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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about “Muslim”¹ perception of “Jesus”²; more specifically, it examines the Muslims’ acceptance of Jesus as “a prophet.”³ Moreover, this research examines some basic arguments between “Christianity”⁴ and “Islam”⁵ on account of their respective attribution to Jesus. Besides, it engages with the different identities of Jesus in the “Bible”⁶ and in the “Qur’an.”⁷ This writing is a research; an analysis; and an expansion.

In order to avoid consequences, I use the terms: Muslims, instead of Moslems; the Qur’an, instead of the Koran. Dr. Mohammed Amin warns: “if someone uses the words Moslem and Koran instead of Muslim and Quran, statistically it is quite likely that the writer is hostile to Islam.”⁸ His reason is that in the 19th century, it was standard practice to transliterate the Islam holy book as Koran whereas now the standard accepted transliteration is Qur’an. Likewise, the followers of the Islamic religion used to be transliterated as Moslems whereas the standard transliterated is now Muslims. Moreover, it is believed that “the name Muhammad is the

¹ Caesar E. Farah, *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, Fifth Edition (New York City: Wireless Boulevard Hauppauge Publications, 1994), 1.

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York City: Harper, 1996), 1.

³ Daniel Ali & Robert Spencer, *Inside Islam: A Guide for Catholics 100 Questions and Answers* (West Chester City: Ascension Press Publications, 2003), 55.

⁴ Gerald O’Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Quezon City: Claretian publications, 1999), 42.

⁵ “Islam at a glance,” www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ata glance.shtml (Last updated 2009-06-30, accessed 2014-10-31).

⁶ O’Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 26.

⁷ Jarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, ed. and trans. Jarif Khalidi (London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 4.

⁸ Mohammed Amin, “Koran, Qur’an or Quran and Moslem or Muslim,” <http://www.mohammedamin.com> (1 December 2010, accessed on April 30, 2015).

strictest and primary transliteration of the Arabic given name. The name is also transliterated as Mohammad (primarily in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan), Muhammad (in India and Bangladesh), Muhammed (Arab World, primarily in North Africa), Mohamed and Mohamad (Arab World), Muhammad (Arab World), Muhammed, Muhamed (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Muhammed, Muhamed, Muhammet, or Muhamet (Turkey and Albania).”⁹

I strongly believe that this topic is ideally relevant today, because some Christians are still facing threats and persecutions carry out by some “Muslim extremists”¹⁰ such as “Bo Ko Haram,”¹¹ and “the Islamic State, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).”¹² We do not know the motivation; above all this research is not to analyze those groups. Rather, it is to carefully study both religions in such a way that we can seek for peace and stability.

Properly speaking, Christians are the followers or believers of Jesus Christ; therefore, we have to approach the current issues through an analysis the views of Islam on Jesus and Christianity. On one hand, we must not neglect “the reality that the Islamic State is Islamic. Very Islamic.”¹³ However, we also should not forget that “more than 120 Muslim scholars

⁹ “Muhammad: the correct spelling,” www.muftisays.com (28th January 2011, accessed on April 30, 2015).

¹⁰ Ronak Kallianpur, “Her town was invaded by Muslim extremists, watch what happens when she confronts them,” <http://qpolitical.com> (accessed on April 29, 2015).

¹¹ Century News, “Insurgents displace Nigerian Christians,” ezproxy.usj.edu.mo (December 10, 2014, accessed on April 29, 2015).

¹² Graeme Wood, “What ISIS really wants,” ezproxy.usj.edu.mo (March 2015, accessed on April 29, 2015).

¹³ Ibid.

from around the world joined an open letter to the fighters and followers of the Islamic State, denouncing them as un-Islamic by using the most Islamic of terms,”¹⁴ on the other hand.

This thesis is rich in itself since it deals with a variety of fields; the subject is Christological, historical, dialogical and a seeking for understanding between Muslims and Christians through careful analysis of the history. The main theme is the Christology, since it is a research of the identification of Jesus according to the two biggest religions. It is also historical because most of the factors of this writing underline how Christianity and Islam began. Furthermore, it is dialogical for the reason that the paper will explicitly reach a reasonable conclusion based upon the systematic study of the Muslim view on Jesus.

For this reason, Christians can tolerate the hostile perception of Muslims, which is their consideration of Jesus as purely a prophet. Lastly, it is a quest for understanding between two religions, because the paper will present a series of Jesus’ titles according to the Qur’an and the Bible. To be precise, this research will argue how Jesus is identified and why He is identified in the two sacred books.

The chief assumption is that Islam is said to deny the belief of Christianity which is the acceptance of Jesus as “God,”¹⁵ whereas Christianity, in fact never talks about their founder, “Muhammad.”¹⁶ So, the striking hypothetical question for a Christian will be: what is so great about Jesus to a Muslim? Why are Muslims concerned with Jesus? In the same way, a Muslim can ask a Christian to what extent Jesus is considered as God, for what reason Jesus attains

¹⁴ Lauren Markoe, “Muslim scholars release open letter to Islamic State meticulously blasting its ideology,” www.huffingtonpost.com (09, 25, 2014, accessed on April 29, 2015).

¹⁵ Gen. 1:1 NJB

¹⁶ Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 15.

the standard of God? Another premise is that Mary, mother of Jesus, appears in the Qur'an more than in the Christian Bible. Hence, there must be a common ground between Islam and Christianity in terms of Mary's role that should lead the two religions to understand one another in lieu of confrontation.

To be able to bring about a closer response to those questions, it is vital to approach the historical context. Hence, chapter I will be dealing with the historical background of Christianity, along with Islam. In addition, the chapter will convey the chronological emergence of both religions, particularly their founders: Jesus and Muhammad, and their holy books: the Bible and the Qur'an.

In chapter II, readers are presented with the basic view of Muslims on Jesus according to their materials, as well as basic tenets. Furthermore, the chapter presents some topics such as Jesus as a Prophet according to the Qur'an; the Muslim view of Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus; Mary and the Angel, according Islam; and the Qur'an Jesus as a different from the Bible Jesus.

Chapter III: the last chapter encounters first of all the prospect of Christianity and Islam on Jesus, including the concrete notion of Christianity and Islam on "Sin"¹⁷ and "Salvation."¹⁸ Secondly, the "Eschatology"¹⁹ from the perspective view of Islam and, finally, Christianity's view of the return of Jesus. Those three aspects will largely be based on passages from the

¹⁷ P.P. Saydon, *Leviticus: A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nashville / New York City, Thomas Nelson, 1975), 229.

¹⁸ P.G. Duncker O.P, *Introduction to the Pentateuch, A new Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nashville / New York City, Thomas Nelson, 1975), 160.

¹⁹ O'Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 79.

Bible and the Qur'an and they underscore the parallelism of the holy Books of the two religions.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

In order to develop the insight of Muslims on Jesus, it is critical to come up with the historical background of Islam, thus the key role of this chapter is to explore the chronological evolution of the two religions by approaching their respective histories. The motive for doing this is to make sure we do not jump to a conclusion due to which religion came first or later. In addition, the researcher believes that acquiring some similarities as well as differences between Islam and Christianity in terms of their beliefs and practices should be an approach to understanding the perception of Muslims. However, historical background here will not include mutual treatment neither in the past nor in the present between two religions.

Indeed Islam and Christianity share some common themes of history such as “Abrahamic religion,”²⁰ “monotheism,”²¹ and the high regard for Mary, mother of Jesus. Likewise, they also share some different themes such as their understanding of God, some contradictions between Bible and Qur’an, the acknowledgement of Jesus as a prophet by Muslims and the believing Jesus as God by Christians. Nevertheless, the foremost objective of this chapter is neither to claim which religion is right or wrong, but rather to bring about the true facts of both religions rooted in the true history; fundamental tenets; and priceless books. Therefore, the following subtitles of this chapter are including: the birth of Christianity, the birth of Islam, the emergence of the holy Bible and the Qur’an.

²⁰ Michael Knowles, “The Galatian Test: Is Islam an Abrahamic Religion?,” eds.b.ebscohost.com (Last updated in 2011, accessed on January 9, 2015).

²¹ O’Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 165.

1. Brief History of Christianity and Islam

In this brief history of two religions, I would like to discuss the notions of Abrahamic religions and monotheism as their two keys similarities before I move on discussing the birth of Christianity and Islam. According to Michael Knowles: “the term ‘Abrahamic religions’ is commonly applied to Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Each claims a connection with Abraham. With the Jews it is their claim to physical descent from him, which in their faith makes them recipients of the promises God made to him. The Muslims accept him as a prophet and believe he helped found the Kaaba in Mecca as a place of pilgrimage. For Christians God’s promises were made to Abraham and were realized in the person of Christ, not for a single nation however but for all mankind.”²²

Abraham is believed to be a leader, a father of multitude faiths in the old time somewhere in the Middle East. As Karen Armstrong asserts: “we have no contemporary record of Abraham, but scholars think that he may have been one of the wandering chieftains who had led their people from Mesopotamia towards Mediterranean at the end of the third millennium BCE.”²³ However, it is very clear they were neither Christians nor Muslims because this is 2000 years before Christ, hence it is vital to analyze the Bible as well as Qur’an. We find the clearer point in Genesis (16:3-5) God tells Abraham: “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name is Abraham.”²⁴ Then, the name Abraham itself denotes the ancestor of a multitude of nations. Moreover, Abraham is known as a person who believes in God, has faith

²² Knowles, “The Galatian Test: Is Islam an Abrahamic Religion?”

²³ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (England, Oxford University Press, 1994), 11.

²⁴ Genesis 16:3-5 NJB

in God that made him a righteous person. Romans (4:3, 13) “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith.”²⁵

There is an Islamic religious term, *Millat Ibrahim* (faith of Ibrahim), indicating that Islam sees itself as having practices tied to the traditions of Abraham. In the Qur’an Surat Ibrahim (Chapter of Abraham) “1 Alif, Lam, Ra. [this is] a Book we have sent down to you that you may bring mankind out from darkness into light, by the command of their Lord, to the path of the All-mighty, the All-laudable.”²⁶ The resemblance theme is that Abraham is given a covenant by God to be the ancestor of a multitude of nations according to the Bible, whereas he is given a book by Allah to bring mankind out from darkness into light according to Qur’an.

Therefore, the question is this: is the one whose name appeared as God in the Bible and as Allah in the Qur’an the same figure? If so, Christians and Muslims must believe in the same God. But, Daniel Ali & Robert Spencer say no. They assert: “No, Muslims believe they worship a different God or at least, that their understanding of God is different from that of Jews and Christians.”²⁷ It seems that we cannot find the answer until we move forward to examining the state of monotheism.

Gerald O’Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, both S.J, in their book *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, come up with the meaning of monotheism as “the belief in one, personal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God, who is the creator and Lord of everyone and

²⁵ Romans 4:3,13 NJB

²⁶ Qur’an 14:1 NJB

²⁷ Ali & Spencer, *Inside Islam*, 83.

everything and yet exists distinct from and beyond the whole universe.”²⁸ They also agree that the New Testament revelation that in the one God there are three persons is not opposed to genuine monotheism. However, Judaism and Islam reject belief in the Trinity as incompatible with monotheistic faith. Mohammad rejected Christ as the Son of God and he regarded the notion of the Trinity as polytheistic.

Considering existing literature on the subject, one will observe that the term monotheism is defined in a diversity of ways and may be applied to a variety of religions as well as to a variety of different elements of religion. For this reason Jens-Andre P. Herbener states: “Monotheism itself is not an untroubled word with a serene and self-evident applicability even to those religious traditions most associated with the exclusive worship of and belief in one unique god or divine reality. Precisely because it is so widely used and so little investigated.”²⁹ Therefore, to agree with Herbener, monotheism still has to be investigated, according to Samer M. Ali from University of Texas at Austin: “An emerging monotheism was promoted by pious elders and ascetics, which gave power and authority to one absolute deity; Allah. The first champions the absolute glory and oneness of God (Allah= The Deity) over all else, exacerbated by a daunting hierarchical divide between Divinity and Creation.”³⁰ Moreover, N.T. Wright, based on how Paul redefines monotheism, claims: “Paul bases his answer on the meaning of monotheism, a monotheism that is both creational and cultic.”³¹

²⁸ O’Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 165.

²⁹ Jens-Andre P. Herbener, “On the Term “Monotheism”,” eds.ebscohost.com (Last updated in 2013, accessed on January 2nd, 2015).

³⁰ Samer M. Ali, “Early Islam-Monotheism or Henotheism? A View from the Court,” ezproxy.edu.mo (Last undated in 2008, accessed on January 4, 2015).

³¹ N.T. Wright, “How Paul redefines monotheism: One God, One Lord,” ezproxy.edu.mo (last updated in November 27, 2013, accessed on January 1, 2015).

After seeing the view of Islam and Christianity, what we can realize a common ground is that monotheism is to do with one God or Allah, who is powerful, who is the creator of everything, therefore, deserves to be worshiped and adored.

1.1. The birth of Christianity

Since Christianity connotes the religion of those who belong to Christian churches and communities, it has something to initiate with Christ. August Franzen and John P. Dolan put it rightly in this way: “as a historical religion of revelation, Christianity derives from the historical person of Jesus Christ Incarnate and his work of salvation. The proof of his historical existence and the authenticity of the foundation of his Church is therefore prerequisite and basic to any presentation of Church history.”³² Thus the following factors will be including: a brief history of Jesus; the Christian faith; the apostolic age; and the Church.

Regarding the birth of Jesus, Patrick Verbraken places the time frame as early as 5 before our era, he asserts: “it must be said that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the year 5 before our era. The great historical fact of the resurrection of the Lord is placed at dawn on Sunday 9 April of the year 30 (it was held for long time to be the year 33, but wrongly so).”³³ Thomas Bokenkotter, however, places things the other way around. Based on Catholic Church, he claims: “the Catholic Church has always claimed Jesus of Nazareth as its founder, and nearly everyone is familiar with basic facts about this dynamic Jewish preacher and healer who was

³² August Franzen, *A History of the Church*, ed. John P. Dolan, trans. Peter Becker (Freiburg: Palm Publishers, 1965), 1.

³³ Patrick Verbraken, *The Beginnings of the Church*, trans. Vivienne Healy (Dublin and Sydney: Gill and Son Ltd, 1968), 1.

born around the turn of the first century A.D (probably between 6 B.C and A.D 6) and was crucified by the Romans between A.D 28 and 30.”³⁴

The life of Christ especially his exact date of birth has always been debatable, particularly among the theologians. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is one of those. In his book, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narrative*, he argues: “Jesus may have been born earlier than previously thought. The calendar we use today, which commences with the birth of Christ and was created by a Dionysius Exiguus, a 6th century monk, may be mistaken. The actual date of Jesus’ birth was several years before”³⁵. He bases his argument on the Gospel of Mathew by claiming that Jesus was born when Herod the Great ruled in Judea. However, given that Herod died in 4 B.C., Jesus must have been born earlier than Exiguus originally documented. Arguments surrounding Jesus’ exact date of birth have confounded scholars for centuries. Even the Gospel of Luke contends that the birth took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria in A.D. 6. However, we shall encounter further information of the birth of Jesus when we move on to the other subtopics mentioned above.

Next, Christianity and its faith. Christians believe in God, trust in Jesus as Son of God not because they started on their own but because they were converted by God. They turned to God, trust in Jesus, and willingness to share was the requirement for Church admission. If we try to sum up the Bible as a whole, we can reach a conclusion that Jesus’ core teaching and message is the kingdom of God, to attain the eternal life after death. Christian faith is somewhat eschatological.

³⁴ Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, Revised and Expanded Edition (New York/ London/ Toronto: Doubleday, 1990), 7.

³⁵ Sorchia Pollak, “Pope Benedict Disputes Jesus’ Date of Birth,” newsfeed.time.com/2012/11/22/pope-benedict-disputes-jesus-date-of-birth/ (last updated November 22, 2012, accessed on January 14, 2015).

However, thanks to the faith of some people who witnessed Jesus as the prophet of the kingdom of God, his message underscored the divine gift, as the elected servant of God; they were able to write down the words of Jesus: the words of God. Moreover, the transformation of the disciples and the faith of the apostles led to Christianity. Thanks to the mission and witnesses of the apostles, who were carefully selected by Jesus, Christian faith is still healthy until today. St. Paul is one of the heroes of that successful evangelization, a religious movement that spread from the East to the West.

After speaking of faith and the apostles, let us move on to the process of how the Church came to be. It is said that shortly before his ascension into heaven, Christ had told his apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. For nine days, the apostles, the Blessed Mother and other followers of Jesus prayed together in the room, known as the upper room, which had been the site of the Last Supper and of several of Christ's appearances after His resurrection. On the tenth day, a Sunday, a sound like a great wind was heard in the room. Then a ball of fire miraculously appeared, separating into individual flames which hovered over the head of each person there. This was a visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit, who had come to the apostles to help them to understand the truths which Christ had taught and to give them courage and love they needed to take this message out into the world. This day is known as Pentecost Sunday and is celebrated as the birth day of the Church, because from that moment the apostles were transformed from fearful, confused men into strong, courageous missionaries.

Since then, each Christian generation takes their own responsibility and continues to increase the number of the faithful, which should be considered as a good sign. However, there are also several problems among the Christianity: too many denominations; the threat of

the schism among the Churches; the division among the Churches; each denomination has its own practices and worship. These are the basic hindrance to be united and pay the way to be seen by other religions like Islam as a disordered religion.

Some scholars suggest that the Apostles preached so persuasively that 3,000 persons accepted Christianity on that day: the day of Pentecost. The chief leader was thought to be Simon Peter whom Jesus called to be the foundation of the Church according to Matthew (16: 18) “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”³⁶

To conclude, Early Christianity began with Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish teacher who recovered and restored the pure and largest religion. Accordingly, early Christianity was the result of a fundamental religious reform. After the departure of Jesus, his community was anointed by the Holy Spirit, and has become the Church. So, Christians believe that the Church is a sign of God’s presence among human beings, as expressed in the preaching, sacramental life, pastoral ministry, and organization of this community, which consists in a communion of local communities presided over by Rome.

³⁶ Matthew 16:18, NJB

1.2. The birth of Islam

When we talk about Islam, we think of Arabs and the Middle East as the context of historical foundation. Therefore, it is also important to have some knowledge of its geographical background. Robert Payne, a historian of Islam bravely claims that “no one knows where the Arabs come from, or whether they were there from the beginning.”³⁷ He also insists that “of the beginning of the language they know almost nothing, and they know hardly more about the early history of the Arabs.”³⁸

Like now, the Middle East was thought to be a place of deep sands in the desert, which could not sustain of vegetation. It is believed there are some places where no one has ever penetrated, therefore, virgin still until today. It is said that in all this desolation of Arabia there are only a few towns. Nevertheless, not all of Arabia is desert: there are lava fields, mountains, fertile fields, and rivers wind along the coastal plains.

Herodotus, who saw the things with his own eyes, says that “the Middle East is a place where the most delicious perfume is found, being the only place in the world which produces frankincense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon and labdanum. As for their religion, the Arabs worshiped Orotal and Alilat; the first, he explains, being Bacchus and the second Urania.”³⁹ Robert Payne, however, disagrees with him and comes out with another definition. He says that “for Orotal is evidently *Allah taalah*, the name by which the Arabs to this day address the Almighty, and Alilat is the goddess Allat, who was worshiped in the shape of a square stone at Taif, on the edge of the plateau, not far east of Mecca. He also affirms that they had other

³⁷ Robert Payne, *The History of Islam* (New York City: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992), 2.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

gods. There was al-Uzza, the morning star, who had her cult at Nakhlah. There was also Manh, the goddess of destiny, who was worshiped as black stone in Qudayd on the road between Mecca and Yathrib.”⁴⁰

Surprisingly, Arabs still venerate the stone and so do all the followers of Muhammad to this day. It is believed that a stone has fallen from the sun, the moon, a planet or a brighter star, then the stone becomes the physical embodiment of the mysterious forces which move the universe. Today all the holy stones of the Arabs save one have been swept away. The one remaining stone, known as the Black Stone, was venerated in Mecca long before the time of Muhammad. Its history is unknown.

Mecca is considered a crucial place for Islam. All the followers of Muhammad are encouraged to visit Mecca as pilgrims. Mecca was neither a city of shepherds nor a cultivated oasis but very much a center of trade and pilgrimage, a real Arab center. The city is situated in the midst of small, barren hills in the desert. It had its temple, the *Kaaba*. Today, every Muslim who makes the pilgrimage to Mecca performs the sevenfold circumambulation of the Kaaba and the Lesser and the Greater Pilgrimage.

There are a variety of definitions of Islam based on religious, political, as well as geographical criteria. Therefore, in this paper, the definitions of Islam will appear under three different connotations according to the respective fields.

First, Caesar E. Farah describes Islam in this way: “the term Islam in the lexicon of the Arabs means ‘submission’ to God (Allah). The religion of Islam is a religion of submission to the will of the omnipotent and omniscient creator, the only God, who admits of no associates

⁴⁰ Ibid.

in the worship of Him.”⁴¹ It is related to some ideas which describe Islam as surrender to God. It also means the submission and peace that come with the surrender. Islam is for sure the name of the religion founded by Muhammad.

Second, Daniel Ali & Robert Spencer assume: “Islam is the religion of more than a billion people on earth, and is the dominant faith in over fifty countries stretching from Morocco to Indonesia.”⁴² The pair focuses on the statistics and geographical rather than the hermeneutical. Moreover, they also claim that *Islam* is the name of the religion itself. It means, in Arabic, submission to the will of Allah.

Third, Cockburn and Alexander define “Islam a Threat.”⁴³ They strongly believe that Islam is always spoken of by orientalist as dar-Islam, which means the house of Islam, the domain of Islam, and the rest of the world is the house of war, meaning that Islam is at war with everything outside it. This definition is politically motivated and contradicts the idea of Mohamed Ghilan as he asserts, “it’s not a quality in Islam that turns people violent, but the people themselves that are the problem.”⁴⁴

Islam is one of the world’s younger major religious traditions at almost fourteen hundred years old. It emerged in the early seventh century near the western edge of the Arabian Peninsula, in Mecca, an important city along the caravan route from Syria in the north to the Yemenite kingdoms of southwestern Arabia. Islam emerged in the context of tribal societies,

⁴¹ Farah, *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, 3.

⁴² Ali & Spencer, *Inside Islam*, 19.

⁴³ Cockburn and Alexander, web.b.ebscohost.com. (Accessed on January 10, 2015).

⁴⁴ Mohamed Ghilan, “It’s extremist Muslims, not Islam extremism,” <http://www.aljazeera.com> (Accessed on January 2, 2015).

which has implications on ethnics and religious levels: a tribal solidarity organizes laws; social and ethical norms.

The details about the emergence of Islam will be seen under the title of historical foundation. Since Islam means surrender or submission to the will of God (*Allah*), Muslims have tended to place primary emphasis on obeying or following the will of God as set forth in Islamic law. Muslims confess their faith by pronouncing Muhammad as the messenger of God. Faith in only one God and in Muhammad as his prophet is the basis of Muslim belief and practice. Faith places the Muslim on the straight path; acts demonstrate commitment and faithfulness. In Islam, the purpose of life is not simply to affirm but to actualize; not simply to confess belief in God but to realize God's will to spread the message and law of Islam.

To begin with, the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines Muslim in this way: "Muslim is a person whose religion is Islam. The form Moslem is sometimes considered old-fashioned."⁴⁵ Therefore, in this paper, I will use the updated version; Muslim. Hence, Muslims are the ones whose religion is Islam, or a group of numerous people who worship in the same religion; Islam. Muslims believe that there is no God but *Allah*, and Muhammad is the messenger of *Allah*.

Muslims sometimes are believed to come from Arabic countries in Middle East. Today, however, they are found virtually everywhere and Islam grows more rapidly than any other religion. Concerning demography, John Bowker affirms, "though Muslims are mainly concentrated in a swathe of countries running from North Africa to Indonesia and the Philippines, they are to be found in virtually every country."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* Seventh Edition, ed. Sally Wehmeier, Colin McIntosh, Joanna Turnbull, and Michael Ashby (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. "Muslim, Moslem."

⁴⁶ John Bowker, *What Muslims Believe* (Boston City: Oneworld Publications, 1998), 1.

There are two major groups of Muslims called “*Sunni* and *Shia*. ”⁴⁷ The *Sunni* comprise around eighty five percent of Muslims worldwide. The term *Sunni* is related to *Sunna*, or tradition. Sunni Muslims follow doctrines and practices of the prophet that is, the traditions derived from the *Hadith* interpreted by Muslim scholars throughout history. The *Shia* comprise around 10 to 15 percent of Muslims. The term *Shi’a* is short for *Shi’at Ali*, or the party of Ali. Shi’a Muslims believe that Ali, the husband of Muhammad’s daughter Fatima, was the prophet’s only rightful successor as leader of the Muslim community. They have traditions and practices that are quite distinct from those of the Sunnis. The differences lie in the fields of doctrine, law, ritual, theology, religious organization.

2. The emergence of the holy Bible and the holy Qur’an

Interestingly, both religions use the word ‘holy’ to entitle their books: holy Bible and holy Qur’an. However, Christianity frequently uses the term ‘sacred’ instead of holy, whereas Islam uses holy predominantly. The two holy books are considered the lifeblood of the world largest two religions; they are thought by believers to be the revelation of God, or Allah, and are regarded as inspired by God.

Christianity describes the Bible as “the sacred writings inspired by God and expressing the Jewish and Christian faith in a way that is normative for all time.”⁴⁸ The Bible, “the

⁴⁷ Sunni and Shia, “Islam’s Ancient Schism” www.bbc.com (published on 20 June 2014, accessed on 2 May 2015).

⁴⁸ O’Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 26.

inspired record of revelation, contains the word of God; that is, it contains those revealed truths which the Holy Ghost wishes to be transmitted in writing.”⁴⁹

Similarly, the Qur’an is regarded by Muslims as “the holy book of Islam and as coeval with God, eternal and uncreated, and bearing a revelation that is complete, unalterable and final,”⁵⁰ claims Benjamin Walker. Daniel Ali & Robert Spencer explain that “the word Koran (Qur’an) means ‘recital’ in Arabic. It is also called *Al-Furqan* (‘The Criterion’ or ‘Standard’) and *Al-Mushaf Al-Shreef* (‘The Glorious Book’) in Arabic.”⁵¹ The most obvious difference between the Bible and the Qur’an is that the Bible was originally written in Hebrew, whereas the Qur’an was written in Arabic.

2.1 The birth of the holy Bible

English term used to refer to ‘Scriptures’ is the word Bible. It derives from the Latin translation of the Greek word “*biblia*”⁵² which means books. However, the New Testament employs two other synonyms to refer to the Bible; the first word is “writings”⁵³ and the other is “Scriptures”. Both words refer to the Old and New Testament writings in whole or in part.

The Bible is a collection of books that have been considered authoritative by the Christian church and have been used to determine its beliefs and doctrines.

⁴⁹ “A collection of Writings which the Church of God has solemnly recognized as inspired,” www.newadvent.org/cathen/02543a.htm (accessed on January 22, 2015).

⁵⁰ Benjamin Walker, *Foundations of Islam: The Making of a World Faith* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 146.

⁵¹ Ali & Spencer, *Inside Islam*, 25.

⁵² “A collection of writings which the Church of God has solemnly recognized as inspired,” www.newadvent.org/cathen/02543a.htm (accessed on January 22, 2015).

⁵³ Ibid.

The Bible, comprised of sixty-six books from more than forty authors, was called ‘the divine library’ (*bibliotheca divina*) by Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate in the fourth century. The authors of Scripture came from a variety of backgrounds, including a farmer (Amos), priests (Jeremiah, Ezekiel), a statesman (Daniel), fishermen (Peter and John), prophets (Isaiah, Micah), a physician (Luke), and a former tax collector (Matthew). The books were written in various countries (e.g., Israel, Babylon, Greece, Italy) and follow a variety of literary styles and genres (e.g., narrative, law, codes, poetry, parables, Gospels, letters). The Bible, however, is not merely an anthology (i.e., a collection of diverse writings from various places); it has a unique unity and purpose. In addition its authors claim to have been directed by God in their writings (e.g., 2 Pet. 1:20-21).⁵⁴

The Christian Bible is divided into two equal parts: the “Old and New Testaments.”⁵⁵

The Old Testament is based primarily on the Hebrew Bible, which is arranged in three sections: “the Law, the prophets, and the writings.”⁵⁶ The New Testament stands to the Old Testament as fulfillment does to promise. Christians believe that Old Testament records what God spoke of old to the fathers by the prophets, whereas the New Testament records that final word which he spoke in his Son, in which all the earlier revelation was summed up, confirmed, and transcended. (See Heb 1)

The Old Testament covers more than two thousand years of Israel’s history. As Paul D. Wegner puts it “the Old Testament records the history of God’s dealings primarily with the nation of Israel, beginning with the creation of the universe until about 400 B.C.”⁵⁷ I think it is proper to say that the traditions of the Old Testament began from the age of Abraham to the age of Greeks that is to say from 2000 B.C to 300 B.C.

⁵⁴Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Michigan City: Baker Books publications, 1999), 25.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁶F.F. Bruce, Carl F.H. Henry, J.I. Packer, R.K. Harrison, *The Origin of the Bible*, ed. Wesley Comfort (Wheaton/IL:Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 5.

⁵⁷ Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, 37.

Like the OT, the NT is also a collection of books written by different authors in a variety of literary genres. It contains twenty seven books from about ten authors recording the history of Jesus from his life on earth to his future return when he will establish a new heaven and earth according to the Scriptures. Paul D. Wegner states: “the New Testament books were written between about A.D 49 (Galatians) and 95 (Revelation).”⁵⁸ By contrast, some contributors of the Bible put the date earlier than that, Philip Wesley Comfort, for example, claims in the book called ‘*the Origin of Bible*’ that “the first New Testament documents to be written were the earlier epistles of Paul between A.D. 48 and 60, before the earliest of the Gospels was written. The four Gospels belong to the decades between 60 and 100.”⁵⁹

2.2 The birth of the holy Qur’an

Islamic authors agree “the Qur’an is the holy book of Islam and they consider the Arabic version as the original. Furthermore, the Arabic version is said to be the word for word revelation of Allah, which means Allah spoke to Muhammad in Arabic. Beginning in about 610 C.E, when he was about forty years old, Muhammad began to experience, in mostly auditory but occasionally visual form, what he would come to identify as divine revelations. Muhammad initially delivered the message orally, and it was not until more than two decades after the prophet’s death that a more or less definitive text was compiled and written. Tradition divided the text into two main periods, the Meccan and Medinan corresponding to the years before and after the Hijra, the move to Medina in 622 C.E.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸Ibid., 49.

⁵⁹ Bruce, Henry, Packer, Harrison, *the Origin of the Bible*, 9.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Just as Christianity claims that the holy Bible existed since the beginning of creation, Muslims also assume the Qur'an in the same manner, "this archetypal text existed in heaven long before the creation of the world, and is spoken of as the mother of the book (*umm al-kitab*), the heavenly prototype of all revelation."⁶¹ Benjamin also agrees that by the grace of Allah, portions of the book were communicated section by section to Muhammad over the course of twenty three years. This was effected through the angel Gabriel, at both Mecca and Medina. The Qur'an now has become a book of innumerable merits, transposed into other languages to inform and enlighten peoples of different cultures. Regarding its merits and values, Ali Quli Qara'i affirms: "it is in its own words, a Book for reflective minds (*alu al-albab*) for those who value knowledge (*alimun*) for those who exercise their rational faculties (*qawmin ya'qilun*) and for those who possess reason and perceptive minds (*ulu al-nuba* and *mutawassimun*)."⁶²

The book comprises 114 chapters often referred to in English by their Arabic designation, *Sura*. Each verse is called an '*ayat*', which means 'sign' or 'miracle.' The book is arranged according to the length of its *Suras*. The longest *Sura* appears first and the shortest *Sura* last. This organization is believed to have been completed long after Muhammad's death.

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is unalterable and cannot be amended because they believe it to be the proclamations of God recorded, and meanwhile the pen of revelation has since dried up, the heavenly inspiration has ended, and therefore nothing more remains to be said, added, or taken away. Moreover, the Qur'an contains all that is needful for the guidance of men and women in every activity. It constitutes not only the religious but also the social,

⁶¹ Ibid., 146.

⁶² *The Qur'an: With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation*, trans. Ali Quli Qar'I (New York City: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc. 2006), ix.

cultural, commercial, ceremonial, military, legal, civil, criminal and administrative codes of Muslims, regulating every aspect of life according to their beliefs.

CHAPTER II: THE VIEW OF MUSLIMS ON JESUS

This chapter is the core of the thesis since it deals with the perception of Muslims of Jesus. It is a debate between Islam and Christianity on acceptance and denial of Jesus' divinity. However, the aim of this chapter is not to claim which religion is on the right path, rather it is to seek for the common comprehension on Jesus from two largest religions in the planet. In other word, the analysis from both religions should largely be based on Jesus' words and deeds while spending lifetime on earth.

There are some scholars claiming that Muslims are less satisfied by Christian belief and doctrine on Jesus. For example, Mehdi Hasan argues that: "Christians, perhaps because they call themselves Christians and believe in Christianity, like to claim ownership of Christ. But the veneration of Jesus by Muslims began during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam."⁶³. However, according to Thomas P. Rausch, S.J. "the earliest Christians used various titles, most of them drawn from the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures, to express their faith in Jesus, they called him prophet, teacher, Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man, Lord, Son of God, Word of God, and occasionally even God."⁶⁴

Therefore, who is Jesus for the Muslims? Mehdi Hasan claims: "Jesus, or Isa, as he is known in Arabic, is deemed by Islam to be a Muslim prophet rather than the Son of God, or God incarnate. He is referred to by name in as many as 25 different verses of the Qur'an and six times with the title of Messiah. He is also referred to as the Messenger and the Prophet but, above all else, as the Word and the Spirit of God."⁶⁵ As we can see, there are several similar

⁶³ Mehdi Hasan, "Jesus: the Muslim prophet", ezproxy.usj.edu.mo (accessed on February 9, 2015).

⁶⁴ Thomas P. Rausch, *Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003) 1.

⁶⁵ Mehdi Hasan, "Jesus: the Muslim prophet."

titles of Jesus used by Islam as well as Christianity. The author furthermore asserts: “the Muslim Jesus is the patron saint of asceticism, the lord of nature, a miracle worker, a healer, a moral, spiritual and social role model.”⁶⁶

Islam highly reveres both Jesus and his mother, Mary; Islam recognizes the virgin birth of Jesus by Mary, as Mehdi Hasan puts it “she was the chosen woman, chosen to give birth to Jesus, without a husband.”⁶⁷ Nevertheless, unlike Christians, Islam does not accept the divinity of Jesus, His passion, His death and resurrection. Hasan states: “for Muslims, the Virgin Birth is not evidence of Jesus’ divinity, only of his unique importance as a prophet and a messiah. The Trinity is rejected by Islam, as Jesus’ Crucifixion and Resurrection.”⁶⁸ The paradoxical beliefs of two religions are thought to be the fundamental tensions among people who are carrying out the interfaith dialogue that neither side wants to face off.

Tarif Khalidi, another scholar of Islam, sees Jesus as “a controversial prophet, he is the only prophet in the Qur’an who is deliberately made to distance himself from the doctrines that his community is said to hold about him.”⁶⁹ It is because Muslims believe that Jesus was not crucified but was raised bodily to heaven by God, a belief that opposes to Christian belief. Hasan still points out that “Muslims scholars have maintained that the Islamic conception of Jesus shorn of divinity; outside the Trinity; a prophet, in the line with the beliefs and teachings of some of the earliest Jewish-Christian sects, such as the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, who believed Jesus to be the Messiah, but not divine. Muslims claim the Muslim Jesus is the historical Jesus, stripped of a later man-made Christology: Jesus as he

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Mehdi Hasan, “Jesus: the Muslim prophet.”

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 12.

might have been without St Paul or St Augustine or the Council of Nicaea.”⁷⁰ By contrast, the writings of St Paul or any other Christian author is largely based on the sayings and teachings of Jesus. In Acts, St Paul claims: “I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven.”⁷¹ Whatever tension or dispute may have developed among Christians and Muslims, the reality is that Jesus is special for both religions.

There is some evidence that can allow both religions to live in peace. The Qur’an, for instance, encourages believers saying “do not dispute the People of the Book.”⁷² In the same way, the Bible teaches believers saying “always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an account for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”⁷³ If believers from two sides read carefully the verses from the two Books, there is no reason to dispute each other, and if they live according to the teaching of their leaders, there is no reason to fight each other. Hence both communities do not need to be afraid of anything, yet live in peace otherwise.

⁷⁰ Mehdi Hasan, “Jesus: the Muslim prophet.”

⁷¹ Acts 1:1-2, NRSV

⁷² Surat 29: 46

⁷³ 1 Peter 3: 15-16, NRSV

A. Jesus: Prophet of Islam

Publicly, Jesus is recognized as one of the great prophets by Islamic society, partly because their notion depends on “sayings and stories”⁷⁴ that are ascribed to Jesus, rather than on Christian Gospel. These sayings and stories, according to Tarif Khalidi, a former Cambridge professor of Arabic and Islamic studies, are “the sources that range in time from the second/eight century to the twelfth/eighteenth century.”⁷⁵

The author also believes that these sayings and stories are very well crafted from the literary and linguistic points of view. They are also worthy of a figure known in the Qur’an and the Muslim tradition as the “Spirit of God and the Word of God,”⁷⁶ says Khalidi: Jesus is said to be a word from God and a spirit from Him. They are said to belong to the “common age-old fund of wisdom found in the rich traditions of Near Eastern cultures. Some of them are echoes of the Gospels, canonical and extracanonical, but many also seem to have their roots in Hellenistic civilization.”⁷⁷

However, Khalidi recognizes that the starting point for the examination of these sayings and stories will be the Qur’an. The Qur’anic stories and sayings of Jesus, were “fables and fantasies”⁷⁸. The striking different image of Jesus between the Qur’an and the Bible is that Jesus is a controversial prophet in the Quran, whereas Jesus is portrayed as “Son of God”⁷⁹ in the Bible.

⁷⁴ Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 3.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁹ Luke 1:35, NRSV.

Jesus is a controversial prophet. He is the only prophet in the Qur'an who is deliberately made to distance himself from the doctrines that his community is said to hold of him. The term the Qur'an employs in this regard is 'cleansing': Jesus will be cleansed from the perverted beliefs of his followers, and furthermore he himself plays an active role in the cleansing process. In answer to God, Jesus explicitly denies any responsibility for advocating tritheism. God meanwhile denies the Crucifixion. With Jesus, as with no other prophetic figure, the problem is not only to retell his story accurately. There are major doctrinal difficulties with the Christian version of his life and teachings, to which the Qur'an repeatedly returns. In sum, the Qur'anic Jesus, unlike any other prophets, is embroiled in polemic.⁸⁰

The reason for quoting that passage is to indicate the very detailed view of Muslims of Jesus which is different from Christians' point of view. Nevertheless, there are also some similarities between Muslims and Christians, especially between the Bible and the Quran. In fact there are four groups of stories in particular, as follows: "birth and infancy stories; miracles; conversations between Jesus and God; and divine pronouncements on his humanity and servanthood, and place in prophetic line."⁸¹

In summary, Muslims recognize Jesus' sinless birth, which took place under the palm tree. In the same way, they accept that Jesus is granted the power of God so that he could cure the sick and raised the dead. However, Muslims consider Jesus' death as miraculous, that is, he was lifted up to God, where he remains alive and awaiting to fulfill his appointed role at the end of time. Moreover, for them Jesus is simply "a servant of God,"⁸² that is, a human being who does not disdain that status.

⁸⁰ Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 12.

⁸¹ Ibid., 14.

⁸² Ibid.

B. Muslim view on Christian belief in Jesus as Son of God

When discussing the view of Muslims on Christian belief in Jesus as Son of God, we can see various tones of their scholars and theologians, some are strong whereas some are soft enough that they welcome dialogue with Christians. It is indeed a sensitive topic, therefore, personal comment is unlikely to be offered, rather the texts from some sources will be analyzed or presented. The perceptions of Muslims come from every corner of the issues such as theological analysis; moral issue; culture of society; and contemporary dialogue.

Regarding the theological analysis, several differences appeared to be the main issues that divide the two faiths. First of all, Muslims never accept Christian doctrine, as a result they reject the basic faith of Christianity. They see Scriptures and dogmas as artificial, therefore consider them as false revelation. Christine Schirmacher asserts: “Christian doctrine is the greatest sin possible, the unforgivable offence of shirk. Christians err in their understanding of the son-ship of Jesus and in their belief in the crucifixion of Jesus and their doctrine of the fall of mankind.”⁸³

Moreover, Muslims also conceive the Bible as a corrupted text, which they regard as “a combination of myths, legend, and history.”⁸⁴ They think that Biblical historical criticism was developed by Christian theologians. For this, Schirmacher continues: “due to the later corruption of the Biblical text, this idea of Christianity can no longer be found in the Christian scriptures but has to be sought in the Qur’an. The Trinity, which caused a major split in the Christian church, is not part of this initial Christian teaching but was introduced only as a

⁸³ Christine Schirmacher, “The Islamic view of Christians: Qur’an and Hadith,” http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/pdf/the_islamic_view_of_Christians-Qur%27an_and_Hadith.pdf (accessed on March 4, 2015).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

result of the philosophical school in Alexandria.”⁸⁵ Therefore, they consider Christian theology as the result of scientific research rather than God’s word. According to Ahmad Shalabi, “the themes of trinity, crucifixion, and redemption are all the combination of the Apostle Paul’s personal opinions coupled with pagan elements which he introduced into Christianity.” So, the view of Muslims on Christianity is that belief in Jesus as Son of God is largely based on the Christian Bible and doctrine.

Regarding the moral issue, Muslims point out the moral concerns of many Muslims living in a non-Muslim society, Western society in particular. They characterize “Western society as such as a Zina-society that has become obsessed by fornication and adultery. The overall decline of morality and the break-up of the family make many Muslims feel unsure.”⁸⁶ It is believed that the negative perception of Muslims on Christianity has been enormously triggered by the relationship between the Middle East and Western countries.

Concerning culture, devout Muslims also indicate many issues, “which are not observed in the West such as the non-consumption of alcohol, blood, carrion, pork, products derived from it, the issues of marriage, divorce, the ritual slaughter of animals, the right to Islamic holidays and the separation of boys and girls during physical education.”⁸⁷

To conclude, the concerns of Muslims are associated with both negative and positive issues: they approach Christian faith without carefully understanding it, which leads them to finding Christians and their faith as complex. Moreover, they take only the western world as an example of Christian way of life and try to look down on Christianity as a whole. But Christians are dwelling around the world and not just in western countries. On the other hand,

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

they are logical to be concerned with the morality of the West, such as the legalization of gay marriage, the decline of the numbers of Christians, and many other issues that are ongoing in the western countries

C. Mary and the Angel according to Islam

First of all, Mary occupies a very important position in Muslim history, hence she is highly honored as the mother of a prophet, as the virgin mother. Thus Mehdi Hasan claims: “the Virgin Mary, or Maryam, as she is known in the Qur’an, is considered by Muslims to hold the most exalted spiritual position among women. She is the only woman mentioned by name in Islam’s holy book and a chapter of the Qur’an is named after her.”⁸⁸ The similarity of between the Bible and the Qur’an is that both hold the story that Mary is chosen to be the Mother of Jesus mediated by the Angel Gabriel. We can see in the Qur’an God (Allah) calls Mary to be the Mother of Jesus: “And when the angels said, ‘O Mary Allah has chosen you and purified you, and He has chosen you to be above the world’s women. O Mary, Allah gives you the good news of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary,’ she said ‘My Lord, how shall I have a child seeing that no human has ever touched me?’”⁸⁹

In fact, Mary appears more times in the Qur’an than in the Bible. By looking at the quotation above, we can understand that the Qur’an affirms the virgin birth, echoing Mary’s response to the angel Gabriel from St. Luke’s Gospel, when she says: “how can it be since I am a virgin?”⁹⁰ Therefore, Muslims agree Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary; Mary was chosen by Allah through angel the Gabriel; Mary is worthy of high honor, in keeping with the

⁸⁸ Mehdi Hasan, “Jesus: The Muslim prophet.”

⁸⁹ Surat 3:42-47

⁹⁰ Luke 1:34, NRSV

role God for chose her. However, there is one thing Muslim theologians do not pay attention to which is the sinlessness the virgin birth. The reason according to Daniel Ali & Robert Spencer is “they do not want to pursue a line of thought that might lead to the affirmation that Jesus was divine, a very disturbing conclusion for the Muslim.”⁹¹ The possible reason is that if Muslims affirm Jesus was divine, then they will have to accept the whole process of Christian doctrine. In other word, if they do so, they automatically become Christians. As we know, Muslims reject the divinity of Jesus: they see the Bible and doctrine as human-developed writings rather than God’s revelation, as I mentioned above.

Regarding the belief of Muslim on angels, my presentation here is based on the articles of Imam Kamil Mufti, a Muslim scholar. Angels, he says, “are thought of as good forces of nature, hologram images or illusions.”⁹² He also suggests that in Islamic doctrine, the angels are real created beings who will eventually suffer death, but are generally hidden from our senses. Mufti claims that they are not divine or semi-divine, and they are not God’s associates running different districts of the universe. His comment is likely intended to combat the notion of the Holy Spirit, in Christianity.

He continues arguing that in the Islamic worldview, there are no fallen angels: they are not divided into good or evil angels. Human beings, he says, do not become angels after death. Based on Muslim scriptures, Mufti agrees that angels were created from light before human beings were created, and thus their graphic or symbolic representation in Islamic art is rare. He describes some of the greatest angels recognized by Muslims: “Gabriel and the attendants

⁹¹ Ali & Spencer, *Inside Islam*, 62.

⁹² Kamil Mufti, “Reality of Angels,” published on 16 Jan 2006- last modified on 04 Jan 2015 www.islamreligion.com/articles/41 (accessed on March 5, 2015).

of God's throne are among the greatest angels. In general Muslims believe in specific angels like Gabriel, Michael, and Malik the guard over Hell."⁹³

The ability and power of angels are given by God, hence they can take on different forms as the Qur'an describes at the moment of Jesus' conception. God sent Gabriel to Mary in the form of a man: "We sent to her Our Spirit and he became incarnate for her as a well-proportioned human."⁹⁴ Gabriel is considered as a heavenly messenger to mankind, He conveys the revelation from God to man, as it in Sura 2:97: "whoever is an enemy of Gabriel, it is he who has brought it down on your heart with the will of Allah, confirming what has been (revealed) before it and as a guidance and good news for the faithful."

Apart from revealing good news, Mufti still lays out some more tasks for Angels. For example, some angels are in charge of executing God's law in the physical world, some are responsible for taking souls out of bodies at the time of death, some are responsible for protecting the believers throughout their life, some are responsible for recording the deeds of man, some are responsible for testing people in the grave, some are responsible for breathing the soul into the fetus and writing down provisions.

He concludes by saying that the angels are a grandiose creation of God, varying in number, roles, and abilities. God is in no need of these creatures, but having knowledge and belief in them adds to the awe that one feels towards God, in that He is able to create as He wishes, for indeed the magnificence of His creation is a proof of the magnificence of the Creator.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Sura 19:17

D. The Bible Jesus and the Qur'an Jesus

As we have seen above, Muslims feel very offended by the faith in which Christians believe Jesus to be the Son of God. In the same way, Christians must be offended by the faith of Muslims who claim Jesus is not the Son of God. The collision of two faiths is due to the issue of the divinity of Jesus. This topic touches on words of Jesus Himself, both in the Bible and in the Qur'an. In other word, let Jesus justify Himself by His sayings, teachings, his ministry, rather than be justified by the people who believe in Him.

First of all, all the four Gospels present that Jesus claims he is the Son of God. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is asked by the high priest: "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God," Jesus said to Him, "You have said so." But I tell you from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."⁹⁵ In the same situation in the Gospel of Mark Jesus is asked: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One? Jesus said, "I am: and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."⁹⁶ Moreover, we can still see in the Gospel of Luke: "Are you then, the Son of God? He said to them, you say that I am."⁹⁷ It is not surprising that Jesus boldly claims himself as the Son of God because the Father also claims Jesus as His Son as revealed in Luke when the baptism of Jesus took place: "this is my Son, my Chosen."⁹⁸

The three biblical accounts lead us to the question to what extent Jesus really means He is the Son of Man and the right hand of the Power. Is it meant that he is not the Son of God? We

⁹⁵ Matthew 26:63-64, NRSV

⁹⁶ Mark 14: 61-63, NRSV

⁹⁷ Luke 22:70, NRSV

⁹⁸ Luke 9:35, NRSV

should wait a moment for two reasons: first, Jesus is asked whether He is the Son of God, and not son of man, second, both Muslims and Christians agree that Jesus was born to Mary without having relationship with a man. I think we can see the answer in the Gospel of John when Jesus said: “just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”⁹⁹ Yet it is still debatable in the sense that Jesus has not said directly my father, but the father. But when we move further in the same Gospel Jesus reveals directly who His Father is by saying: “The Father and I are one.”¹⁰⁰ In addition, Jesus unveils the Power as His Father, claiming: “in my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.”¹⁰¹ This passage is the most solid evidence that Jesus’ Father is the Power where He is going and dwelling.

Regarding the testimony of the Son of God, I would like to present three particular occasions that Jesus is presented as the Son of God. Firstly, the Gospel of Luke presents: “the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”¹⁰² This conversation is between the angel and Mary, the mother of Jesus. The phrase “the power of the Most High” echoes the use of the expression by Jesus mentioned above. Secondly, we see in the 1 John: “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”¹⁰³ Thirdly, the Gospel of John claims: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may

⁹⁹ John 10:15, NRSV

¹⁰⁰ John 10:30, NRSV

¹⁰¹ John 14:2, NRSV

¹⁰² Luke 1:35, NRSV

¹⁰³ 1 John 1:20, NRSV

have eternal life.”¹⁰⁴ Those three biblical accounts do not just agree that Jesus is the Son of God, but rather they affirm that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

Let me conclude with the summary of Jesus’ teaching in the Gospel of John which I believe is the statement that Jesus has made in order to reveal his identity.

Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.¹⁰⁵

This passage is a gist of Jesus’ identity. It demonstrates that Jesus comes from his Father; comes to this world to save the world; therefore, he and his Father are one, as he insisted in the other passages.

We have seen how Jesus speaks of himself in the Gospel, so now we turn to the Qur’an. What has Jesus to say in scripture of the Islam? We know that Muslims strongly disagree that Jesus and God are the same. Moreover, the Qur’an condemns those who believe that Jesus is divine. The conversation of the angel with Mary, according to the Qur’an, goes: “O Mary, when Allah gives you the good news of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary.”¹⁰⁶ As we can see, the Qur’an accepts Jesus as Messiah, not as God, this is the main reason why Muslims do not have Christological views such as Christians have.

¹⁰⁴ John 3: 16 NRSV

¹⁰⁵ John 12:44-50 NRSV

¹⁰⁶ Sura 3:45.

In addition, Muslims emphasize more on the Word. In fact, they perceive Jesus as the “Word of God and the Spirit of God.”¹⁰⁷ This word and spirit is the main image in the Qur’an. Karif Khalidi asserts: “in broad terms, the argument has tended to hinge largely upon the proper interpretation of two epithets applied to him in the Qur’an: he is said to be the word from God and the spirit from him.”¹⁰⁸ The word of Jesus in the Qur’an can be seen in Sura 5:116 “Jesus said: Glory be to you! It cannot be that I would say that which is not mine by right. Had I said it, You would have known it. You know what is in my soul, but I know not what is in Yours. Only you can truly know the unseen.” Some Muslim scholars regard this passage as the vigorous Qur’anic denunciation of the Trinity as tritheism.

Next, the Qur’an also presents Jesus’ word as Jesus’ claim to be a servant of Allah: “He said, indeed I am a servant of Allah! He has given me the Book made me a prophet.”¹⁰⁹ This Qur’anic passage is a hard passage for Muslims to believe in Jesus’ divinity, because they think that God cannot be a servant since He possesses almighty power.

¹⁰⁷ Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁹ Sura 19:30.

CHAPTER III

THE PROSPECT OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM ON JESUS

This chapter is a quest for the assumptions from both religions concerning the notions of sin and salvation. In other words, it examines the different treatment by Christianity and Islam of sin and salvation, based on their beliefs and teachings. In the same way, this chapter will present the Christian eschatology. Likewise, it will present the return of Jesus according to the teaching of Islam. In doing this, I believe that common themes may be, directly or indirectly, reached so that it is easier to comprehend the closeness of these two faiths.

1. Christianity's notions of Sin and Salvation

The dictionary of theology comes out with the definition of sin as “any thought, word, or deed that deliberately disobeys God’s will and in some way rejects the divine goodness and love.”¹¹⁰ Moreover, “*The Rite of Penance (RT)*”¹¹¹ describes sin as “an offense and disobedience against God which disrupts our friendship with him.”¹¹² Therefore, the Christian notion of sin is considered an obstacle to find God.

David M. Coffey asserts that “the Catholic tradition knows at least four ways of distinguishing sins.”¹¹³ First, the “the sin of nature,”¹¹⁴ which he suggests that with the exception of Jesus and Mary, all human beings share by the very fact of possessing human nature, that is original sin. Nevertheless, he attains that human nature itself is not sinful

¹¹⁰ O’Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 243.

¹¹¹ David M. Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, ed. John, D. Laurance (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), xiii.

¹¹² Coffey, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation*, 2.

¹¹³ Ibid, 3.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 4.

because it was created by God. However, it became tainted by sin through the sinful choice of human beings. “Original sin is overcome in each person through baptism itself, yet the sinner bears personal responsibility for the personal sin”¹¹⁵ claimed David M. Coffey. Second, the distinction between “social sin and sin of individual,”¹¹⁶ which enacted through men frequently join together to commit injustice, or through collective behavior of certain social group. In this case, says David M. Coffey, “it is only fitting that they should help each other in doing penance so that freed from sin by grace of Christ they may work with all men of good will for justice and peace in the world.”¹¹⁷

Third, “the distinguishing of sins is according to the virtue violated by sin: thus for example there are sins of imprudence, or sins of injustice, to name offenses against just two of the four cardinal virtues.”¹¹⁸ The final distinction of sin is “mortal and venial, the so-called theological distinction of sins. Rite of Penance does this by dividing sins into grave and venial.”¹¹⁹ Whatever sin it may be, Christians firmly believe that all human beings or all sinners have overcome sin through Jesus Christ. Thus, Vatican II claims: “we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us by the sacrifice of the Cross from original sin and from all those personal sins.”¹²⁰ The conclusion is that there are two main sins: original and personal sin in, and which both have been overcome through the saving work of Jesus.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II*, New Revised Edition (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1982), 391.

2. The notion of Islam on Sin and Salvation

Islam does not concentrate much on the idea of sin. However, some of its teachings are directly or indirectly relevant to the avoidance of sin, which means they also propose a moral standard or ethical perception. John Renard, who holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from Harvard, affirms that “Islam’s teachings on sin and final accountability are highly developed.”¹²¹ He gives some clues of sin from the perspective of Islam such as forgetfulness of God that leads directly to forgetfulness of one’s inmost self that can gradually stifle the voice of conscience.

Unlike Christianity, “Islam rejects the notions of original sin and redemption because human beings are directly responsible,”¹²² claims John Renard. It means the individual decides his or her final destiny. For this reason, Renard asserts: “those who make their choices in this life in isolation from the needs of the human community as a whole will fashion their own hell hereafter.”¹²³ However, he insists that “seeking forgiveness is at the heart of Qur’anic ethics; it is the first step toward becoming receptive to the experience of God’s mercy, and moral growth is an ascending spiral.”¹²⁴

Next, the Islamic notion of sin according to two experts of Islam: Daniel Ali, the founder of Christian-Islam Forum, and Robert Spencer, the author of two books on Islam. They state that “there are three types of sin which Allah will not forgive sinners: Attributing Partners to Allah; The Killing of a Believer; and Apostasy.”¹²⁵ All three are based on the Qur’anic texts.

¹²¹Renard, *101 Questions and Answers on Islam*, 49.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ali & Spencer, *Inside Islam*, 96.

The first is from Sura 4:116 :“Indeed Allah does not forgive that any partner should be ascribed to Him, but He forgives anything besides that to whomever He wishes. And whoever ascribes partners to Allah has certainly strayed into far error.”¹²⁶ The sin is called “shirk.”

The second is from Sura 4: 93: “Should anyone kill a believer intentionally, his requital shall be hell, to remain in it; Allah shall be wrathful at him and curse him and He shall prepare for him a great punishment.”¹²⁷ The question is can anyone kill a believer intentionally? The answer is no, because “the moral injunction to command the good and forbid the evil goes a step further than the saying familiar to Christians, do good and avoid evil,”¹²⁸ claim John Benard.

The third is from Sura 3: 90: “excepting those who join a people between whom and you there is a treaty, or such as come to you with hearts reluctant to fight you or to fight their own people. Had Allah wished, He would have imposed upon you and they would have surely fought you.”¹²⁹ Again, we should think it over here, must a non-Muslim be fought despite he or she does not fight? The answer is no, because the Qur’anic texts goes on saying “so if they keep out of your way and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then Allah does not allow you any course (of action) against them.”¹³⁰ This text, in my view, seems to epitomize the belief that all people ought to live in peace and stability.

¹²⁶ Sura 4: 116.

¹²⁷ Sura 4: 93.

¹²⁸ Benard, *101 Questions and Answers on Islam*, 49.

¹²⁹ Sura 4: 90.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

3. Christian Eschatology

The Greek term “Eschata”¹³¹ connotes the last things, therefore “Eschatology”¹³² will have to deal with knowledge of the last things. Gerald O’Collins and Edward G. Farrugia assert: “eschatology denotes that future directedness of our entire present existence.”¹³³ The pair also defines eschatology as a branch of systematic theology which studies God’s final kingdom, as expressed by its Old Testament preparation, the preaching of Jesus, and the teaching of the New Testament Church. According to Charles W. Gusmer, the kingdom of God is much related to the healing of Jesus as a sign of eschatology expressed by its New Testament. He claims: “the healing works of Jesus are eschatological signs in the sense of the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’. His acts of power foreshadow the ultimate transformation of humanity and of the universe on the day of Jesus’ Second Coming, the resurrection of all flesh, an event not yet come to pass.”¹³⁴

Regarding the Old Testament preparation, it is crucial to take a look to the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Judah and Jerusalem: “it will happen in the final days, then he will judge between the nations and arbitrate between many peoples”¹³⁵ (Isa. 2: 2, 4). The vision of the prophet is linked to the last judgment. But it is still unknown who is the one will judge the nations and peoples.

¹³¹ O’ Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 79.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Charles W. Gusmer, *And You Visited Me: Sacramental Ministry to the Sick and the Dying*, Revised Edition, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 150.

¹³⁵ Isaiah 2:2,4, NJB

Then we must move forward to the preaching of Jesus, if we want to know who this judge. For this I believe the most suitable passage is from the book of Revelation. “See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”¹³⁶ (Rev.22:12-13). The passage conveys that the reward Jesus will pay is a result of present actions, that is why most of the authors see eschatology as present and future events, and the future is that Jesus will come again in this world in glory that is why eschatology is relevant to the second coming.

Finally, the teaching of New Testament Church: after believing the Gospel and becoming the followers of Christ, Christians follow confess through the “Profession of Faith or Creed”¹³⁷, saying, “He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.”¹³⁸ This is the core of Christian eschatology since it deals with judgment, kingdom, and hope in the future.

Kenneth L. Gentry stresses: “in fact, by definition eschatology emphasizes end-time events.”¹³⁹ The striking point he makes is that the end time events are what he calls “postmillennialism”¹⁴⁰, which teaches that Christ will return to earth after a long era of gospel progress on that Christ wins the victory before he returns. He states: “postmillennialism is the only eschatological system that offers historical hope, it is the only

¹³⁶ Rev. 22:12-13, NRSV

¹³⁷ The Order Of Mass: for the use of the people excerpts from the English Language edition (2010) of the Roman Missal (2008), 11.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. “The Postmillennial Vision of Christian Eschatology,” eds.a.ebscohost.com (accessed on March 27, 2015).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

system offering hope within the continuous, unfolding history in which we presently live.”¹⁴¹ This approach is mainly focused on the second coming of Jesus, as the chief hope for the humanity.

David Wilkinson agrees: “it is important to stress that the meaning of Christian eschatology goes much beyond the common understanding of that word, as it implies the interaction between the future and the present.”¹⁴² He thinks that the challenge for theologians is clearer if one considers the end of the whole universe, as it leads us to re-examine aspects such as hope and the function of man in the world. He also suggests that this kind of problem is strictly connected with other essential principles of the Christian doctrine. The author mentions three particular fields: “providence, Resurrection, and new creation.”¹⁴³

So, let me analyze those three particular fields according to the Church’s documents. Firstly, concerning providence, the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms: “by his providence God protects and governs all things which he has made, reaching mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and ordering all things well. For all are open and laid bare to his eyes, even those things which are yet to come into existence through the free action of creatures.”¹⁴⁴ This statement provides the clue that providence is the idea of God’s guidance of his creation toward perfection.

Secondly, concerning the Resurrection, this is the fact that Jesus was raised from death: “not a mere return to earthly life, but the passage of Jesus through death to his definitive,

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² David Wilkinson, “Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe,” eds.a.ebscohost.com (accessed on March 25, 2015).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ CCC, 302.

transformed life that has inaugurated the final resurrection of human beings and their world.” This passage conveys Christian belief that Christ has died in order to save the world and humanity. In the same way, Roch A Kereszty, asserts: “as for the pre-Pauline kerygma, the resurrection of Christ includes his transformed, glorified body.”¹⁴⁵ Therefore, we must also believe that on the very last day human beings will be transformed and glorified bodily by the help of Christ. Hence, Rosh A Kereszty suggests that a part of Judaism at the time of Jesus expected a bodily resurrection of the dead, in particular of the just on the very last day at the dawn of the new age. This is why David Wilkinson mentioned the third point: the new creation.

The new creation: it is understood that a new creation is due to take place on the last day, when Jesus comes again in glory and establishes a new era, or creates something new. For this reason, Rosh A Kereszty states: “the pre-Pauline kerygma applies this well-known promise of the general eschatological resurrection to Jesus: the new age dawned on us because this one individual, Jesus of Nazareth, rose from the dead.”¹⁴⁶ Therefore, as a whole, eschatology, according to the Christian point of view, is a result of one of covenants made by God. As the Davidic Messiah, Christ must return to justify the remnant of Jews and Gentiles, to restore Israel, to judge the nations and to establish the glory of God as the sovereign ruler of the world.

¹⁴⁵ Roch A Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, Revised and Updated Edition, (New York: St Pauls Publication, 2002), 36.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

4. Eschatological view of Islam

It is hard to start writing about the Islamic eschatology because the information is complicated. Different authors convey different points of view, hence, this presentation is largely depended on sources, some are written by Muslims scholars, whereas some are not. In terms of terminology, Hoda El Shakry puts it: “eschatology denotes an apocalyptic end of time of history of humanity. Islamic eschatology encompasses a complete reordering of the world through the foretold major and minor signs of the apocalypse, the Day of Resurrection [*Yawm al-Qiyamah*], as well as the final judgment.”¹⁴⁷ The striking point is that Hoda uses the terms: signs and the Day of Resurrection, which are relatively close to the Christian terms.

There are three major sources to depend on, regarding eschatological view of Islam, according to Dr. Ahmad Shafaat: “the light of the teaching of the prophet as contained in the Qur’an; the authentic Hadith; and the light of other Muslims traditions”¹⁴⁸. Above all, the connotation of Islamic eschatology is not too far from the notion of Christianity since they also maintain the existence of “Heaven and Hell,”¹⁴⁹ “the signs of Judgment Day,”¹⁵⁰ and “the second coming of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵¹

First, in the light of teaching of the prophet as contained in the Qur’an: the holy book contains warnings that someone can be judged by Allah according to their faith and good deeds. If someone has faith and good deeds, then Allah can free him or her from darkness into

¹⁴⁷ Hoda El Shakry, “Revolutionary Eschatology: Islam & the End of Time in al-Tahir Wattar’s *al-Zilzal*, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 42 (2011),” ezproxy.usj.edu.mo (accessed on April 14, 2015).

¹⁴⁸ Ahmad Shafaat, “Islamic View of the Coming/Return of Jesus,” published in May 2003, www.islamicperspectives.com (accessed on April 14, 2015).

¹⁴⁹ Ali & Spencer, *Inside Islam*, 39.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

light. In Sura 2:82: “And those who have faith and do righteous deeds, they shall be the inhabitants of paradise they shall remain in it [forever].” This passage agrees that there is heaven in the Islamic belief. Furthermore, Sura 2:257 says: “Allah is the Guardian of the faithful: He brings them out of darkness into light. As for the faithless, their patrons are the Rebels, who drive them out of light into darkness. They shall be the inmates of the Fire and they shall remain in it [forever].” This passage recognizes that there is hell in the Islamic belief.

Second, the authentic Hadiths: it is thought to be the second sacred book of Islam; it is a collection of Muhammad’s sayings that were not considered to be revelation from Allah. Most of the scholars agree that the Hadiths are the major source of Islamic eschatology, and agree that their passages concerning the end times are highly contradictory. However, at least we know that “a number of Hadiths are as much instructions on how to live as on how to die”¹⁵², claims John Renard.

Third, in the light of the other Muslims’ traditions, closely linked to the Hadith. This it is a continuation from the Hadiths, since both deal with “signs” that point to the climactic event of Islamic eschatology, namely “the Hour,” which refers to the time of resurrection and judgment. Daniel Ali & Robert Spencer hold that “among the signs of Judgment Day, Islamic tradition holds that the greatest of all is the second coming of Jesus Christ! It is He, not Muhammad or anyone else, whom Muslims expect to return to earth in the last days.”¹⁵³ By contrast, Ahmad Shafaat insists: “in the light of the Qur’an and the Hadith, the figure that comes closest to fulfilling earlier messianic or eschatological prophecies, and thus being a

¹⁵² Renard, *101 Questions and Answers on Islam*, 41.

¹⁵³ Ali & Spencer, *Inside Islam*, 39.

messianic figure is the prophet Muhammad. The belief in Muhammad as the last prophet also gives him an eschatological or messianic character.”¹⁵⁴

There are three particular phrases used by the authors quoted above. I believe they should be analyzed in order not to confuse Islamic eschatology with that of Christianity. They are, first of all, messianic prophecies, second of all, the day of Resurrection, and finally, the second coming of Christ.

Regarding messianic prophecies, Ahmad Shafaat discusses that “the really important figure in the Qur’an are prophets (*ambiya*) and messengers (*rusul*), not kings or priests.”¹⁵⁵ It seems that Ahmad Shafaat wants to point out the difference between the Islamic view and the Christian view the term ‘messiah.’ Regarding the day of Resurrection, David R. Reagan suggests that “there is only one resurrection. The saved and unsaved are resurrected at the same time. Mohammad will be the first human being to be resurrected.”¹⁵⁶ This is totally opposite to the Christian notion of the resurrection, since Christians believe that Christ is the first person to be resurrected. Regarding the second coming of Jesus, David R. Reagan asserts: “Jesus was not crucified or resurrected, he was lifted up to Heaven. One of the reasons He must return is that He can experience death, like all other men.”¹⁵⁷ He also suggests that the second coming of Jesus is not considered to be the decisive event, but it is viewed as a sign pointing towards the hour. The beginning of the end times is marked by the appearance of the Antichrist, who is called Dajjal.

¹⁵⁴ Shafaat, *Islamic view of the coming/return of Jesus*.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ David R. Reagan, “Islamic Eschatology: What are the end-time prophecies of Islam?” <http://www.lamblion.com/articles/articles-islam2.php> (accessed on April 12, 2015).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

In the introduction, readers are provided the Muslim stance on Jesus and his believers. Likewise it also presents the current issues particularly the horrible acts of some Muslim extremists towards Christians in the Middle East and many other regions. At the same time, it offers the view and response of some devout Muslims and Muslim scholars on the attitude of some radical groups.

Readers are also presented the overview or the chronology of the thesis in the introductory part. Moreover, we can see the fields that the dissertation is going to be including, dealing with examining, discussing, and expanding. For example, this research raises some questions based on the assumption of two religions: Islam and Christianity. It furthermore highlights some parallel and unparallel positions among those two religions.

Chapter one consults the historical background between Christianity and Islam. Additionally, it presents some common themes such as Abrahamic religion and monotheism, and different themes such as the interpretation of God, contradictions between the Bible and the Qur'an, and the acknowledgement of Jesus. This chapter also deals with the birth of Christianity and Islam, the emergence of the Bible and the Qur'an.

Chapter two is the core of the dissertation, because it deals with the Muslim view of Jesus. It presents the stance of Muslims on Jesus, or the Muslim acceptance of Jesus. In the same way, we can see the Muslim view on Christianity and its belief, doctrine, and the Bible. Finally, this chapter engages with the Muslim view on Mary and the Angel, according to the Qur'an and Muslim tradition.

Chapter three presented the perspective of Christianity and Islam on Jesus. It also demonstrates how these two religions recognize the notion of sin and salvation. In other

words, it offers the eschatological view of both Christianity and Islam. Readers are presented the differences between the two religions on judgment, heaven, hell, the second coming of Jesus, and the kingdom of God.

As a whole, this thesis is primarily historical, Christological, and dialogical. Historically speaking, Christianity was born earlier than Islam, however, the number of Christians are steadily declining whereas the number of Muslims are rapidly increasing. Regarding Christology, Christians believe Jesus Christ was sent by God from heaven, therefore he is the Son of God. By contrast, Muslims always regard Jesus as one of the great prophets. He is said to be a word from God and a spirit for him. It is the Ascension rather than the Crucifixion which marks the high point of his life in the Qur'an and in the Muslim traditions as a whole. Concerning the dialogue, Christians and Muslims have been seeking to reach out to one another in order that both communities maintain peace and stability. Unity is a key to peace and stability, we can see Christianity has several denominations and sometimes it is hard for them to maintain unity. Likewise, Islam has two groups in particular and it is also hard for them to keep unity.

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