



CHRISTOLOGY IN THE QUR'AN:

CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE FOR THE PROMOTION OF COMMON VALUES

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OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION

PART ONE

1. **A PREAMBLE:** Christology as a contentious subject in Christian-Muslim Relations.
2. **Dialogue** as the best way forward: What does this sense of dialogue entail?
3. **Christology as Barrier** to Christian-Muslim Relations – ***The difference***
 - *The Tawhid versus the Holy Trinity*
 - *Jesus as “Son of God”*
 - *The Problem of Original Sin (Adam and Eve’s Sin)*
 - *The Problem of the Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection*

PART TWO

4. **Christology as Bridge** to Christian-Muslim Relations - ***Commonalities***
 - *The Virginal Conception of Jesus (Surah 19:16-21)*
 - *The miracles Jesus performed (Surah 5:109-110)*
 - *The Ascension (Surah 4:157-158) and the Second Coming (Surah 43:57-67)*
5. **Christology and Dialogue** for the Promotion of Common Values
6. **Conclusion**

Things to Note

- ❖ **The Qur'an:** Muslims view it to be sacred – a verbatim word of God dictated to Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel.
- ❖ **The Christology of the Gospel of Mark**
 - ✓ **The 'Son of God' motif (1:16 – 8:26)**
 - ✓ **The 'snap poll' – who do people say I am? (8:26-29)**
 - ✓ **The 'Son of Man' motif (8:31 – 16:8)**
 - ✓ **"truly, this man was the son of God", The Centurion.**
 - ✓ **The Epilogue (16: 9-20)**
- ❖ The Purpose of this presentation is to tease out what the Qur'an has to say about Jesus, the Messiah, and to present that as grounds for possible Christian-Muslim Dialogue.

Christology in Christian-Muslim Relations: A Preamble

- ❖ The historical contours of Christian-Muslim relations have often been described as one of claim and counter, and the mutual dismissal of the other's beliefs. **Why?**
- ❖ The reason is "Islam and Christianity are pre-eminently religions of belief.
- ❖ Each has struggled to define its own orthodoxy against variant heterodoxies and heresies from within and each has a history of self-proclamation as universal truth against any other claimant of truth from without" (Pratt, D. *The Challenge of Islam*. 2005, p102).
- ❖ For Christians, Jesus Christ is the "Son of God" and "Saviour of the World", an understanding which is central to the Christian Scriptures.
 - ✓ **Mk 1:1: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah (the Christ), the Son of God" (KJV).**
 - ✓ As Walter Kasper put it, "the assertion that 'Jesus is 'the Christ' is the basic statement of Christian belief and Christology is no more than the conscientious elucidation of that proposition" (Walter Kasper. *Jesus The Christ*. 1976, p15-16).

A Preamble.....

- ❖ Against this Christological understanding is the later (after 600 year) Islamic view of Jesus as a “prophet and messenger of Allah”.
- ❖ **Surah 5: 46-47:** Allah said, “we sent Jesus. The son of Mary as prophet to confirm the Torah. We gave him the Gospel to provide light and guidance to all who belief in God”
 - ✓ As Muhammad Ata ur-Rahim put it, “Jesus was a prophet was sent to the people of this earth; that he was a messenger whose guidance and teaching were a reaffirmation of the guidance which the prophets before him had brought and a preparation for the guidance which the prophet coming after him would bring” (*Jesus Prophet of Islam*. 1999, p206).
- ❖ These contention led Gaudeul to say that “Islam and Christianity shared the same universe at a point, “but mentally they lived in different worlds and, as time went on, the mental universe of each society grew more impervious to the thinking, the values... and indeed the whole universe of the other” (Gaudeul, J. *Encounter and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*. 1990, p191).
- ❖ Yet, the truth is that Islam and Christianity have something more to say about Jesus Christ in the Qur'an and the Bible than any other religion in the world.
- ❖ As things stand, at least for now, both religions are here to stay. Number of Christians in the world = **2.2bn** (Catholics = 1.2bn). Muslims = **1.8bn**.
- ❖ So, how can these two faith communities engage creatively and constructively in conversations about Jesus Christ that lead to mutual learning and enrichment?

THE QUESTION OF DIALOGUE

- ❖ Interreligious dialogue has been variously defined over the past 4 decades.
- ❖ For instance, John V. Taylor defined it as the “sustained conversation between parties who are not saying the same thing and who recognize and respect contradictions and mutual exclusions between their various ways of thinking” (John V. Taylor. “The Theological Basis of Interfaith Dialogue” 1979, p373).
- ❖ For Jason Barker, it is “a formal process in which authoritative members of at least two religious communities come together for an extended and serious discussion of the beliefs and practices that separate the communities” (Jason Barker. *Christians and Interreligious Dialogue*. 1998, p7).
- ❖ Leonard Swidler, sees it as “a conversation between two or more persons with differing views, the primary purpose of which is for the participants to learn from each other so that both can change and grow” (Leonard Swidler. *Towards a Universal Theology of Religions*. 1988, p6)
- ❖ **My definition:** interreligious dialogue is “the constructive and positive conversation between people of different religious traditions, on issues of religious significance, for the purpose of mutual learning and enrichment.”

The Essential Starting Points for this form of Dialogue

- ❖ Dialogue here entails:
 - Deeper Knowledge and commitment to one's religious beliefs and practices
 - a deliberate effort to engage genuinely and respectfully with another on issues of religious significance;
 - a willingness to listen and understand what the other has to say;
 - An openness to learn from what is said;
 - a desire to relate to, communicate with and be understood by the other.
- ❖ In Christians and Muslims must see the other as an Equal Partner in dialogue.



The Goal of Dialogue

The Goal of this form of Dialogue

. To Know oneself ever more profoundly

. To know the other more authentically

. And to live together more accordingly

Here, dialogue is oriented not just towards learning about the other but also learning from them which leads to a better understanding of oneself and the other.

What about conversion? Is the absence of conversion a sign of dialogical aporia?

The Outcome of Dialogue

A fruitful dialogue is measured by its outcomes:

- ❖ It could lead to a better understanding and appreciation of each other's faith.
- ❖ It could also lead to better relationships between the two faith communities.
- ❖ Dialogue is also an excellent school for overcoming the ignorance and prejudice we harbour about the religious other.
- ❖ It could also lead to conversion – personal response. Having carefully examined their faith claims, a person might make a life-changing decision as a result of a transparent and free dialogue.

The Question of Christology in Christianity and Islam

❑ Christology from a Christian Perspective

- “Christology” has its etymological roots from two Greek words: “**Χριστός**” (Christos) which means “**Christ**” and “**λογία**” (logos) which means “word,” “reason” or “**the study of**”.
- Since “Christ” relates to Jesus, we could simply say that “Christology” within a Christian context, refers to “the study of the person and mission of Jesus the Christ.”
- As Raymond Brown puts it, “Christology discusses how Jesus came to be called *Messiah* or *Christ* and what was meant by that designation”. (Raymond Brown. *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*. 1994, p3)
- So, we could say that “Christology” represents a renewed response to the question Jesus put to his disciples: “Who do people say I am?”... “who do you say I am?” (**Mark 8:27-28**). From the testimony of the synoptic Gospels, we find different responses to this Christological question:
- While others said he was John the Baptist, still others said he was Elijah or one of the Ancient prophets. But for Peter, Jesus is “**the Christ, the son of the living God**” (**Mark 8:29**).

Christology from a Christian Perspective...

- ❖ So from the text of **Mark 8:27-29**, we could say that the different responses to the Christological question “who do you say I am?” represent the diverse understandings of the early Christians’ experience of Jesus, giving rise to what some scholars called the ‘multiple christologies’ of the New Testament (**Richard Longenecker. *Contours of Christology of the New Testament*. 2005**).
- ❖ Within these divergences of opinion, Christian faith and theology stresses that an authentic Christian response to the Christological question: “**who do you say I am?**” must be a reaffirmation of Peter’s response: “You are the Christ, the son of the living of God” (**Mark 8:29; Matthew 16:16**).
- ❖ This is because Peter’s response to the question was approved by Jesus’ when he said: “**“Blessed are you, Simon! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven”** (Matthew 16:17).
- ❖ From this perspective, Raymond Brown views Christology “as that subject which discusses any evaluation of Jesus in respect to who he was and the role he played in the divine plan. It addresses issues relating to Jesus as both God and Man and how he became such in the incarnation (**Brown, R. *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*. 1994**).
- ❖ Thus, a Christian cannot go into dialogue on Christology without full commitment to the above understanding of the identity and mission of Jesus Christ.

Christology in Islam?

❑ What is Islam?

- ❖ The word “Islam” comes from the Arabic word (al-’islām) which literally means “**to surrender or to submit**”. In a religious sense, it means the “submission or surrender of oneself to Allah (God)”.
- ❖ Islam is therefore a religion founded by the prophet Muhammad in the 7th century AD/CE. As a religion, Islam is structured on **five pillars** which constitute the foundation of the religion i.e. **The Shahada, the Salat, Zakat, Ramadan and Hajj**.
- ❖ Islam also has **six articles of faith** which every Muslim must ascribe to. These are: **Believe in One God (Tawhid), in the Angels, in the Revealed Books (especially the Qur’an), in the Prophets, in the Last Day** (Day of Judgment) and in the “**Measuring Out**” both its good and bad.
- ❖ The “**measuring Out**” connotes the destiny of every human person. You could view it as “Predestination” or God’s foreknowledge of the fate of every human person).

An Islamic Christology?....

- ❖ If Christology is essentially part of Christian theology as we saw earlier, can the notion of an “Islamic Christology” be theologically justified, and what would be the grounds for such a Christology?
- ❖ We did say that Christology is a response to the question Jesus put to the apostles: **“who do you/people say I am?”**. So an Islamic Christology will relate to a Muslims response to the above question.
- ❖ For Islam therefore, Jesus is a **“Prophet and messenger of Allah”** like the rest of the other prophets (i.e. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Job, Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, Jeremiah etc)
- ❖ Although the Qur'an and the *Hadiths* (The Traditions) present Jesus Christ as a prophet of Allah, a human being without any divine attributions, Jesus is nonetheless highly respected in Islam and is given greater mention with honorific titles in the Qur'an than any of the prophets that preceded him.
- ❖ **(e.g. Messiah, Word of God, Son of Mary, Spirit of God, Messenger of God, Servant of God, and a Sign from God).**

Titles of Jesus in the Qur'an

- **Jesus as the Messiah and a friend of Allah** – “The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, will be honored in this world and the Hereafter; a friend of Allah and one of those brought nearer to Allah.” (**Surah 3:45**). The title **messiah** appears 11 times in the Qur'an.
- **A messenger of Allah** – “the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God...and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and in His messengers” (**Surah 4:171**).
- **A Spirit from Allah (see Surah 4:171)**
- **A Servant of Allah** – “He [Jesus] said; ‘I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scriptures; made me a prophet, made me blessed wherever I may be...” (**Surah 19:30-32**).
- **Jesus as a sign from Allah** - “...I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. Be mindful of God, obey me. God is your Lord and my Lord, so serve Him – that is the straight path” (**Surah 3:50-51**)
- **The Word from Allah** - “O Mary! Behold, God gives you good news of a word from Him, who shall become known as the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary” (**Sura 3:45**)

An Islamic Christology?

- ❖ Geoffrey Parrinder affirms that the name *Isa* (Jesus) occurs **twenty-five** times in the Qur'an and by combining this name with titles such as *Messiah* and "Son of Mary" in the Qur'an, "Jesus is spoken of **thirty-five times**" in the Qur'an more than the prophet Muhammad (Parrinder, Geoffrey. *Jesus in the Qur'an*. 1965, p16).
- ❖ From these references to Jesus in the Qur'an one finds that the Qur'an itself contains narratives about Jesus Christ who occupies a central place in Christian faith and theology.
- ❖ In this way, the Qur'an provides answers as to who Jesus was, how he came to be and his mission in the divine plan.
- ❖ Thus, if Christology concerns the study of Jesus Christ in respect of his identity and mission, then Islam also has the resources that provide for this study within its own religious context.
- ❖ Hence an **"Islamic Christology"** will therefore focus on the Islamic understanding of the identity and mission of Jesus the Christ in the divine plan of Allah.
- ❖ **For Islam, Jesus was a prophet and messenger of Allah. A Muslim in dialogue must represent this Islamic position.**

Jesus As Bridge and Barrier in Christian-Muslim Relations

❑ Jesus As Barrier

- ❖ The Holy Trinity *Versus* the Tawhid.
- ❖ Jesus as the “Son of God”.
- ❖ The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

❑ Jesus as Bridge

- ❖ The Virginal Conception of Jesus
- ❖ The Miracles Jesus performed.
- ❖ The Ascension and Second Coming

Barriers to Christian-Muslim Dialogue on Christology

- ❖ The following nonnegotiable faith principles set the two religion apart and circumvent every attempt at dialogue between them.
- ❖ This is because; each of these principles give meaning to their respective understanding of the identity and mission of Jesus.

(1) *The Tawhid vs. The Holy Trinity*

(2) *Jesus as Prophet vs. the “Son of God”*

(3) *The concept of Original Sin*

(4) *The Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection*

The Most Holy Trinity vs. The Tawhid

❑ The Holy Trinity

- ❖ The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a theological articulation of the Christian experience of God as One in three divine persons – **God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit**.
- ❖ Even though the word “**Trinity**” is not found in the Christian Scriptures, the Christian experience of God as three persons in one God, even goes back to the beginning of creation in the book of Genesis where God created the world by His Word and His Spirit hovered on the waters (**Gen 1:2**).
- ❖ At the baptism of Jesus in **Mark 1:9-11** the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove and a voice from heaven said; “**this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased**”.
- ❖ At the great commissioning in **Mat 28:18-19**, Jesus’ parting words to the disciples were:
- ❖ “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**”

❑ The Tawhid in Islam

- ❖ The word **Tawhid** has its Arabic roots from “wahid” which means “**God is one**”.
- ❖ Hence, *Tawhid* takes on the meaning of “recognizing and acknowledging that God is One”. It is “‘the assertion of divine unity’ or ‘the declaration of God’s oneness.’”
- ❖ This oneness of God is expressed in the first part of the **Shahada** which states that “there is no god but God” or “there is no god but one God” (**Surah 5:73**).
- ❖ This emphasis underscores Islamic monotheism where Allah remains the transcendent Being who is creator and source of everything in the world.
- ❖ Muslims believe that Allah created the world in order that creation would submit to Him, by living according to His plans. For God himself said in the Qur’an: “**There is no god but I, so worship me**” (**Surah 21:25**).
- ❖ Consequently, the **Tawhid is a non-negotiable part of Islamic faith**.

The Obligation to Tawhid

- ❖ In Islam, the first part of the *Shahada* which contains the sentence of the *Tawhid* states that “there is no god but one God” (***La ilaha illa Allah***). This means that to worship something else is to fall into error and misguidance” or *Shirk*.
- ❖ Here, the Qur'an states that, “**Do not associate others with God; to associate others with God is a mighty wrong**” (Surah 31:13).
- ❖ So, the avoidance of associating others with Allah is a central nerve in the message of the Qur'an. ***Shirk*** is therefore nothing but the reversal of the *Tawhid*, and a reversal of *Tawhid* leads to the annihilation of Islam.
- ❖ For the Qur'an: “**Those who say that God is a third of three are truth-concealers**” (Surah 5:73).
- ❖ In relation to Jesus the Qur'an warns, “**the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary is only the messenger of God... So have faith in God, and do not say, 'Three.' Refrain... God is only One God**” (Surah 4:171).
- ❖ Even the **Qur'anic Jesus** affirms this oneness of God when he said: “**God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him – that is the straight path**” (Surah 3:51).
- ❖ So, when the Qur'an criticises followers of other religions, it very often does so on the basis of a perceived distortion to the *Tawhid*.
- ❖ The Islamic commitment to the **Tawhid** explains why the theological articulation of God as *Holy Trinity* is perceived by Muslims as unacceptable.

Jesus Christ As "Son of God"

- ❖ In Christian faith and theology, the notion of "Divine Sonship" or Jesus as the "Son of God" is not taken in the literal sense of filiation (or the physical generation of a son) but in a **metaphorical** sense of establishing relationships.
- ❖ The title "Son of God" communicates the intimate relationship that exists between Jesus and God the Father.
- ❖ This intimate relationship was communicated by the father at the Baptism of Jesus when the voice from the clouds said:
"This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Mk 1:11).
- ❖ **At the transfiguration, the voice from the Father said: "This is my son, the beloved. Listen to him" (Mk 9:7)**
- ❖ Jesus himself also expressed this relationship in a "Father-son" way. For instance, he prayed to God as **"Abba Father" (Mk 14: 36).**
- ❖ **So, within Christian faith and theology, the sonship of Jesus is not understood literally but metaphorically.**
- ❖ **Dialogue with Muslims could help clarify this understanding.**

Jesus as “Son of God” in Islam

- ❖ Whereas Christians understand the “sonship of Jesus in metaphorical terms, Muslims understand that the Christian notion of the divine sonship is taken literally.
- ❖ Hence, for Muslims, the identification of Jesus as God’s son undermines the unity and transcendence of Allah **(Turning the Tawhid on its head)**.
- ❖ **In Surah 4:171 - “The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only the messenger of Allah... God is only one; He is far above having a son”**
- ❖ **In Surah 9:30-31 – “The Jews call Ezra a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. They take Christ the son of Mary to be their Lord; yet they were commanded to worship but One God: there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: He is far from having a son.”**
- ❖ The prophet Muhammad also stated in the Qur’an: **“if the Lord of Mercy had a son, I will be the first to worship him, but blessed be the Lord... He is far above their false descriptions” (Surah 43:81-82).**
- ❖ Thus, Christian-Muslim dialogue on Christology could help Muslims to understand that the Christian conception of Jesus as “son of God” is not literal but metaphorical.
- ❖ This could help change Muslim attitudes towards Christians as a result of this concept.

ORIGINAL SIN: The Christian View

- ❖ For Christian faith, the disobedience of Adam and Eve (**Genesis 3: 1-20**) brought irrecoverable damnation on human race.
- ❖ On account of their sin of DISOBEDIENCE, Adam and Eve brought to humanity a state of corruption from which humanity is unable to extricate itself. If redemption is to take place, it must be on the basis of a new OBEDIENCE on the part of humanity" (McGrath, Alistair, E. *Christian Theology: An introduction*. 1997, p338).
- ❖ Since humanity is unable to break free from its entanglement to sin, it could only take God in Jesus Christ to set humanity free from this bond of sin. This was made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ **As Rom 5:19 indicates: "For just as through the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one man, many are made righteous."**
- ❖ **1Cor 15: 21-23: "For since death came through one man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through one man. For as in Adam all were made to die, so also in Christ all are made alive. "**

ORIGINAL SIN: The Islamic View

The Narrative of the creation of the world and the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is found in **Surah 15:39-43** and **Surah 7:11-23**.

- ❖ In this narrative, **Iblis** (Satan) is said to have previously disobeyed God (**Surah 7:11-12**) and was to be subjected to punishment (**Surah 7:13**). Allah boasted of the obedience of humanity to His Law in contrast to Satan's disobedience.
- ❖ So, *Iblis* made a deal with God for the postponement of his punishment until the Day of Resurrection (**Surah 7:14-15**). This postponement would buy him time to test humanity's obedience to God. God is said to agree to deal, aware that "**Iblis shall have no authority over them, except those who choose to follow him**" (**Surah 15:43**).
- ❖ So in **Surah 7:20**, *Iblis* lured Adam and Eve into disobedience to the divine command (**Surah 7:19**) leading to the Fall – *Iblis* said; "**your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you from becoming angels and immortals**".
- ❖ Thus, Allah's question "did I not prohibit you two from this tree?" (**Surah 7:22**), confirmed that "Adam disobeyed his Lord" (**Surah 20:121**).

Original Sin in the Qur'an

- ❖ The Qur'an reports that after the Fall of Adam and Eve, the two immediately realised their mistake, they repented and were pardoned by Allah.
- ❖ The Qur'an says: **"they were immediately shocked at what they had done and with one voice the two of them said, 'we have wronged ourselves and unless you forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall surely be among the lost'" (Surah 7:23).**
- ❖ From this act of repentance and the desire for forgiveness, Adam and Eve were forgiven by Allah who restored them back to their original state of "grace".
- ❖ As the Qur'an confirms, God did not only forgive them, but **"His Lord Chose him" (Surah 20:122).**
- ❖ **Thus, Adam is even added to the list of prophets in Islam.**
- ❖ Thus, for the Muslim, If God restored Adam and Eve to their original state, can there be original sin again?

The Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection

□ Its Centrality to Christian Faith and Theology

- The event of Jesus' Suffering, Death and Resurrection, also referred to as the Paschal mystery, is central to Christian faith and theology. All the four Gospels give detailed accounts of the veracity of the event (Mark 14:32 – 16:12, Matthew 26:47 – 28:16 and Luke 22:47 – 24:50).
- Jesus' death on the cross is seen as the perfect sacrifice that restores humanity back to God (Rom 3:25). By His death and Resurrection, Jesus gained victory over sin, eternal death and Satan.
- ❖ The Paschal Mystery has both *soteriological* and *eschatological* implications for Christian faith and hope. At the *soteriological* level, "Christ's death on the cross is interpreted as God's victory over both sin and death. At the *eschatological* level, it gives both foundation and substance to the Christian hope of eternal life." (see, McGrath, Alister, E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 1997, p384).
- ❖ Within the context of original sin, Jesus death and resurrection provided the only means of atonement for the sin of disobedience.
- ❖ As McGrath puts it, **"the victory of the cross provided the basis by which God is enabled to forgive sins."**

The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ



The Islamic View on the crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Christ

- ❖ From a Qur'anic point of view, Jesus the *Messiah*, the son of Mary was never crucified.
- ❖ The Qur'an says: **"The Jews said, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah. But they did not kill him nor crucified him, though it was made to appear like that to them... No! God raised him to Himself"** (Surah 4:157).
- ❖ The Qur'an further affirms in **Surah 3:55**: **"God said, Jesus, I will take you back and raise you up to me. I will purify you of the unbelievers"**.
- ❖ In **Surah 19:33**: Jesus himself said; **"Peace was on me the day I was born and peace will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again"**.
- ❖ The "Qur'anic Jesus" also said – **"I was a witness to them as long as I was with them. But ever since you took my soul, you were their overseer"** (Surah 5:117).
- ❖ These contradictions are clarified by classical Islamic scholars like **al-Tabari, al-Razi and al-Badawi**. Their views centre on the *substitution theory*, though more recent scholars support the *swoon theory*.

The Substitution and Swoon Theories of the Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection

- ❖ Following his analysis of **Surah 4:157**, al-Tabari said that it was not Jesus who died on the cross, but God transformed someone to look like him and it was this person who died on the cross (*the substitution theory*).
- ❖ al-Razi supported the *substitution theory*, listing five different possibilities by which the *substitution* could have occurred:
 - Firstly, it is possible that the Jews crucified someone like Jesus and lied about it.
 - Secondly, it is possible that Judas sent Titanus to kill Jesus and Titanus was arrested and crucified instead.
 - Thirdly, maybe a man who was guarding Jesus was transformed to look like him and it was him they killed.
 - Fourthly, Jesus asked one of his disciples to volunteer and one of them did.
 - Finally, maybe a hypocritical disciple who sought to betray Jesus was made to look like him and killed.
- ❖ **Swoon theory**: that Jesus did not die on the cross, but merely fell unconscious, and was later revived in the tomb in the same mortal body (Ahmed Deedat and Ghulam Ahmad – Founder of Ahmadiyya movement)

Current Islamic Scholarly Views on crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ

- ❖ For Merad (1980:14) “in the Qur’an, everything is aimed at convincing the Believer that he or she will experience victory over the forces of evil. So, to accept the tragic passion and death of Jesus Christ implies that God failed. **The death of Christ is a sign of divine weakness.**
- ❖ Thus, for Muslims, the prevention of the death of Jesus was another marked proof of Allah’s care for His prophets, His apostle, His word and His Spirit.
- ❖ According to Mona Siddiqui, “it is on the theology of redemption that Islam parts company with Christianity in that it does not have those defining moments of alienation from God as in the fall and subsequent reconciliation with God, enacted by the redemption through the death and resurrection of Christ.” (Siddiqui, Mona. *Christians, Muslims & Jesus*. 2013, p218).
- ❖ So, for Islam, as “the closest friend of Allah and the nearest to his heart” Allah, the all-powerful God could not have allowed his prophet to experience such a shameful death.

Reaching a Mutual Understanding of the Death and Resurrection of Christ

- ❖ Having considered the two views on the death and resurrection of Christ, we could say that: whether or not the crucifixion and death of Jesus took place, Jesus ascended to heaven by virtue of God's divine intervention.
- ❖ For Islam, this intervention raised Jesus to heaven without dying on the cross. For Christianity, this divine intervention raised him to life after the death.
- ❖ In other words, both religious communities agree that there was God's divine power in Jesus prevented him from experiencing the *shamefulness* of death.
- ❖ Thus, if God's divine power enabled Jesus to accomplish the divine will in this remarkable way, how can the life and message of Jesus become a context for Christian-Muslim response to God and to issues of human flourishing?
- ❖ This questions brings us to the area of Christian-Muslim dialogue for the promotion of **"Common Values"**.



**ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE
WE GO FOR BREAK?**



PART TWO

Jesus, the MESSIAH as Bridge to Christian-Muslim Relations

The Virginal
Conception
of Jesus
(Surah 19:16-
21)

The miracles
Jesus
performed
(Surah
5:109-110)

The
Ascension
to Heaven
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The Second
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The Virginal Conception of Jesus

Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38).

- ❖ "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you."
- ❖ But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.
- ❖ The angel said to her, " Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.
- ❖ He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."
- ❖ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the Child will be holy and shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:26-38)

The Qur'an

- ❖ In **Surah 3:42** - "The Angel said to Mary: 'Mary, God has chosen you and made you pure. He has truly chosen you above all women.'"
- ❖ In **Surah 3:45**, "The Angel said, 'Mary, God gives you news of a Word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary. He will be prominent in this life and in the Hereafter, and one of those closest to God.'"
- ❖ **Surah 3:46-47** - "He will speak to people from the crib, as well as an adult; he will be one of the righteous." She said, "My Lord, how can I have a son, when no man has touched me?" He said, "**GOD** thus creates whatever He wills. To have anything done, He simply says to it, 'Be,' and it is."
- ❖ **Surah 19:19-22** the Angel said "'I am but a Messenger from your Lord, to announce to you the gift of a pure son.' She said, 'how can I have a son when no man has touched me? I have not been unchaste,' and he said, 'This is what your Lord said; 'it is easy for me'".

The Annunciation and Birth of Jesus the Christ



The Miracles Jesus Performed

In Mark's Gospel (1:21 – 8:22)

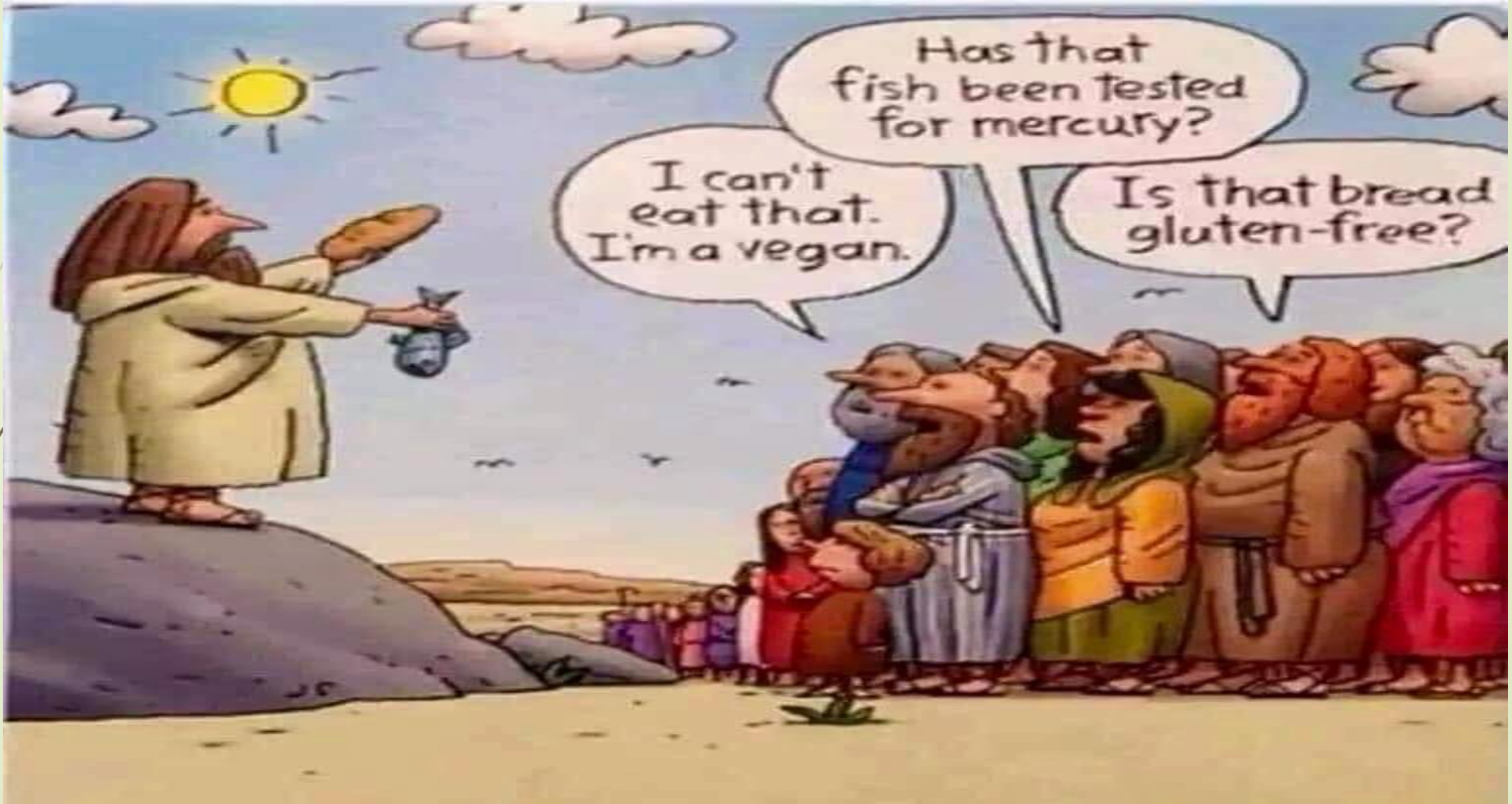
- ❖ Here, one finds the *Messiah*, the Son of God seriously at work by delivering the man with the unclean spirit **(1:21ff)**
- ❖ the healing of Simon's mother in-law **(1:29ff)**, other healings in Galilee (1:35ff), the cleansing of the leper (1:40ff), the healing of the paralytic (2:1ff) and the man with the withered hand (3:1ff).
- ❖ The calming of the storm **(4:35ff)**, the deliverance of the Gerasene demoniac (5:1ff), raising of Jairus' daughter back to life (5:21ff), the feeding of the five thousand **(6:30ff)**.
- ❖ **walking** on the sea (6:45ff), the deliverance of the little girl with the unclean spirit **(7:24ff)**, the cure of the deaf man (7:31ff), feeding the four thousand (8:1ff) and the cure of the blind man **(8:22ff)**.

- ❖ **The Qur'an says:** "God will teach Jesus, the *Messiah* "the Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel, He will send him as a Messenger to the people of Israel. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord... I will heal the blind, the leper and bring the dead back to life with God's permission" **(Surah 3:48-49)**.
- ❖ "Then God will say, Jesus, son of Mary! Remember my favour to you and to your mother: how I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit... How by my leave, you fashioned the shape of a bird out of clay, breathed into it and it became a bird; how by my leave, you healed the blind and the lepers; how by my leave, you brought the dead back to life" **(Surah 5:110)**.
- ❖ Muslims are always quick to indicate that these miracles do not imply Jesus is divine.

The Healing miracles of Jesus



If Jesus tried to feed the 5000 today... 😊



The Ascension and Second Coming of Jesus

- ❖ In Mark's Gospel, the Ascension occurred after a meal (**Mk 16:19**). In Luke, it occurred in Bethany not far from Jerusalem (**Lk 24:50**), while Acts gives a precise location – “on the Mount of Olives” (Acts 1:12).
- ❖ Having ascended into heaven, the Church's belief that Jesus “will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.”
- ❖ According to Jesus' own words **“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left” (Mat 25:31-33).**
- ❖ **The Qur'an denies the crucifixion and death of Jesus but affirms the ascension:**
- ❖ It says: **“The Jews said, ‘We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah.’ But they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it appeared like that to them; those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him—God raised him up to Himself. God is almighty and wise” (Surah 4:157-158).**
- ❖ The Qur'an affirms that from heaven, Jesus will return again at the **“Last hour or the Day of Judgment”** to be a witness against the unbelievers (Surah 4:159 and 43:61).
- ❖ **Surah 43: 61: “Jesus shall be a sign for the coming of the Hour (judgement Day). Therefore, believe in Allah and have no doubts about the hour.”**
- ❖ The hadith *Sahih al-Bukhari* even indicates **where and how** the “Second Coming of Jesus” will occur.

The Ascension of Jesus to Heaven




Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol 3, Book 41, 43

- ❖ According to the above Hadith, **The Hour will not be established until Jesus, the Messiah, the son of Mary descends as a just ruler.**
- ❖ **How will this occur?** The *Second Coming* of Jesus will be in the midst of wars that are fought by the *Mahdi* (the righteous) against the Anti-Christ (*Dajjal* or false Messiah) and all his followers.
- ❖ **Where will the second coming occur?** Jesus will descend **on the East of Damascus. He will be anointed by Allah.** He will then join the *Mahdi* (the faithful) in the fight against the Anti-Christ.
- ❖ His conquests over the Anti-Christ will be a *sign* to the “People of the Book” who will then believe in him, leading to the formation of one community of believers.
- ❖ Jesus will assume leadership of this community; he will judge as a just ruler, and he will bring about **universal peace.**
- ❖ So, Muslims believe that Jesus is a sign of the HOUR – the Day of judgment will not happen until the Second Coming of Jesus.

Dialogue For the Promotion of Common Values

- ❖ Having considered the “bridges” and “barriers” in the Christian and Muslim perspectives about the identity and mission of Jesus Christ, the question is: **what can Christians and Muslims learn from their understandings of Jesus as “Son of God” and as the “Prophet of Allah”?**
- ❖ In other words, if Jesus is the incarnate Word of God in Christianity, what is the essential message of Jesus the son of God to Christians?
- ❖ In the same way, what is the central message of the “Jesus the messenger of Allah” to Muslims? since there can be no prophet or messenger without a message, and no message without an intended audience?
- ❖ These question brings us to face-to-face to the centrality of the message of Jesus in both religious texts and the possible “common Values” Christians and Muslims may share as a consequence of this message.

Possible Common Values

 Inspired by
Jesus, the
Messiah

The Value of prayer and Submission to the Will of God.

The value of Peace and Peaceful Co-existence.

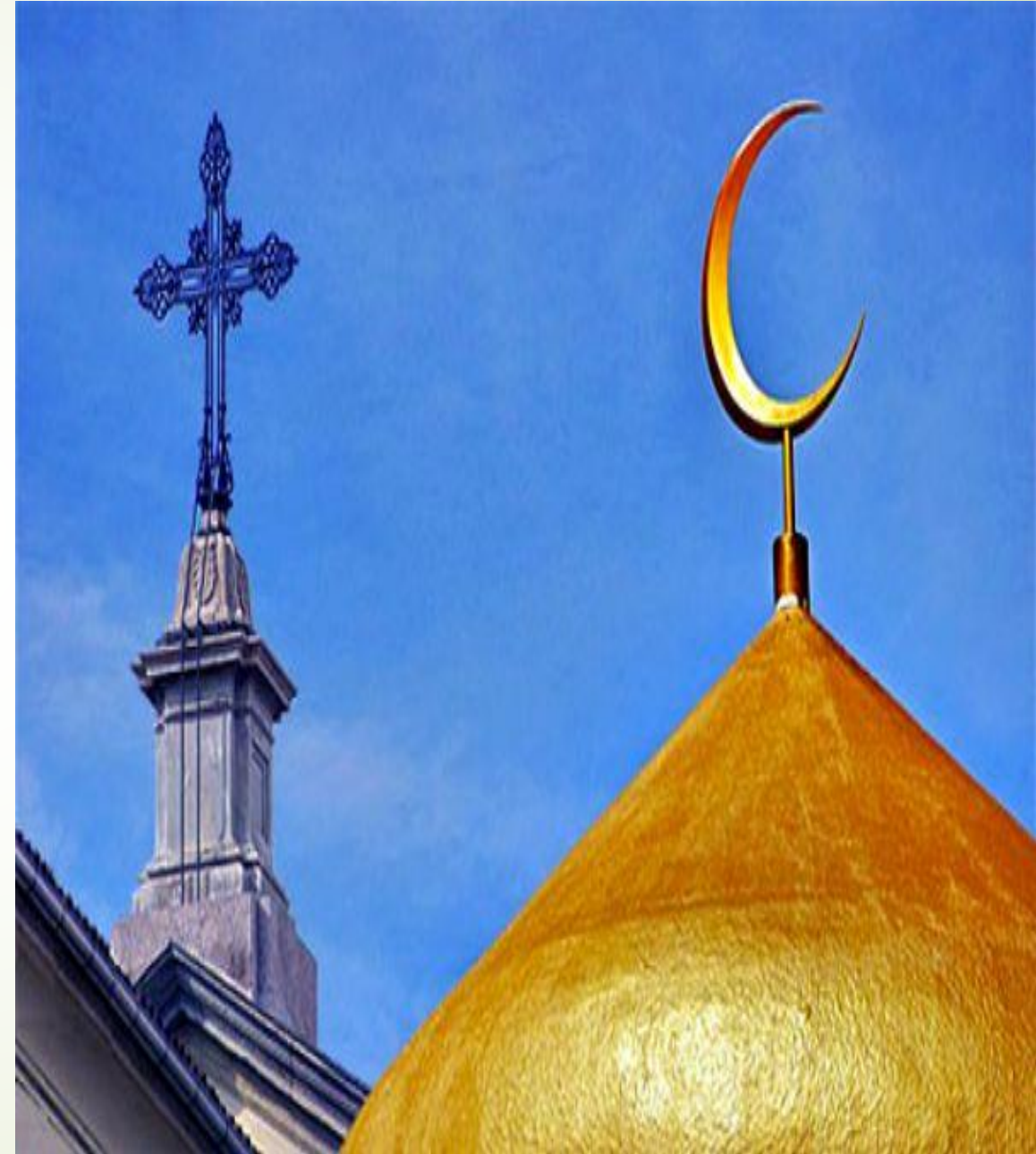
The value of Solidarity with the Poor and the Marginalized in Society.

These values as we will soon see are inspired by the “Qur’anic Jesus” and the “Jesus of the Christian Gospels”.

Pope Francis meeting with Muhammad bin Abdul Karim, secretary-general of the Muslim World League, 9Sept. 21, 2019



The Cross (crucifix) and the Crescent - symbols of Christian and Muslim faiths



Jesus, the Messiah and the Value of Prayer

- ❖ **For the Qur'anic Jesus**, prayer and submission to God was central to his life. In terms of submission to God, he says in the Qur'an **"Be mindful of God and obey me: God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him – that is the straight path"** (Surah 3:50-51 and 19:36).
- ❖ In these texts, the Qur'anic Jesus affirms the central place God occupies in human life and the human obligation to submit to him.
- ❖ In the Qur'an, Jesus also said: **"I am a servant of God. He has granted me the Scriptures and made me a prophet... He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live"** (Surah 19:30-31).
- ❖ In Christianity, Jesus as the "Son of God" *also* instructs Christians in respect of the worship of God and love of neighbour. At the start of his public ministry Jesus' central message was; "repent, for the kingdom of God is close at hand" (**Mark 1:15**).
- ❖ **The Gospels also present a picture of Jesus Christ** as one who was very committed to prayer and emphasized its importance to the life of the disciple.
- ❖ After the baptism, Jesus goes to the desert and spends 40 days and nights in fasting and prayer alone with God (**Mk 1:12-13**). This will prepare him for the victory over Satan.
- ❖ After overcoming the devil's temptations and beginning his ministry, Jesus always found time to be by himself in a lonely place to pray (**Mk 1:35, Lk 5:16**).
- ❖ Before choosing the twelve apostles Jesus went to the mountains to pray about this decision (**Mk 3:13 and Lk 6:12-16**). Jesus Christ as a "prophet of Allah" and the "Son of God" demonstrates in the Qur'an and in the Gospels that **PRAYER and SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD** is central to the life of every believer.
- ❖ Muslims pray 5 times a day. How often do we pray as Christians/Catholics?
- ❖ What about organising Christian-Muslim interreligious prayers for the needs of the world?

The Challenge of Secularism

- ❖ In 2009, Callum G. Brown's book on *The Death of Christian Britain*, in which he examines how the nation's dominant religion has been destroyed by secularism. *In his considerations of Callum's findings*, Hakim Murad, a British-born Muslim emphasized how hurt he feels to find himself tragically part of this Godless society. For him, "what is dying is a set of monotheistic convictions and a life of prayer and human giving."
- ❖ For Murad, *secularism* is the reason for the death of Christian Europe. Despite the fact that Christianity and Islam have different religious doctrines and practices, Murad asserts that a Christian Europe would be a better place for Islam than a secular Europe, because a Christian Europe offers the space for religious beliefs while a secular Europe seeks to erase the trace of God in it.
- ❖ For Murad therefore, secularism poses a mutual challenge to Christianity and Islam, and these two communities need to work together through the dialogue of life and common action to confront what he called "**the new barbarism.**"
- ❖ Today, the "new enemy" is not so much Islam or Christianity but challenge of secularism.
 - Consider for instance, how the National Secularists Society (NSS – Britain recently fought to scrap Council prayers before and after meetings, and to abolish the wearing of religious articles in public space. (e.g. **Nadia Eweida**, the British Airways employee).
 - Consider also the campaigning against the teaching of Religious Education (RE) in Catholic Schools.
 - What about the recent attempt of Edinburgh city council to scrap Catholic Education Reps from attending their meetings?
- ❖ It will only take Christian-Muslims collective action to push back the frontiers of secularism.

Pope Francis in a Turkish Mosque, praying with the National Iman of Turkey.



Pope Francis Prays with Muslims and people of other faiths for refugees from Myanmar



The Value of Peace and Peaceful Co-existence

- ❖ **Peaceful co-existence** connotes the willingness to live together in peace despite differences. How is the sense of peace upheld by the Qur'anic Jesus in Islam and the Son of God in Christianity?
- ❖ Islam is said to be a religion of **"peace"**. This is partly because the word *Islam*, which is derived from the Arabic *Salama* (Ṣ-L-M) means "to be safe, secure, to Submit or be at peace".
- ❖ Though religiously, "Islam" means "submission to the will of Allah", "Submission" and "Peace" are correlated because the submission of oneself to the will of Allah is the only way to finding peace in Islam.
- ❖ The Qur'an affirms that Jesus' entire life was marked by peace: **"peace was on me the day I was born and will be on me the day I will die and the day I am raised to life again"** (Surah 19:33).
- ❖ In the Christian Scriptures, Jesus is described as the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). For **St. Paul says "He himself is our peace"** (Eph 2:14).
- ❖ In John's Gospel, Jesus himself declared: **"peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you"** (Jn 14:28).
- ❖ So, being a peaceful person and promoting peace was central to the identity and mission of Jesus in both religions.
- ❖ why then the many Christian-Muslims interreligious wars and conflicts?

Christian-Muslim Prayers for Peace in the Philippines



Christian-Muslim Prayer for Peaceful elections in Ghana, 2012



The former Archbishop of Accra visits the National Chief Iman, 201



Jesus and the Value of Solidarity with the Poor and the Marginalised

- ❖ The concept *solidarity* generally refers to the ties which bind people together whether as a group, a community or a society. The bases for these social ties could be derived from kinship, shared values and goals, and reasons of our “common humanity”.
- ❖ Christian-Muslim solidarity, in support of the poor and marginalized in society, could therefore focus on retrieving internal resources from the message and deeds of Jesus as basis for collective actions.
- ❖ What might guide this discourse on collective action could be the Qur'anic accounts of Jesus' response to the needs of the poor and marginalized and how they serve to motivate a Muslim religious response to the needs of the poor.
- ❖ On a Christian front too, the same discourse could focus on how Jesus' fundamental option for the poor and the marginalized might serve as basis for Christian action in response to the needs of the poor.

The Value of Solidarity with the Poor in Islam

- ❖ Solidarity with the poor and the marginalized is expressed in Islam through **Sadaqa and Zakat** – the third pillar of the religion.
- ❖ **Zakat** is the third pillar of Islam and it concerns the payment of some percentage of an individual's wealth, property or profits in lieu of helping the poor and needy in the community.
- ❖ According to the Qur'an, beneficiaries of this almsgiving are: **the needy, the poor, the collectors of the zakat, those whose hearts are to be reconciled to Allah, captives, debtors, those fighting in God's path and travellers (Surah 9:60).**
- ❖ The Qur'an emphasizes that **"goodness does not consist in turning your face to the East or the West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day ...those who give away some of their wealth to orphans, the needy, the traveller and beggars and to liberate those in bondage"** (Surah 2:177).

Solidarity with the Poor in Islam

- ❖ **Zakat** therefore refers to the Muslim obligation to give alms to the poor and needy in society.
- ❖ **Sadaqa** represents beneficent giving. It is an act of giving which is done out of compassion, love, generosity and friendship. *Sadaqa* is given voluntarily out of love for God and for his creation.
- ❖ As the Qur'an says, "**prophet, have you considered the person who denies the judgement? It is he who pushes aside the orphan and does not urge others to feed the needy**" (Surah 107:1-2).
- ❖ Whereas paying the **zakat** is considered obligatory for every Muslim, offering **Sadaqa** is however a voluntary act of charity. Yet, both are undertaken as a result of faith in God.
- ❖ In response to this beneficent giving, the "Qur'anic Jesus" says: "**I am a servant of God... He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live and to cherish my mother**" (Surah 19:30-31).

Solidarity: The Miracles Jesus Performed

- ❖ Even though the Qur'anic interpretations of the miracles of Jesus (**Surah 3:49**) are seen as *signs* intended to authenticate his prophetic claims, these miracles were nonetheless the concrete expressions of Jesus' response to the needs of those who benefited from them (**Surah 10: 28-30**). **He achieve this;**
- ❖ through the provision of *food* to the hungry (**Surah 5:113-115; 19:23-26**);
- ❖ *sight* to the blind; *healing* to the leprous; and *life* to the dead (**Surah 3:49-50**).
- ❖ According to Ayoub, "the miracles that the Qur'an attributes to Jesus during his ministry are miracles of life and healing... The Qur'an credits Jesus alone among the prophets with raising the dead, giving sight to the blind and healing the lepers and the sick" (**Ayoub, Mahmoud, M. A Muslim View of Christianity. 2007, p114**).

On Catholic Solidarity with the Poor and the Marginalised

- ❖ In his encyclical letter **Sollicitudo rei socialis** – ‘On Social Concern’ 1987”, Pope John Paul II indicated that *solidarity* “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” (***Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 1987, #37**). ***The gift of “our common humanity”***.
- ❖ In connection with this sense of solidarity, ***Gaudium et Spes*** also emphasizes that “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.” (***Vatican Council II: Gaudium et Spes*, #1**).
- ❖ Here, nothing that is genuinely human should fail to find an echo in the hearts of all within this context of the “solidarity of others.” It is a solidarity centered on human flourishing.

Interfaith Action in response to the 'suffering other'

- ❖ From a Christian perspective, the "love of God" translated into tangible acts of love for one's neighbour remains an essential hallmark of the Christian identity. **"Greater love has no man than this, that one lays down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13).** Jesus will later demonstrate this by his own sacrifice on the cross.
- ❖ **In Luke 4:18-21** Jesus outlines his mission statement: *The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom to captives and sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*
- ❖ **Consider the numerous miracles he performed in the Gospels.**
- ❖ **The Need for collective action:** Today, poverty and disease continue to threaten the very survival of the human race and the dignity of the human person. As our communities and cities are fast becoming multiracial and multi-religious, so is poverty and disease fast weeping through these communities, and reducing many families to subhuman lives.
- ❖ There are therefore situations where the face of the suffering other may not always be a Muslim or Christian face and likewise the benevolent giver.
- ❖ So, why can't we engage in interfaith action in response to these suffering ones? A good place to begin could be: Helping in the Food Banks, campaigns against abortion.



CONCLUSION

- ❖ What I have tried to do so far has been an attempt to tease out an image of image in the Qur'an that opens up positive discourse for Christian-Muslim dialogue as an exercise in learning from and about the other.
- ❖ This Image demonstrated that Jesus the Christ is both barrier and bridge in Christian-Muslim relations. While the "barrier" defines our unique differences, the "bridge" showcases what hold in common about Jesus, the Christ. So, how can we negotiate this dialectics of bridge and barrier to relate more openly and genuinely in response to human flourishing?
- ❖ Jesus Christ may be viewed as a "prophet of Allah" in Islam and experienced as the "Son of God" in Christianity. Yet, he remains a significant common context for Christian-Muslim dialogue of life and dialogue of common action in a world that has gone religiously awry.
- ❖ **Hans Kung** once said that: **"there can be no world peace without peace among the religions, no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions and no dialogue between the religions without accurate knowledge of one another"**.
- ❖ *Christian-Muslim dialogue on Christology offers us this rare opportunity.*

END OF THE PRESENTATION

THANK YOU !

Any Questions or contributions?

