavily on faith alone, overlooking the necessity of consistent moral effort. The monastic model, in particular, can lead to psychological strain when it isolates the believer from natural human needs.

In contrast, Islam presents a balanced and holistic approach to sanctification, known as *Tazkiyah*—the purification of the soul. Islam acknowledges human nature in its full complexity and promotes a path that harmonizes spiritual development with worldly engagement. The Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasize that acts of worship, moral conduct, and even daily routines can become means of drawing closer to Allah if done with the right intention. Unlike monastic traditions, Islam discourages celibacy or complete withdrawal from society, instead encouraging believers to fulfill their social, familial, and economic duties while maintaining constant awareness of God. The five pillars of Islam—faith, prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage—serve as practical and spiritual disciplines that nurture both the inner and outer aspects of a person. In addition to these, concepts like *Ihsan* (worshiping God as if one sees Him), *muraqabah* (vigilance), *muhasabah* (self-accounting), and *dhikr* (remembrance of God) refine the soul. Islam's integration of law, faith, and personal effort creates a universally accessible system of sanctification that aligns with human disposition, without requiring renunciation or extreme austerity.

While all three traditions aim at purification and nearness to God, Islam stands out in its ability to balance external obedience with internal sincerity, spiritual goals with worldly responsibilities, and individual accountability with divine mercy. Judaism provides a highly structured legal framework, but often leans more toward external practice. Christianity offers deep spiritual insight, but at times disconnects sanctification from the demands of ordinary life. Islam's approach, being moderate and holistic, addresses the full scope of human experience. It makes every action—from worship to work—a potential act of devotion, offering a natural and comprehensive system for self-purification that remains relevant and accessible until the Day of Judgment.



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