TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE QUR'AN

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To my love, Miae

our children Yein, Stephen, and David

and

the Peacemakers around the world.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1   RELEVANCE

Larry Poston (2000:9) comments that Max Muller, the founding father of the academic discipline known as comparative religion studies, believed that most people never examine their personal religious faith in comparison with another world religion. "He who knows one knows none" (Swatos 2008:1). If we apply this statement to Christian-Muslim relations, then Christians cannot know their own faith without understanding the Islamic faith. In the same way, without understanding the faith of Christianity, Muslims cannot know their own faith. The paradoxical implication that one must learn another religion in order to know one's own religion could better render a meaningful solution for the tensions of Christian-Muslim relations. However, this proposal has met with obstacles derived from the respective mandates of the believers.

In the heart of Christianity and Islam there is the call to make known their faith. This is called "the Great Commission" (Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16) in Christianity while in Islam it may be called "the Jihad."[1] However, when they follow their own mandates without adequate knowledge of the other's faith, religiously driven conflicts are inevitable. Kateregga and Shenk (1980:xvi) accurately present the problem of Muslim-Christian interaction:

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[1] Literally Jihad means "an effort" or "a striving" (S 9:5-6; 25:52). The mission of Islam is also called "*da'wah*" (call to Islam). See 6.7.2.3 "Understanding of Christian mission and Muslim *da'wah.*"

Hundreds of millions of Muslims and Christians are neighbours to each other. The faithful in both communities believe that they have been called by God to be witnesses. Yet they seldom hear each other's witness. The collision of their histories has created walls which separate. Although both communities worship the same God and seek to be the people of God, they seldom listen to one another.

As many religions eventually become the culture of the believers, at least in the case of Islam, the above mentioned problem of Muslim-Christian relations seems to originate from behaviour produced by ethnocentrism. Hiebert (1983:39), in his competent discussion of cultural anthropology, defines ethnocentrism as "judging other people's behaviour by one's own values." Ethnocentrism can very well become religiocentrism when both Muslims and Christians interact with each other within the values of their religions without understanding the other's religious values or teachings.

Furthermore, the tendency towards religiocentrism in Christian-Muslim relations has affected all levels of society, including the various scholarly communities. As a result, both Christian and Muslim scholars have been concentrating on arguments that aim to establish their religious pre-eminence (Gilchrist 1999:5). Due to the recent global conflicts between Muslims and Christians, much publication and study on the issue of Muslim-Christian relations has been undertaken. However, the majority of these works seem to deal with rational arguments of the relational problem between the two religions. Scholars make use of a deductive approach[2] to the relational problem which first examines the consequences of the

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[2] For the definition of "inductive approach" and "deductive approach" see 1.7.2 "Explication of terminology" in this chapter.

problem, then attempts to deduce the cause of the problem. This approach can possibly identify the cause of the problem but may not adequately explain the origin of the cause or its development into different problems.

On the other hand, the inductive approach analyses the cause of the problem in order to infer a general conclusion. Therefore it can answer both the questions of the origin of the cause and its development into other problematic areas in Christian-Muslim relations. Respectfully, this thesis embraces the inductive approach to the text with an unbiased religiocentrism. As a result, this study makes an effort to close the gap between Islam and Christianity. The effort is made through a comparative understanding of the relationship of God with man in the Bible and the Qur'an with selected examples. This study may be timely as it is valuable in respect to today's global conflicts which are arising from religiously oriented cultural clashes. In the area of Old Testament studies, this research may contribute a better understanding and deeper insight in the areas of theophany, immanence and the transcendence of God by providing perspectives of God in the Semitic and oriental worldviews. This will be accomplished through the study of selected examples in the Qur'an illustrating how God related with Adam, Abraham, and Moses. For example, in the story of Moses' encounter with "the burning bush" (Ex 3:2; S 20:10; 27:7-14; 28:29-35), the biblical interpretation reflects God's fiery theophany (Niehaus 1995:187) while the Qur'an indicates the ontological status of Moses when encountering physical fire, *naar* (S 27:8). This brief comparison, which will be exposed in the later part of this thesis, brings a Semitic (Qur'anic) understanding of the impossibility of God's metaphysical presence, which challenges the biblical interpretation of the theophany of "the burning bush."

1.2 PROBLEM SETTING

Claude Moss (1943:1) defines an antinomy as "a pair of necessary truths, which must be held together, and yet, which appear to contradict each other." He provides a few examples of Christian antinomy: (1) God is three and God is one, (2) Jesus is both God and man, and (3) God is omnipotent, yet man has free will. My initial research reflects another antinomy of God, which is that God is transcendent and immanent, in reference to God's manifestation to Adam, Abraham, and Moses. This antinomy has been somewhat neglected by the majority of scholars and apologists from both Christian and Muslim perspectives. This oversight is not limited to the specific examples of my research but it also extends to the study of the Qur'an by biblical scholars, as John Reeves (2003:43) states:

> Many contemporary biblical scholars are aware that Bible and Qur'an share and exploit a common layer of discourse consisting of a number of stories and themes featuring and drawing on certain paradigmatic characters, such as Noah, Abraham, and Moses, however, do not pursue the literary ramifications of this nexus, and hence they remain remarkably oblivious to the rich reservoirs of traditional lore tapped and channelled by the Qur'an and its expounders.

Out of the many indications of this paradoxical relationship between God and creation in the Old Testament, Isaiah 57:15 expresses both the transcendence and immanence of God:

> **Isaiah 57:15**   For this is what the high and lofty One [transcendence] says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy [a cause of transcendence]: I live in

a high and holy place [transcendence], but also with him [immanence] who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

A brief observation of the text concludes that, while God dwelling in a high and holy place is evidence of his transcendence, at the same time he is present among the lowly and contrite, which is evidence of his immanence. In this context of Isaiah, the lowly and contrite are identified with those who abused and exploited Israelites. Of this transcendent-immanent nature of God, Brevard Childs (2001:471) concludes that "God is totally transcendent, yet at the same time God truly 'tabernacles' with his people."

On the other hand, the Qur'an emphasises the absolute transcendence of God similarly to the biblical account, yet lacks any element of the immanence of God:

> **Surah 6:103**   No vision can grasp Him. But His grasp is over all vision: he is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.

> **Surah 7:143**   When Moses came…said, "O my Lord! Show (Thyself) to me That I may look upon thee." Allah said: "By no means canst thou see Me."

> **Surah 16:50**   They all revere their Lord, High above them, and they do all that they are commanded.

> **Surah 17:43**   Glory to him! He is high above all that they sat! – Exalted and great (beyond measure!).

Surah 17:57   Those whom they call upon do desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord—even those who are nearest.

Surah 20:114   High above all is Allah, the king, the truth!

Surah 112:4   And there is none Like unto Him.

All of these verses imply the separation of man from God and deny man's direct access to God. First, when Moses requests to see Allah in Surah 7:143, God's denial suggests the impossibility of a direct encounter with Allah. Ali (1989:649) comments that the concept in Surah 16:50 is similar to the biblical fear of the Lord because "Allah is so high above the highest of his creatures, that they all look up to him in awe and reverence." Surah 17:57 indicates that it is impossible to have direct access to God. This applies even to Mohammad ("even those who are nearest") who sat "a two bow's distance in the heaven" (Musk 1989:151). The "bow distance" is referred to as 100 to 150 yards (Ali 1989:1378). Thus, it is a total of 200 to 300 yards distance. The only use of this measure in the Qur'an is in Surah 53:9, where the angel Gabriel stands a distance of two bows away from Mohammad during the revelation of the Qur'an. It is not God who reveals the Qur'an to Mohammad but the angel Gabriel, and Gabriel maintains his ontological (physical) distance from Mohammad during the revelation. This is another indication of the ontological transcendence between man and the heavenly being. Surah 112:4, "And there is none Like unto Him," sums up the whole argument and especially warns Muslims against anthropomorphism, which Ali (1989:1714) defines as "the tendency to conceive of Allah after our own pattern, an insidious tendency that creeps in at all times and among all peoples."

Conclusively, the people of Israel in the Old Testament experienced their God in transcendence and immanence (Is 57:15) while Muslims believe in a total transcendence of God which precludes the experience and knowledge of God (S 6:103; 20:114). This fundamental difference is deepened by the incarnation of God in the Christian faith in the New Testament (Jn 1:14; Phlp 2:7-8; 1 Tm 3:16), which completely separates the theology and beliefs of the two religions. Accordingly, the different concepts of the revelation of God may have resulted in the separation and conflict between Islam and Christianity, which is evident in the course of human history.

Furthermore, the Old Testament's perception of the transcendence of God is due to the collision of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. This is clearly seen at the foot of Mount Sinai where God sets a boundary of limited access to himself for the people of Israel (Ex 19:12). The people can only gain access to God after they consecrate themselves (Ex 19:10, 22). However, the nature of God's transcendence in the Old Testament is contradictory as it relates to the Qur'an. Many of the biblical transcendence incidents parallel to the Qur'anic account are accompanied by the immanence of God. For example, God reveals himself to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 24:16) and expresses a desire to dwell among the Israelites (Ex 25:8; 29:45, 46). On the other hand, although it needs further exposition, the Quran's understanding of the transcendence of God is possibly due to the expansion of the sinfulness of man's nature as seen in Exodus 19:12. This brought about the total separation of God from man and will be further discussed in chapters 4 and 5. The Islamic concept of the transcendence of God, therefore, is similar to that of biblical holiness as Sweetman (1967:112) confirms in his definition of the transcendence of God in Islam. He says the transcendence (*tanzih*) and the declaration of immaculateness (*taqdis*) or sacredness are connotations of the Islamic transcendence of God. He provides definitions of *tanzih* as

"purifying" and *taqdis* as "consecration" or "hallowing" which share the same Semitic root (*qds*) with Hebrew word קֹדֶשׁ (holiness).

Exposition of the different aspects of God's revelation in the two Scriptures should not be based on mere philosophical theology, which discusses the result of the problem. On the contrary, the exposition should be based on the Scriptures themselves, which reflect the causes of the problem. When examining the Bible and the Qur'an for the relationship between God and man, many passages and episodes are strikingly similar to each other. Yet, there are some crucial differences in almost every occurrence. For example, the account where the three visitors announce the birth of a son to Abraham in Genesis 18 is comparable to Surah 11 and 15 as an identical event. Yet the Qur'an indicates that only two visitors came to Abraham (S 51:24) instead of the three in the Old Testament (Gn 18:2). In Genesis, the third visitor is identified as God (יהוה, Gn 18:1), and he remains in the scene of Abraham's supplication for Sodom (Gn 18:16-33), indicating the immanence of God in this event. On the other hand, the Qur'an affirmatively deletes the third visitor, who is identified as God, from the beginning of the scene (S 11:69), thus indicating the absolute transcendence of God in this context.

What is the cause of the difference? Was there any editorial work in the Qur'an based on the Qur'anic writer's prior understanding of the absolute transcendence of God? Or as the Qur'an itself claims (S 5:48), has the former revelation of God (the Bible) been so corrupted by Jews and Christians (Ali 1989:263) that God revealed the final and correct version of the Holy Scripture, the Qur'an? One affirmative fact at this stage is that both Muslims and Christians believe the Bible to be the "Word of God." The Qur'an confirms that the same God revealed the Bible and the Qur'an (S 29:46; 2:136). However, the contents of revelation from the same

God in the two Scriptures are considerably different even in identical episodes. If this difference between the two Scriptures has any influence on the process of formulating the respective Christian and Muslim theology and practice, there will be unavoidable theological disagreement between the two religions. Hence, the difference in the Scriptures is possibly one of the root causes of the conflict between Muslims and Christians seen today. For example, Christians' view of the immanence of God allows the incarnation of Jesus while Muslims' strict adherence to the absolute transcendence of God does not allow God to be human and to live among them. Thus, Christians' testimony of Jesus to Muslims would meet with an uproar for committing one of the greatest sins for Muslims, *Shirk,* idolatry or ascribing plurality to the deity (Hughes [1885] 1998:579).

At this point, I sense the need to investigate aspects of the transcendence of God, particularly in the context of God's major encounters with some of the significant figures of the Bible and the Qur'an. They are, namely, Adam, Abraham, and Moses. The proper understanding of God's relationship with man may bring a better understanding of the differences between Christianity and Islam, achieved through a comparative understanding and implications of the transcendence of God in the theologies of Christians and Muslims.

1.3   AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this thesis is therefore to investigate the transcendence of God in the Bible and the Qur'an, particularly within the limits of corresponding accounts of God's relationship with Adam, Abraham, and Moses. Selected passages will be used as examples to fulfil the aim of the study. Through this study an attempt will be made to determine what constitutes different aspects of theologies and practices of Christianity and Islam.

The objectives of research are expressed through the following major research areas. These objectives are:

- to present an overview of the research as well as the various aspects of research methodology (chapter 1).

- to describe the similarities and differences in the Qur'an and the Bible and to present an appropriate approach to the exegesis of the elective passages (chapter 2).

- to establish the preliminary preparation of the study as well as to orient the readers to the theological issues of the transcendence of God (chapter 3).

- to investigate how God reveals his will in respect to the Qur'an and the Bible, particularly the Old Testament (chapter 4).

- to describe and analyse the transcendence of God revealed in the Old Testament and the Qur'an, within the limits of the parallel passages dealing with Adam, Abraham, and Moses (chapter 4).

- to find the cause of the differences between the corresponding episodes of the Old Testament and the Qur'an with regard to the transcendence of God (chapter 5).

- to analyse the implications of the transcendence of God with regard to the differences in Christian and Islamic theology (chapter 5).

- to conclude the study as well as to discuss any solutions for the Christian-Muslim conflicts and the necessity for further studies (chapter 6).

1.4   METHODOLOGY

The basic approach to the study of the transcendence of God is a comparative exegetical and literature study (chapter 4) as well as a comparative theological analysis (chapter 5) of both the Qur'an and the Bible. In the process of exegetical study the redactional approach to the Qur'an is evident in chapter 4. The redactional historical approach (or redaction criticism) is defined as an analysis focusing on the literary and theological contributions of the authors by analysing the way they modified their sources to arrive creatively and purposefully at their own special emphases (Grenz, Guretzki & Nordling 1999:100).

Within the limits of this thesis there is no attempt to study the extensive biblical or philosophical theology of the transcendence of God. Instead, the major approach is to examine the transcendence of God as a theological theme, or theologoumenon, in the light of the grammatico-historical approach. The grammatico-historical approach is the combined analysis of a text from two major criticisms: grammatical criticism and historical criticism. Grammatical criticism includes all attempts to answer questions pertaining to the language of the text (Hayes & Holladay 1987:27) while historical criticism is concerned with the historical settings of biblical texts (Stuart 2001:116). In addition to historical criticism, the reader's approach to the background and situation will be utilised to understand how the

people in the episode actually understood the appearance of God in particular situations, in order to fully understand the historical settings of the text.[3]

In the process of exegesis, this thesis employs the inductive approach to the Scriptures and analyses of the theme, the transcendence of God. As an inductive study method, the approach is a movement from the particular to the general; the thesis will formulate the understanding of the transcendence of God from the relevant passages of the Old Testament and the Qur'an. Then the findings of textual studies will be applied to the specific implications for the theologies of Christians and Muslims. This approach should provide some advantages by identifying theological reasons for the Christian-Muslim conflict, which originate from the different understandings and practice of theology.

There are three processes of the inductive method: observation, interpretation, and application. These processes are further explained as follows (Kyomya 1998:5):

- **Observation**: This asks the question, "What does the text say to the reader?" Thus it will note what is to be understood in the texts of the Old Testament and the Qur'an. As many of the corresponding episodes of the two texts differ from each other, this section will also discuss some of the editorial arguments of the texts in light of redaction criticism.

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[3] Orthodox Islamic belief holds that the Qur'an is the divine word as delivered directly to Mohammad. "Thus the Qur'an is literally the Words of God, repeated, without error, by his 'envoy' or 'messenger' (*rasul*), as he is called in the Qur'an, and as every Muslim must believe" (Peters 2003:26). In this respect, with the Qur'an being "Words of God," Islam upholds strong resistance to the application of historical-critical methods, which is stated here as one of the various approaches, to the Qur'an (Winter 2004:61). However, in order to achieve the purpose of this thesis, the exegetical method of interpretation is applied to both Scriptures, the Qur'an and the Bible. See also 1.4.2.

- **Interpretation**: This asks the question, "What does the text mean?" In this section, the thesis will be explored beyond the lexical or dictionary meaning of "referent." The section will employ the grammatico-historical method of exegesis, which seeks the meaning of a passage in its context, taking into account the rules of literature, grammar, syntax, and figures of speech to seek the values of its witness in light of its historical background. This approach will include, but is not limited to, historical and cultic background, textual criticism, grammatical and syntactical analysis, lexical study, and theological analysis. Chapter 4 will deal with interpretation after a brief presentation of an observation of the texts.

- **Application**: This asks the question, "How does the text relate to the particular [then and today] situation?" Here, the question asked is in relation to the theological implication of the transcendence of God over the formation of Systematic Theology (chapter 5). The basic approach to this section is a comparative theological analysis of the transcendence of God. Chapter 5 concentrates on whether the concept of God's transcendence, derived from chapter 4, has any significant impact on the theology of Christians and Muslims.

This study of the transcendence of God is further based on a literature study. The Bible, the Qur'an, language tools, relevant books, and periodicals will be the major resources for the exposition and analysis.

1.4.1 Underlying assumptions in the research

Although Christians share the Old Testament with Jews, in this thesis, the Old Testament refers to part of the Scripture of Christianity. The interpretation and exegesis are confined to

the perspective of Christianity, especially from an evangelical-conservative Protestant perspective. There are other theological perspectives that differ from this view. For the exegesis of the Qur'an, Sunni belief or orthodox Islam is the main argumentation.

The Scriptures used in this thesis are "The New International Version" (1978, revised 1983) for the Bible and "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary" (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1934, revised 1989). It was a requisite decision to choose these Scriptures due to the various translation processes of the Scriptures. John Gilchrist (1995:139) comments on the translation of the Qur'an: "Unlike the Bible, authorised translations of the Qur'an into English, published by a number of recognised scholars, have never been produced. Virtually every English version has been the work of only one man, whether done by Muslim scribes or by Orientalists in the West. As a result each translation to some extent reflects the bias of the writer no matter how sincerely he may have attempted to produce a text as close to the Arabic original as he can." Therefore, it has been the considered decision to choose the most popular translation of the Scriptures, both the NIV and the Ali version of the Qur'an, in the Muslim world as well as in the West. I will refer to different translations if called for in the contexts of exegesis.

Both Muslims and Christians treat their Scriptures as inerrant; both adherents of these faiths see their Scriptures as the "Word of God," which is incapable of erring (Grenz et al 1999:66). Since there are many crucial differences between the Bible and the Qur'an, the inerrancy of the Scripture brings conflicts between the two groups of believers. However, for academic research, it is presupposed that both the Bible and the Qur'an are the Word of God without any further argument of inerrancy. The dogmatic description of how these believers want to view their Scriptures is not challenged in this study. Muslims treat the Hadith as fallible, but

based on Muslims' high respect towards the Hadith, this thesis will treat it on the same level as the Qur'an in the exegetical argument. God will be used in the general sense of deity, applying to both Christian and Muslim faith. If there is a need to distinguish between the two deities in the argument, Yahweh will be used when referring to the Christian deity while Allah will be used for the Muslim deity.

1.4.2 Delimiting the concerns of the research

As the Qur'an declares its status as a sequential Scripture to the Bible (S 5:48), there are many biblical accounts retold in the Qur'an, especially from the Old Testament.[4] However, these biblical stories appear in the Qur'an without ample details, so exegesis of the Qur'an is heavily dependent upon the corresponding biblical account in order to compare the relationship of God in both Scriptures. Therefore, in the process of exegetical analysis of the text, I will apply the biblical exegetical method of literary grammatico-historical approach to both the Qur'an and the Bible within the limit of the corresponding texts employing the biblical and Qur'anic theology, not the history behind the texts.

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[4] There are 25 prophets mentioned by name in the Qur'an. Following are the major prophets of the Qur'an: Adam the "Chosen of Allah," Noah (*Nuh*), the "Prophet of Allah," Moses (*Musa*), the "Converser with Allah," Abraham (*Ibrahim*), the "Friend of Allah," Ishmael (*Isma'il*), the "Sacrifice of Allah," Jesus (*Isa*), the "Word of Allah" and the "Spirit of Allah," Isaac (*Ishaq*), Jacob (*Ya'qub*), David (*Dawud*), Solomon (*Sulaiman*), Elijah, Elisha, Jonah (*Yunus*), John the Baptist (*Yahya*), Zechariah (*Zakariya*), father of John the Baptist. Salih, Hud and Shu'aib, The identity of the last three is not clear (*Prophets* 2002:1). Many of the biblical prophets in the Qur'an have extensive similarity to the biblical accounts, especially Adam, Abraham, and Moses. These three persons are chosen for discussion as they are foundational figures of both Christianity and Islam as well as for the comparable textual similarities.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis for this study of the theologoumenon, namely the transcendence of God in the Old Testament and the Qur'an with regard to the eclectic passages, is as follows:

Exegesis of the parallel passages dealing with Adam, Abraham, and Moses in the Old Testament and the Qur'an shows that the (ontological) transcendence of God[5] in the Old Testament is due to the sinful nature of man. Due to the unholy nature of man, the Holy God cannot be with man, yet God uses his transcendent nature as a medium to approach man. On the other hand, due to the presupposition of the absolute transcendence of God, the Qur'an is redactionally written to propagandise against God's immanence in the Old Testament and thus maintain God's absolute transcendence from his creation.

The differing concepts of the relationship of God with mankind shown in the divergent exegesis of Adam, Abraham, and Moses may have been foundational to the entire Islamic and Christian faiths. Furthermore, they may have caused some of the major differences between Christian and Muslim theologies, with the one allowing God's presence with man in Christianity and the other denying God's presence with man in Islam. The differences may also have constituted a root cause of Christian and Muslim conflicts. On the other hand, explicating the differing concepts of the transcendence of God and their effect on the theology of Christianity and Islam may result in better Christian-Muslim relations by promoting understanding of the root cause of the differences.

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[5] See the definition of "transcendence" and "ontological status" in 1.7.2. In this thesis, the transcendence of God is referring to God's ontological transcendent state from humankind.

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISION

Significant differences as well as similarities between Islam and Christianity are noted in the theologoumenon of the transcendence of God, based on exemplary chosen texts in events between God and Adam, Abraham, and Moses. Their implications for overall Muslim and Christian theologies will be discussed. The following provides an overview of this thesis:

- Chapter 1 includes rational statements on the subject of God's relationship with his people, particularly referring to the theologoumenon, the transcendence of God. It presents an overview of the problem statement, aims and objectives, as well as various aspects of research methodology, hypothesis and study outline.

- Chapter 2 presents a background study of the Bible and the Qur'an. It will focus on the methods of divine revelation and the relationship between the two Scriptures.

- Chapter 3 orientates the readers to the theological issues of the transcendence of God from the viewpoints of both Christian and Muslim scholars as well as Jewish scholars. The issues of transcendence in Buddhism, Hinduism, and other societies will first be presented for the purpose of orientation. The study of chapter 3 will carry out a literature review of the "Ways of Transcendence," edited by Edwin Dowdy (1982).

- Chapter 4 focuses on the exegetical and comparative studies of the corresponding passages and episodes between the Old Testament and the Qur'an in order to investigate the transcendence of God revealed in the text. Survey and analysis of the biblical and

Qur'anic passages on the transcendence of God in events with Adam, Abraham, and Moses will be carried out.

- Chapter 5 applies the results of chapter 4's findings to the general theologies and practice of Christians and Muslims. Such areas include anthropology, soteriology, pneumatology, bibliology, and theology proper. This chapter will explore how differing views of God's transcendence influence overall Christian and Muslim theology and contribute to the disunity and conflict between adherents of these faiths today.

- In Chapter 6 a synopsis of the results and findings of the research as well as the implications of the thesis' finding for Christian and Muslim relations will be provided. Several suggestions for further research will conclude the study.

Ibn Warraq (1995:1) divides Islam into three categories: "Islam 1, Islam 2, and Islam 3. Islam 1 is what the Prophet taught, that is, his teachings as contained in the Koran. Islam 2 is the religion as expounded, interpreted, and developed by the theologians through the traditions (Hadith); it completes the *sharia* and Islamic law. Islam 3 is what Muslims actually did do and achieve, that is to say, Islamic civilization." This thesis' outline may be compared to that of Warraq's division of Islam. Chapters 1 to 3 prepare for the main studies. Chapter 4 correlates with Islam 1 by employing exegetical studies of the Qur'an and the Bible. Chapter 5 may correspond to Islam 2 in a discussion of the theological issue of the transcendence of God which is brought forth in chapter 4. Chapter 6 brings forth some issues of Islam 3. Therefore, the study touches on all aspects of Islam with a focus on the foundation of Islam, Islam 1, which refers to the Qur'an.

1.7 ORTHOGRAPHY AND TERMINOLOGY

1.7.1 Orthography

The adjusted Harvard system of reference is used in this thesis. The system is also called the author-date reference system, and the major reference is *Form and Style in Theological texts: A Guide for the Use of the Harvard Reference System* by Killian (1989). *The Chicago Manual of Style,* 14th edition, will supplement the Harvard Reference System by Killian.

All scripture references of the Bible are from the New International Version (1985) unless otherwise indicated. The Hebrew text of the Old Testament is from the fourth corrected edition of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1977) by the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. Greek text references for the New Testament are from Nestle-Aland 27th Edition (1993) while the Greek translation of the Old Testament is based on the LXX Septuaginta Rahlfs' (1935). The English translation version of the Qur'an is from Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1989), and the Roman transliterated version of Haleem Eliasii (1997) will be used for the Arabic text of the Qur'an. Unlike the Bible, which has reference to particular books, chapter, and verse such as Genesis (Gn 1:1), Exodus (Ex 1:1), and Leviticus (Lv 1:1), the Qur'an has only Surah (chapter) and verse as (S 1:1) references.

All Arabic words are transliterated and italicised in this thesis. In the case of the Arabic word that is recognised by the normative use of the noun and proper noun in English, anglicised forms are in use. For example, the word for God in Arabic is used as "Allah" instead of "*Allah*" when it occurs within the English sentence. Hebrew and Greek are used in the main

text with definitions when it first occurs followed by the words alone in the immediate succeeding arguments.

The different expressions for God in the Hebrew and Arabic translation and transliteration are capitalised, such as Yahweh, the Lord, and Allah. Accordingly, any of the words from the ninety-nine names of God in Islam will also be capitalised. The different words for Christian and Muslim Scripture are capitalised. However, instead of employing various terms such as the Book, the Holy Scriptures, the Mother of Tablet, and the Word, the unified form of "Scripture" will be used for both Christian and Muslim Scripture unless those terms are a part of the original text. The derived form of the Bible and any pronouns that refers to God will not be capitalised here. However, the Qur'an, Qur'anic and Allah are capitalised.

1.7.2   Explication of terminology

Depending on the context of the terminology used, the meaning and implications of a word or terminology can be varied. This thesis employs few terminologies that may be interpreted in various ways even without reference to particular context among scholars. Some of the following terms are already mentioned in this chapter's discussion of methodology. Other are listed to clear the ambiguity of the terms.

Exegesis: A word derived from the Greek verb "to lead out," is the careful historical, literary, and theological analysis of a text (Gorman 2001:31).

Grammatical Criticism: An analysis of text that includes all attempts to answer questions pertaining to the language and literary features of the text. This includes both the words

themselves, either alone or in phrases, as well as the way in which the words are put together or the syntax of the sentence. Rules of grammar in effect at the time the passage was written may also need to be examined if it appears that meaning and understanding depend upon resolving grammatical issues (Hayes & Holladay 1987: 27).

Grammatico-Historical Criticism: This method of exegesis seeks the meaning of a passage in its context, taking into account the rules of grammar, syntax, and figures of speech to seek the values of its witness in light of historical background. This approach will include, but not be limited to, historical and cultic background, textual criticism, grammatical and syntactical analysis, lexical study, and theological analysis.

Historical Criticism: Historical criticism is concerned with the historical settings of biblical texts, including the establishing of names, dates, and times for events mentioned or attended to in a given passage. The aim of historical criticism is to produce a useful understanding of the relevant historical factors behind the text (Stuart 2001:116).

Immanence: As the contrast to transcendence, immanence refers to God's existence in all parts of the universe. Just like transcendence in this thesis, the term is limited to the usage of the ontological status of God's existing inherently to his subject.

Inductive and Deductive: Induction is the basis of the scientific method used in this study. It is the method of reasoning that infers conclusions from observed patterns from particular facts or individual cases in data under study. Deductive reasoning deduces conclusions that are logical and necessary consequences of the premises. It reasons from the general to the specific (Sawyer 1999:151).

Ontological Status: Ontology is a branch of metaphysics[6] which is concerned with the nature of being. In Christian metaphysics there are three arguments: arguments for the existence of God, for the attributes of God, and for the relationship between God and the world (Hasker 1983:105-117). In the arguments for the existence of God, "ontological arguments set out to prove that it is logically impossible that God should not exist—that denial of God's existence is self-contradictory" (Hasker 1983:106). Ontological status refers to the existence status of God's being with mankind in this thesis.

Reader's Approach: This approach to a text is also called "reader-response criticism" and "reader-oriented criticism." Clines and Exum (1993:19) well define this somewhat ambiguous terminology of exegesis thus: "Reader-response criticism regards meaning as coming into being at the meeting point of text and reader—or, in a more extreme form, as being created by readers in the act of reading." In this thesis the reader's approach looks into the understanding of the circumstance of text by the original or early reader that includes the person involved in the biblical and Qur'anic events. This is done through "four view points— those of narrator, character, plot, and implied reader. The task of the real reader is to assemble meaning through these viewpoints by searching for (constructing) a consistent relationship between them" (Tate 2006:440).

Redaction Criticism: The primary meaning of this criticism is an analysis that employs "the quest for perceiving the ways in which the final author(s) of the text purposefully adopted and adapted sources" in order to create meaning in a new context (Gorman 2001:15). Western scholars of Islam, such as Geiger, Bell, and Wansbrough, promote the work of

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[6] Others treat ontology as synonymous to metaphysics or "first philosophy" as defined by Aristotle in the 4th century B.C. (Preece 2003:958; Keller 1975:1107).

Mohammad as redactor of the Qur'an. Firestone (2003:10, 12, 19) provides the accounts of the three scholars' views: Geiger upholds that, in some cases, Mohammad purposefully distorted or misrepresented Jewish teachings in order to make them fit the historical, cultural, ritual, or moral-ethical contexts in which he was working, Bell demonstrates that the present form of the Qur'an is the result of the careful editing, revision, and sometimes replacement of passages with Mohammad's cut and pasted verses, and Wansbrough examines how Qur'anic words, phrases, symbols, and ideas fit into the unfolding of generic scripture. His models are drawn mostly from the Bible and rabbinic tradition to demonstrate how the Qur'an developed organically within a sectarian biblical/rabbinic milieu. Muslim exegetes also sought Jewish and Christian texts that would explain the Qur'anic references to see how the Qur'an stood at the end of a series of revelations from God to humankind in the first Islamic century. This approach produced negative attitudes by the beginning of the third Islamic century. "Any relationship between biblical figures and themes found in the Qur'an was held to be the result of God's previous revelation to humankind, and any differences were the result of Jews and Christians corrupting that revelation. The Qur'an was not regarded as an imitation of the Bible" (Robbins & Newby 2003:24). Islamic scholars' attitudes closed the door to any scientific approach to the texts. Redaction criticism in this thesis, however, is limited to the argument of the formation of the Qur'anic texts corresponding to the Old Testament. The discussion of the transcendence of God is limited to biblical material in the Qur'an which is entitled to criticism, for both biblical and Qur'anic materials are sent by God according to the Qur'an (S 39:1,2; 45:2; 46:2; 76:23; 97:1).

Special Revelation: "The term revelation means intrinsically the disclosure of what was previously unknown. In Judeo-Christian theology, the term is used primarily of God's communication to man of divine truth, that is his manifestation of himself or his will…this

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revelation being further discriminated as *general* or universal (that is, revelation in nature, history and conscience) and *special* or particular (that is, redemptive revelation conveyed by wondrous acts and words)" (Henry 1988:457). In this thesis, the discussion of the transcendence of God is limited to the category of "special revelation," where God reveals himself to particular people. In this individual and particular sense of revelation, "theophany" may be cross-defined with special revelation thus: "A theophany occurs when God's presence is made visible and recognisable as a divine self-disclosure" (Yarbrough 2000:733). However, it must be noted that Islam considers the Qur'an as proof of theophany. In fact the Qur'an is treated as "*the* great theophany of the religions" (Winter 2004:50), for Allah did not reveal himself but his will through the Qur'an."

Theologoumenon: "A theologoumenon is a theological opinion. This word is often applied to opposing arguments in a theological debate, where both sides are rigorously orthodox. This happens because we possess sufficient knowledge to assure our salvation, but we do not possess all knowledge, and we cannot satisfy our curiosity about every matter. For example, scripture does not teach us precisely what demons are, so theories about demons are theologoumena" (Collins 2008:1).

Transcendence: Opposite to immanence, it means either God's independence from the world or his greater status. From this definition, there are various theological uses for this term. However, in this thesis, transcendence has limited usage in reference to the ontological status of existence *above and apart from the material world* in reference to the relationship between God and his subject.

CHAPTER 2

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIBLE AND QUR'AN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Both Christians and Muslims have placed their faith in descriptions in either the Bible or the Qur'an and endeavour to live according to the teachings of their Scriptures. They also respect their Scriptures to be the true "Word of God." However, when believers of the two major religions face each other with their respective beliefs of scriptural supremacy, there is unavoidable conflict because "Monotheistic traditions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam are notoriously exclusivist in their theologies and discriminatory in their laws" (Sachedina 2006:291). Some Christians treat the Scripture of Islam as the result of a deceiving act of a satanic angel in the revelation of God to Mohammad (Poston 2000:181). Thus, the Scripture of Islam, the Qur'an, is accordingly the "masterwork of the Satan, an ingenious mixture of truth and lies that binds all its beliefs in a dangerous imitation of the truth" (Abd-Al-Masih [s a]:68) and the truth of God needs to be disclosed to Muslims. Similarly, Muslims believe that Christians possess an altered version of what was once the Word of God, and therefore it is no longer trustworthy. Only the Qur'an contains spiritual truth. "In any point in which the Qur'an and the Bible disagree, the quranic text is to be considered accurate" (Poston 2000:183-184). Braswell (1996:296) also says "If the Bible contradicts what is reported in the Qur'an, then the Bible is false or has been corrupted."

In spite of the Qur'anic claims of "confirmations of (revelations) that went before it and a fuller explanation of the Book [the Bible]" (S 10:37), and that the same God revealed both the Bible and the Qur'an (S 29:46), there are crucial textual and theological differences in the two Scriptures. These differences between the Qur'an and the Bible may have been the cause of the depreciating of the Bible or the Qur'an by their traditional believers. Then how can the similarities and differences of the Qur'an and the Bible best be described and treated without causing any unwelcome results? Were there distinct methods of God's revelation of the Scriptures that resulted in the divergence? What seems to be the cause of the differences? Are there any explications and solutions for the differences in the corresponding accounts of the two Scriptures? These are some of the few questions addressed here after a short introduction to the Bible and the Qur'an.[7]

2.1.1 Introduction to Bible and Qur'an

2.1.1.1 The Qur'an

The Qur'an is considered to have been existent in the highest (7th) heaven, but it was for some reason brought down to the third heaven, from where the angel Gabriel took it piece by piece to reveal it to Mohammad, the "illiterate" prophet. Mohammad then recited the Qur'an and shared it with the people around him (Nehls & Eric 1996:53). Mohammad received the Qur'an and conveyed it five verses at a time and immediately ordered the passages to be

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[7] Some groups of Christianity and Islam hold the view that the Bible and the Qur'an cannot really be compared with one another as one Scripture over against the other. This belief of religiocentrism is based on either Jesus or the Qur'an being the living Word of God among the respective believers (Phipps 1996:81). However, for academic research, the Qur'an is treated as subsequent to Scripture in this thesis. See 1.4.2, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 for further discussion.

written down. Mohammad's companions immediately committed the verses to memory five at a time (Layla 1992:232). In this way many of his followers could quote large passages, some even the whole Qur'an, by heart. Those who memorised the entire Qur'an were called memorizers or protectors of the Qur'an (*Hafiz*).[8]

After the death of Mohammad in A.D. 632, Abu Bakr became the first Caliph (*Khalifah*), successor to Mohammad. Under the influence of the second Caliph Umar, Abu Bakr compiled the Qur'an into one volume because many memorizers of the Qur'an (*Hafiz*) were disappearing from the scene through battles and natural death. The final version was checked and approved by all Muslims, who heard the Qur'an from Mohammad (Kateregga & Shenk 1980:30). The final Qur'an generally used today is authorised by Uthman, Mohammad's third successor (Nagel 1999:12). Therefore, the collection of the Surahs has been suggested in three stages: "The first time was by Mohammad, basing this interpretation on the report of Zayd B. Thābit that stated, 'We used to compose (*nu'allif*) the Qur'an from the leaves…', in the following way: 'Mohammad used to say that this verse should be put in this sūra.' The second time was under Abū Bakr, but not in a definitive codex. The third time was under 'Uthmān in a 'definitive single' codex" (Gilliot 2006:46). At the final stage of the collection of the Qur'an, "Uthmān ordered that the other codices should be burned or destroyed and that the 'codex of Zayd' ('Uthmānic codex') alone should be preserved (in Medina) and copies made to be sent to each of the main centres of the empire: Mecca, Basra, Kūfa and Damascus" (Gilliot 2006:45). The Qur'an is divided into 114 Surahs (chapters) in no chronological order. Apart from Surah 1 they are roughly ordered according to length, the second Surah being the longest (Nehls & Eric 1996:53).

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[8] *Hafiz* is an honorific title for "one who preserves, has by heart" (the entire Qur'an). *Hafiz is* sometimes addressed as *shaykh,* "master" (Graham & Kermani 2006:122).

Muslims see the Qur'an as the verifier and guardian of the revelations of God. Maulana Ali ([1936] 1992:27) explains it based on Surah 5:48, "To thee We sent the Scripture [the Qur'an] in truth confirming the scripture that came before it and guarding it in safety":

> The Qur'ān is thus not only a verifier of the sacred books of all nations as stated above; it is also a guardian over them. In other words, it guards the original teachings of the prophets of God, for, as elsewhere stated, those teachings had undergone alterations, and only a revelation from God could separate the pure Divine teaching from the mass of error which had grown around it. This was the work done by the Holy Qur'ān, and hence it is called a guardian over the earlier scriptures [the Bible].

Therefore, the Qur'an is treated as superior among all the books of revelation as the final revelation which is "a summary and clarification of the former scriptures" (Shenk 2006:87). The books indicated in the Qur'an (S 2:136; 3:3; 17:55; 87:19) are the *Suhuf* (Scrolls) revealed to Abraham which is lost, the *Taurat* (Torah) revealed to Moses, the *Zabur* (Psalms) revealed to David, the *Injil* (Gospel) revealed to Jesus, and the Qur'an revealed to Mohammad (Kateregga & Shenk 1980:25-26). Among these books, the Qur'an itself boldly claims its supremacy to readers in Surah 2:23 and 17:88:

> **Surah 2:23**   And if ye are in doubt as to what we have revealed from time to time to Our servant then produce a Surah like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah if your (doubts) are true.

Surah 17:88 Say: "If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an they could not produce the like thereof even if they backed up each other with help and support."

Yusuf Ali (1989:21, 699) explains that these two verses (S 2:23; 17:88) are the test of the true revelation from God by challenging humankind and Jinns to produce one like the Qur'an in terms of spiritual truth in such noble language. Furthermore, "*The Muslim believes the Qur'an to be the absolute identical copy of the eternal heavenly book, even so far as the punctuation, titles and divisions are concerned*" (Nehls & Eric 1996:54). For this reason, Muslims do not accept critique of the Qur'an, whether by historians, scientists, orientalists or theologians. In fact, those who apply the techniques of biblical criticism to the Qur'an and other Islamic sources "have found themselves condemned in *fatwah*, decrees declaring them to be apostates and beyond the pale of Islam" (Masood 2001:xvi). On the other hand, the Qur'an, both the book itself and its content, is highly respected by Muslims as they recite or chant the Qur'anic verses in Arabic, the original language of the revelation. Therefore, to the believers, "the Suras demand no critical thinking, only a passive acceptance and obedience" (Abd-Al-Masih [s a]:72) for "**Allah's law** is not to be penetrated by the intelligence, it is **ta'abbudi**, i.e. **man has to accept** it **without criticism**" (Nehls 1991:3). Consequently, as Amar Djaballah (2004:15) agrees, the vast majority of Muslims conceive of the Qur'an as the uncreated and eternal Word of God, and they must believe it as is written.

2.1.1.2   The Bible

The Bible is divided into two parts known as the Old and the New Testament. Unlike the Qur'an, which consists solely of chapters, there are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament

and twenty-seven books in the New Testament in the Protestant canon. The Old Testament begins with the five books of Moses (Torah), known as *Taurat* in the Qur'an (S 5:44), followed by the twelve books of the history of Israel and the rise of the prophets. Five books of wisdom, or the poetic books, follow next. In this section, Psalms is known as *Zabur* in the Qur'an (S 17:55). Together with *Taurat, Zabur* is generally referred to as the entire Old Testament by the Qur'an and the Muslims (S 5:49, 71; Gilchrist 1999:51). The remaining seventeen books are known as the books of the prophets (or prophecy).

The New Testament is the Christian Scripture dating from the second part of the first century. Unlike the Old Testament, the Jews do not accept the New Testament as canonical. However, Muslims and the Qur'an accept it as *Injil* (S 5:46), the Gospel of Jesus, that is generally referred to as the New Testament. The New Testament may be divided into three major sections: history (5 books), letters (21 books) and prophecy (1 book).[9] These books were written between 50 and 150 A.D., but only in the second century did the designation "New Testament" first appear (Peters 2003:17). The term "New Testament" is a theological term indicating the prophetic promise of the Old Testament which is fulfilled in the New Testament (Jr 31:31; Mt 26:38; 2 Cor 3:14). The term was first used by an early Church Father, Tertullian (c. 200) to indicate the entirety of the New Testament (Gromacki 1974:42).

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[9] Other popular divisions of the New Testament according to literary style are: Biography (Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn), History (Ac), Pauline Epistles (Rm, 1 & 2 Cor, Gl, Eph, Phlp, Col, 1 & 2 Th, 1 & 2 Tm, Tt, Phlm), General Epistles (Heb, Ja, 1 & 2 Pt, 1, 2, & 3 Jn, Jude), and Prophecy (Rv).

The Protestant Bible consists of 66 books: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The Catholic Bible has 73 books: 7 more books in the Old Testament than in the Protestant Bible. They are Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Wisdom, Sirach, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and parts of Esther and Daniel. In this thesis, the Bible refers to the Protestant Bible.

The canonisation of the Old Testament was historically undeviated compared to the New Testament. The three divisions of the Old Testament, Law, Prophets, and Writings (Psalms), were already recognised in the New Testament (Lk 24:44; see also Jn 10:35; 2 Tm 3:15). "This three-fold division was also attested to by Josephus (A.D. 37-95), Bishop Melito of Sardis (ca. A.D. 170), Tertullian (A.D. 160-250), and others. The Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90 is generally considered the occasion whereby the Old Testament canon was publicly recognized" (Enns 1989:171).

Even though Peter recognised Paul's writings as Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16, it is not until A.D. 363 that the Council of Laodicea stated that along with the Old Testament the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were to be read in the churches. In A.D. 367 Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, declared that the twenty-seven books were the only true books. The Council of Hippo (A.D. 393) recognised them and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) affirmed that only those canonical books were to be read in the churches (Enns 1989:172; Harrison 1964:108-109).

Christians accept the Bible as the "Word of God."[10] They use the Bible "for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tm 3:16). Christians also follow the example of Jesus whose teachings and personal life are based on the Old Testament. Therefore, Christians believe the Old and New Testament to be the "Word of God" and treat the entire Bible as guidance for their lives.

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[10] The phrase "Word of God" refers to Jesus (Rv 19:13; Jn 1:1, 14; 1 Jn 1:1) or a speech by God (Grudem 1994:47). In this thesis, it is a dogmatic expression to indicate that the faith tradition gives authority to the Scriptures.

2.2 REVELATION OF GOD

Christians believe that the Bible is the written "Word of God" through God's inspiration of different writers (Kenny [s a]:9). The Bible declares in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed [θεόπνευστος] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." The Greek word θεόπνευστος in 2 Timothy 3:16 is a word composed of θεος (God) and πνευσις (blowing, breathing). Thus the word θεόπνευστος means "inspired by God" (NRS, NAU) or "inspiration of God" (KJV).[11] The Hebrew translation of the New Testament sheds better understanding of the inspiration. The Salkinson-Ginsburg Hebrew New Testament translates 2 Timothy 3:16 as, "כָּל־כִּתְבֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ עַל־פִּי רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים" (all the writing of Holy Scriptures is upon (by) the mouth of the Spirit of God). This Hebrew translation indicates that the author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit through the inspiration of human writers and translators who wrote what Christians have today. In the process of writing, no thought or interpretation of the writers has been added as the Bible says in 2 Peter 1:20-21, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Historically, the inspiration of the Scripture was first enunciated by Pope Gregory I (called "the Great") and open repeated thereafter (Peters 2003:21). Evans (1974:194-195) comments on inspiration as "*the strong, conscious inbreathing of God into men, qualifying them to give utterance to truth. It is*

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[11] NRS (New Revised Standard Version, 1989), NAU (New American Standard Bible, 1995), KJV (King James Version, [1611]1769).

God speaking through men, and the Old [and New] *Testament is therefore just as much the Word of God as though God spake every single word of it with His own lips."*[12]

However, Muslims can say "Divine inspiration does not mean divine dictation" (Kateregga & Shenk 1980:109). In this denial of the perfection of divine inspiration Muslims would argue that there is the possibility of human influences and editorial work in the writing of the Bible. Thus Kateregga (Kateregga & Shenk 1980:117) says, "the imprint of human personality is part of the content of biblical revelations." He continuously argues that the true revelation is "the true guidance that has been sent down (*tanzil*) directly from God." He means that in contrast to the Bible, the Qur'an had been dictated to Mohammad (*Wahyun*) in the original format of the heavenly copy. This implies that Allah himself is believed to be the actual author of the Qur'an.

In response a Christian scholar (Kateregga & Shenk 1980:32) says:

> Christians believe that the central fact of Divine revelation is God's Self-disclosure. God reveals Himself pre-eminently through His acts in human history. Divine Scriptures are, therefore, a revelation of God's Self-disclosure, and the Divinely inspired record of man's response to God's Self-disclosure. Christians do not perceive of revelation as Divine Books which have been sent down from heaven, but rather as the personal Word of

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[12] There are many other views of the inspiration of the Scripture. Yet, it is sufficient to deal with the view which is indicated above in this thesis. Enns (1989:160) lists other views such as: natural inspiration, spiritual illumination, partial or dynamic inspiration, conceptual inspiration, and divine dictation.

God engaged in lively, active encounter with man. That is the nature of Biblical revelation.

In the above Christian view of the revelation of God, Shenk presents and compares the two methods of revelation: the Muslims' way of sending down the word and the Christian view of writings as the inspired record of God's self-disclosure. This leads into further investigation of how God communicates with man, especially according to the Qur'an and the Old Testament.

2.3   MODES OF REVELATION

There are two notable statements of how God communicates with man in the Old Testament and the Qur'an. A biblical passage in Numbers 12:6-8, for example, may be compared with Surah 42:51.

Numbers 12:6-8   [6]he said, "Listen to my words: When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. [7]But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. [8]With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Surah 42:51   It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a Messenger [the angel Gabriel] to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise.

The biblical passage in Numbers classifies mediators in God's communication on two different levels: general mediators and a unique authoritative mediator, Moses. To a general prophet, God reveals himself in visions and speaks in dreams (Nm 12:6). To Moses, God speaks face to face, clearly with no riddles (Nm 12:8).

The phrase "face to face" (פֶּה אֶל־פֶּה, literally "mouth to mouth") in Numbers 12:8 may indicate a contradiction of Exodus 33:20, which says, "you cannot see my face [פָּנַי], for no one may see me and live."[13] However, the context of Numbers 12 indicates "an anthropomorphism meaning that God spoke to Moses without mediation" (Hannah 1985:228). Out of the twelve NIV uses of the phrase "face to face" in the Old Testament, eight times are from the word "face" (פָּנִים), three use the word "mouth" (פֶּה), and once the word "eye" (עַיִן) is used.[14] From the usages of the phrase "face to face" it seems that the Old Testament uses the three words, "face," "mouth," and "eye" interchangeably when two parties are in close interaction with each other. Close interaction is not limited between man to man but also between God and man, which accounts for a major part of its usage. Bullinger (1968:873) expands this close interaction with the implication of the word "face." He asserts that the "face" would also indicate the divine presence in happiness and divine favour as in Psalms 17:15: "In thy face [presence] is fullness of joy." Thus, the figurative expression suggests a close relationship between God and Moses. The use of the phrase "face

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[13] This is further supported by John 1:18, "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

[14] The biblical (NIV) references of "face to face" are: (1) eight times by the word "face" (פָּנִים), Gn 32:30; Ex 33:11; Dt 5:4; 34:10; Jdg 6:22; 2 Ki 14:8; 2 Chr 25:17; Ez 20:35, (2) three times by the word "mouth" (פֶּה), Nm 12:8; Jr 32:4; 34:3, and (3) one time by the word "eye" (עַיִן) in Nm 14:14.

to face" is clear when it characterises God's relationship with Moses as friendship, "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face (פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים), as a man speaks with his friend" (Ex 33:11; cf. Dt 34:10). Furthermore, God speaks to the people of Israel "face to face" at Mount Sinai from the midst of fire (Dt 5:4), another indication of God's presence and intention of a close relationship with man. It is a picture of immediate and profound intimacy that reflects God's initiative in revelation (Wessner 2002:116).

While the Bible indicates that God communicates directly with man (e.g., a special revelation),[15] the Qur'an strongly denies direct communication between God and man.[16] Surah 42:51 lists the three ways God communicates with man: inspiration, speaking from behind a veil, and the sending of a messenger. For Muslims, divine inspiration (*wahyun*) means either a suggestion supernaturally conveyed by God into the heart or mind of man, or verbal inspiration in which the actual words of God are conveyed in human language (Ali 1989:1261; Rahman 1989:99). The word inspiration implies a divine source that is beyond the world and the recipient. Even though some scholars may call this a direct revelation from God (Glasse 2001:383), the immediate context of excluding God's speaking to man ("It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a Messenger…") suggests that there is no direct communication with God.

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[15] Jesus as revelation of God would be included in the category of special revelation (Jn 1:1-18).

[16] Maulana Ali ([1936] 1992:78) lists three methods of revelation: (1) inspiration of an idea into the heart, *wahy,* (2) God's speaking to a man from behind a veil that includes *ru'yā* (dream), *kashf* (vision), and *ilhām* (voices in a state of trance), and (3) *wahy matluww*, revelation that is recited by the angel Gabriel which is the surest and clearest form of revelation limited to Mohammad.

The second mode of communication may further support the transcendence of God in his revelation. The phrase, "behind a veil," is interpreted not as a material veil, but as a mystic veil of light (Ali 1989:1261). The word veil (*hijāb*) is used six times in the Qur'an (S 7:46; 17:45; 19:17; 33:53; 38:32; 41:5) besides Surah 42:51. Four of those six occurrences refers to a non-physical veil that operates in a spiritual sense, such as the separation of darkness from light, or the believer from non-believers in heaven. The other two times (S 19:17; 33:53) it means a "screen" to separate one person from another. In the context where God is involved the veil is understood to be a non-physical veil, indicating the separation of God and man. If the word was taken to mean a physical "screen," it would be possible to see God once the veil is removed. Therefore, the presence of God behind a physical screen would indicate that God's immanence is within the limit of man's ontological experience of God. Thus, by interpreting the veil as a non-physical veil that separates God and man permanently, Muslims interpret this form of revelation as the absolute transcendence of God.

The last mode of God's communication, namely through an angel, is possibly the most dramatic example of the separation between God and man in the Qur'an. Surah 42:51 says that God speaks to man through a messenger who reveals his will. The messenger (*rasul*) is identified as the angel Gabriel (S 16:102), through whom revelations were given to Mohammad (Ali 1989:1261). Even though these texts do not indicate that the Holy Spirit is equal to the angel Gabriel, Muslim scholars identify the Holy Spirit as a title of Gabriel (Ali 1989:664; Shenk 2006:181; Abd-Al-Masih [s a]:30). The messenger was standing "a distance of but two bow-lengths" (S 53:9) when he conveys the revelation of the Qur'an to Mohammad. The "bow distance" is referred to as 100 to 150 yards (Ali 1989:1378). Thus, it is a total of 200 to 300 yards distance. This would be a visible distance in which to recognize a contour clearly, but not close enough to identify a figure. Thus, it can be treated as the

ontological transcendence of a heavenly being as distinguished from man. Furthermore, the fact that Gabriel had to receive a part of the Qur'an from the Mother of Tablet (S 43.4; 85:21-22), rather than directly from God, is a further indication of Allah's distance from both angel and man alike.

In summary, the following flowchart compares the mode of revelation between the Scriptures. Both the Qur'an and the Bible have their origin in God who reveals himself to humankind. However, in the process of revealing the Scriptures to humankind, there is a clear distinction of God's status of absolute transcendence in the Qur'an through the medium of the Mother of Tablets and the angel Gabriel. On the other hand, in the Bible an immanent God is revealed when revelation takes place through the presence and active involvement of God in the history of humankind and in the process of the inspiration of the Bible.

Yahweh		**Allah**	
↓		↓	
God's (Jesus') active involvement in human history	*[Immanence of God]*	The Mother of Tablet	*[Transcendence of God]* *Tanzil*
↓		↓	
Inspiration of the Holy Spirit	*[Immanence of God]*	Angel Gabriel	*[Transcendence of God]* *Wahyun*
↓		↓	
The writers of the Bible	**Inspiration**	Mohammad	**Dictation**
↓		↓	
Christians		Honourable Scribes (S 80:15-16)	
		↓	
		Muslims	

Figure 1: Two Modes of Revelation of the Scriptures

2.4 APPROACHES TO BIBLICAL MATERIAL IN THE QUR'AN

2.4.1 Introduction

Marilyn Waldman (1985:1) presents one of the major problems among the scholars who try to investigate the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible:

> When scholars investigate the apparent transmission of material from one monotheistic scripture to another, they tend to assume that earlier materials are normative and later ones derivative. This tendency, if unmitigated, makes it difficult to appreciate either earlier or later materials in and of themselves; and it affects scholars' attitudes to the whole of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition and each of its various parts.

In the case of the Bible and the Qur'an the normative-derivative issue of the Scriptures can be examined through the *comparability* or *continuity* of the two Scriptures. If the later Scripture (the Qur'an) shows obvious continuity with the earlier Scripture (the Bible), then it would be possible to treat the Bible as normative and the Qur'an as derivative. However, if there is no continuity between the two Scriptures, then there is no need for the normative-derivative argument; the two Scriptures are *two distinct normative Scriptures* of distinct religions. It would not be necessary to discuss the normative between the Scriptures of Christianity and Islam but treat them as independently respectable Scriptures of the two religions. Through the following investigation of the continuity-discontinuity principle, an approach to the Scriptures will be determined.

2.4.2   Continuity between Bible and Qur'an

Jane McAuliffe (2002:315) asserts that there is both a connection and disconnection between the Bible and the Qur'an. She first presents continuity between the two Scriptures based on the following three grounds: theological understanding of God, the Bible as a precursor to the Qur'an, and the biblical predictive value for Muslim biblical scholars.[17]

First, McAuliffe (2002:315) arrives at the conclusion that the theological connection between the Bible and the Qur'an is based on "the common sharing of the understanding of God, his revelation, his prophets, and his will for humankind." For Muslim scholars, this argument of theological connection based on the understanding of God is generally accepted, as the Qur'an clearly indicates the God of Muslims and Christians are the same (S 2:133; 5:72; 29:46).

Muslims readily accept the concepts of God as creator, provider, ruler, and many other functional attributes of God that Christians support. However, with regard to Christians' understanding of the relationship attributes of God, Muslim understanding may not agree with that of Christians. For example, Christians attribute to God the names "Love" and "Father." A few biblical verses displaying the "love" trait are:

> **Exodus 34:6**   And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate [רחום] and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love [חֶסֶד] and faithfulness.

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[17] The term "Muslim biblical scholars" means scholars who are Muslims but do research with biblical materials.

Psalms 103:8 The LORD is compassionate [רַחוּם] and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love [חֶסֶד].

1 John 4:7-8 [7]Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. [8]Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love [ἀγάπη].

1 John 4:16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love [ἀγάπη]. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

As seen from the above passages, Exodus 34:6 and Psalms 103:8 contain the word "compassionate (רַחוּם)" and "love" (חֶסֶד). In the English translation (NIV), the word חֶסֶד (love) seems to describe God as love. The word חֶסֶד is used in the Old Testament as "covenantal love" or "loving kindness" (Harris 1980:307). However, it is the word רַחוּם (compassionate) which may truly indicate that God is love. The word is the derived form of רֶחֶם which means "mother's womb." Its verb form רָחַם refers to deep love (usually of a "superior" for an "inferior") rooted in some "natural" bond (Coppes 1980:841). The psalmist uses the word רָחַם to express his love toward God in Psalms: "I love you (אֶרְחָמְךָ), O LORD, my strength" (Ps 18:1). In the book of Hosea (2:25 [Eng. 2:23]) God expresses רָחַם for his wayward people: "I will show my love [וְרִחַמְתִּי]." When the word is used by God, it either indicates the love of a mother (Is 49:15) or of a father (Ps 103:13). Hence, despite the fact that the word רַחוּם is translated as "compassionate" in the English Bible (NIV), it is acceptable to understand the word רַחוּם as "love" or "parental love."[18]

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[18] Nöldeke (1998:53) indicates that the Qur'an also borrows this word, רָחַם, as a proper name of God, "*Al-Rahman,*" which has been used in the opening Surah *Al-Fatiha* (S 1:1-7). However, it is translated as "Merciful"

In the New Testament, the word "love" (ἀγάπη) indicates God's unconditional love for his subjects (Stauffer 1985:9). In addition to the direct indication of God as "love" in 1 John 4, John 3:16 shows God's wilful direction of love toward man as it says, "For God so loved (ἠγάπησεν) the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Christians generally interpret this verse as God's self-sacrificing love to mankind, as God chose to love sinners to give eternal life (Jamieson, Fausset & Brown 1997:[Jn 3:16]; Richards 1987:716). 1 John 4:10 further explains: "This is love (ἀγάπη): not that we loved God, but that he loved (ἠγάπησεν) us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." However, the Christian interpretation of propitiation in John 3:16 and 1 John 4:10 is denied by Muslims as the Qur'an indicates that no one can take on himself the sins of another.[19]

In connection with the above expression of God as "love," the Bible further indicates another relational trait of God as "father."

> **Deuteronomy 32:6** Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?

> **Hosea 11:1** When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

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rather than any sense of unconditional love. Furthermore, in a classical type in Arabic, it expresses the intensity of the character of mercy (Jomier 2001:361).

[19] Surah 6:164; 17:15; 35:18; 39:7; 53:38.

Malachi 2:10 Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?

Matthew 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Romans 8:14-15 [14] because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. [15] For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

All of the above verses indicate the attribute of God which unfolds into a personal relationship between God and his subjects as a father and his son. At least two verses (Hs 11:1; Mt 3:17) from the above citations are the self-declaration of God, where the Bible uses the analogy of human relationships to show the nature of God's relationship with man.

However, based on the prohibition of the anthropomorphism of God, the relational aspects of God's attributes are not acceptable to Muslims. Gatje (1971:19) provides an insight into this prohibition of anthropomorphic concepts of God: "when God's seeing or hearing or God's hands and feet are spoken of in the Qur'an, or even the idea that a man sees God, one must not take this literally." It is a result of the Muslim attitude toward God that they are "quite unwilling to have any traffic with theology, dialectical or rational. Their objective was not to define or understand God, but simply to describe" God as in the Qur'an and the Sunna (Peters 2003:235). On the other hand, Christians even interpret "the grossest form of anthropomorphism" such as in the Song of Songs "to reveal something new and profound about the reality of God" (Peters 2003:297). Thus, McAuliffe's assertion of continuity based

on the limited theological consideration of God may need to be further defined since, while there is continuity between Bible and Qur'an based on the functional attributes of God, discontinuity emanates from the relational attributes of God as seen from Christian theological considerations.

Concerning the issue of the narrative connections between the Bible and the Qur'an, McAuliffe (2002:307) concludes that the Bible is a precursor to God's final revelation to Mohammad. She provides the fact that the Qur'an shares a great deal of narrative material, such as narratives about Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the Bible. In this, she rightly says, "Muslim and Christian identifications meet and mingle within the Qur'an" (McAuliffe 2002:307). The co-existence of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traditions indicated in the Qur'an would yield to the firm continuity of the Qur'an with the Bible. Furthermore, as the theory of abrogation[20] nullifies source criticism of the Qur'anic text, Muslim scholars establish the continuity of Qur'an traditions with the Bible by confirming consecutiveness of the Qur'an as the corrected version of the Bible.

A last argument of McAuliffe is based on the predictive value of the biblical provision for Muslim biblical scholars. McAuliffe (2002:309) explains that Muslim scholars look for two sorts of passages, namely polemic and apologetic arguments in the classical Islamic context. They are (1) those which could be interpreted as announcing the advent of Mohammad and the triumph of his community, and (2) those which could provide evidence that the biblical text had been deliberately or inadvertently corrupted. These are mainly issues concerning Mohammad's annunciation in the Bible. Muslims scholars look at Deuteronomy 18:18, 33:2,

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[20] McAuliffe (2002:307) applies the theory of abrogation to the advantage of posteriority of the Qur'an as "the Qur'an is God's final and perfect revelation, and God is free to recapitulate and correct what went before."

Isaiah 21:7, Matthew 21:43, and John 15:26 as references to Mohammad or Islamic triumph (McAuliffe 2002:310).

So far McAuliffe provides arguments for the continuity of the Qur'an from the Muslim's point of view. There is no provision for the Christian biblical scholar's arguments that assert against such Muslim view of the biblical texts. It is possible to look into the Bible as the predicable prior Scripture to the Qur'an based on the interpretation of certain verses out of its own context in connection with Islam and Mohammad. However, the Islamic interpretation of the above verses (Dt 18:18; 33:2; Is 21:7; Mt 21:43; Jn 15:26) does not convince Christian [or biblical] scholars as these are seen as the New Testament interpretations of Jesus, the Holy Sprit, and the New Testament Church.[21]

From a Christian perspective, Coker (1931:95) brings a strong tie between the Qur'an and the Bible by investigating the influences of the Bible upon the Qur'an, such as the use of stories and ideas of the Bible which are incorporated freely in the Qur'an, especially from the Old Testament. For example, biblical accounts such as the creation and the rise and fall of the human race and Jesus in the New Testament are identical to accounts that appeared in the Qur'an. Coker (1931:99) has further argued the issue of the influence of the Bible upon the Qur'an and listed two key considerations:

> The primary literary source of the Koran is the Old Testament; the next source
> in importance is the New Testament; while a third source is the Talmud, the
> Targums, the Midrash, and the Apocryphal literature. Mohammed's

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[21] See 5.7.2 "Advent of prophet like Moses" for fuller argument of the passages.

appropriate of biblical material was probably through the medium of other

people and not by reading and studying the book himself.

The first consideration sums up Coker's argument that the Qur'an as a whole is derived from the Bible and other relative biblical materials. The fact of derivation of the Qur'an from the Bible would explain how the same materials appear in both the Qur'an and the Bible. As Mohammad was surrounded by the Jewish diaspora and sects of Christianity (S 5:82),[22] the second consideration describes how Mohammad received the materials for the Qur'an. The fact that Mohammad's acquisition of biblical material through the medium of other people is a possible explanation for differences between the Bible and the Qur'an, as oral communication tends to fail to deliver a perfect detail. However, the Bible was available to Mohammad at the time that Islam was formed (S 3:71, 93; 10:94; 21:7) for reference to the biblical content of stories, and this may lead to further arguments on the normative-derivative issue of the Scripture between the Qur'an and the Bible.

Meanwhile, Coker (1931:99) establishes continuity of the Bible in the Qur'an by showing the use of biblical materials by Mohammad in his formation of religious faith and doctrine. The chronological survey of the Qur'an divides Mohammad's use of biblical materials into roughly three stages: (1) in the devotional stage of the early *suras,* Mohammad uses phrases that have close parallels in Psalms, Job, Isaiah, and Ecclesiastes, (2) in the apologetic stage, biblical stories are used freely to prove and substantiate his apologetical claims, and (3) in the

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[22] Furthermore, the cousin of Mohammad's first wife Khadija, Waraqa ibn-Nawfal of Mecca, was Christian. There was also the presence of Jewish settlements in the oases and other Christian presence among the Meccans who traded with the Byzantine and Abyssinian empires, which were Christian (Watt 1970:8).

doctrinal stage, the chief doctrines of the Qur'an are laid down, and these doctrines come largely from the Old and New Testaments.

All of the above arguments of Coker refer to the personal use of the Bible by Mohammad as a redactor of the Qur'an; it implies that when Mohammad began his prophethood, he took biblical materials as foundational teaching materials for his own, correcting and editing the material to suit the need of the contextual setting of his time. John Gilchrist (1995) provides extensive scientific evidence of Mohammad as redactor, and the source of the Qur'an derived from Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Buddhist origins. Gilchrist (1995:ii) even asserts that "Muslim scholars have always been well aware of these evidences but on the whole have chosen conveniently to ignore them. I am not aware of any real attempt by a Muslim writer to face them objectively and provide explanations for their implications." However, what Gilchrist holds in his book, "The Qur'an: The Scripture of Islam" (1995), is contrary to the current trend of Christian scholars' position of dialogue with Muslims. Montgomery Watt (1970:vi) says "it has become imperative for a Christian scholar not to offend Muslim readers gratuitously, but as far as possible to present his arguments in a form acceptable to them. Courtesy and an eirenic outlook certainly now demand that we should not speak of the Qur'an as the product of Mohammad's conscious mind; but I hold that the same demand is also made by sound scholarship." It is the same attitude of sound scholarship that is present in this thesis. In conclusion, the use of biblical materials in the Qur'an by Mohammad serves as a firm evidence of continuity as well as a possible consideration to discontinuity due to the editorial work and reinterpretation processes, which result in textual similarities with key differences made in the biblical traditions in the Qur'an. For example, the biblical accounts of

Abraham's test in Genesis 22 is comparable to Qur'an 37:100-113 where Muslim scholars identify the son of Abraham as Ishmael and not as Isaac as appears in the biblical account.[23]

2.4.3 Discontinuity between Bible and Qur'an

Just as there is a strong connection between the Bible and the Qur'an, there is also a rational indication of the disconnection between the two Scriptures. In the argument of discontinuity between the Bible and the Qur'an, McAuliffe (2002:311) raises the Qur'anic charge of the corruption of the Bible and the abrogation of all previous Scriptures. However, it seems that the argument is portrayed from one side, namely the Muslim point of view which assumes the Qur'an as the final and correct Scripture for the God of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

The first issue of literary discussion of the disconnection based on the Qur'anic charge of the corruption of the Bible may be found in Surah 2:75-79 and 3:78.

> **Surah 2:75-79** [75]Can ye (O ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you? Seeing that a party of them heard the word of Allah and perverted it knowingly after they understood it. [76]Behold! When they meet the men of Faith they say: "We believe" but when they meet each other in private they say: "Shall you tell them what Allah hath revealed to you that they may engage you in argument about it before your Lord?" Do ye not understand (their aim)? [77]Know they not that Allah knoweth what they conceal and what they reveal? [78]And there are among them illiterates who know not the Book

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[23] In the Qur'anic account, the son (Isaac in the Bible) is not identified and is interpreted as Ishmael by Muslim scholars. It will be further discussed in 4.3.4, "Test of Abraham."

but (see therein their own) desires and they do nothing but conjecture. [79]Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say: "This is from Allah" to traffic with it for a miserable price! Woe to them for what their hands do write and for the gain they make thereby.

Surah 3:78 There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues; (as they read) you would think it is a part of the Book but it is no part of the Book; and they say "That is from Allah" but it is not from Allah: it is they who tell a lie against Allah and (well) they know it!

These verses which indicate the distortion or concealing of the Scriptures are usual scriptural supports for the Muslim accusation of the corruption of the Bible (Shenk 2006:88). However, the text does not actually deal with the corruption of the Bible but the depravity of the believers. Surah 2 indicates that the believers "perverted," "conceal," and "conjecture" the Scripture on their reading and understanding of the text, while Surah 3 indicates that believers misquote the Bible. Yusuf Ali (1989:37) gives reasons for these concealments and neglecting of the prophecy in the Bible from the immediate context of the Jews of Medina who understood Deuteronomy 18:18 as reference to Mohammad. It says, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him." Here, a "prophet" in this verse is understood as a reference to Mohammad. Thus the Jews were trying to hide the claimed prophecy of Mohammad from the Muslims. Ali's assertion makes an applicable argument that is valid in a context of the uprising of Islam in Medina. However, the verses do not indicate the corruption of the text but of the believers' interpretation. Muslim scholars have no ground for textual criticism of the Bible based on this issue. For this, McAuliffe (2002:311) correctly

asserts that it is "…ambiguous Qur'anic accusations. In some cases the charge was understood to be not actual alteration but simply concealment or omission."

However, Surah 5:13-14 appears to be a more convincing charge of the corruption of the Bible. Concerning the Old Testament, Surah 5:13 portrays:

Surah 5:13 But because of their breach of their Covenant, We [Allah] cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard: they change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the Message that was sent them, nor wilt thou cease to find them--barring a few--ever bent on (new) deceits: but forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds): for Allah loveth those who are kind.

Since the next verse, Surah 5:14 additionally refers to the Christians' Covenant, verse 13 deals with God's covenant with Israelites. Thus corruption of the Old Testament is indicated in verse 13 as the Qur'an employs the words "change" and "forget" to indicate corruption by Israelites (S 5:12). Then there is the charge against Christians in verse 14:

Surah 5:14 From those too who call themselves Christians We [Allah] did take a Covenant but they forgot a good part of the message that was sent them: so We estranged them with enmity and hatred between the one and the other to the Day of Judgment. And soon will Allah show them what it is they have done.

From Surah 5:14, it can be understood that Christians did not change the Bible but rather forgot some portions of the revelations from God. However, because of the strong Qur'anic statement of neglect and concealment of the revelation by both Christians and Jews, Surah

5:13-14 is open to the further consideration of source criticism of the Scriptures. A proper charge against a Scripture should be accompanied with an appropriate historical account of any changes.

On the issue of discontinuity of the Bible and the Qur'an based on the abrogation of previous Scriptures, the charge of corruption of the Book (the Bible) is justified in Surah 2:106. It reads:

> **Surah 2:106**   None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten but We substitute something better or similar; knowest thou not that Allah hath power over all things?

This verse indicates that the theory of abrogation is for the purpose of protection of Scripture by replacing what has been corrupted or changed with something better, the true revelation of God, namely the Qur'an. If the Qur'an is the result of abrogation of the previous Scriptures, i.e., the Bible, then the Qur'an must contain the corrected revelation of corresponding accounts between the Bible and the Qur'an. This means, then, that the Bible contains corrupted revelation, for God cannot reveal false revelation. Accordingly, in conclusion for Muslim scholars, the discontinuity between the Qur'an and the Bible is clear since the Bible differs from the Qur'an on account of human corruption of the Scripture. For Christian scholars, the exact opposite of the Muslim scholars' view would be maintained against the Qur'an.

2.5 APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP

Since there are traces of both continuity and discontinuity between the Bible and the Qur'an, it is difficult to present a solution for the disagreement of the two Scriptures. In the same way, it would be an arduous task to decide whether or not the Qur'an is derivative from the Bible. However, to a certain degree, I am endeavouring to bridge the gap between the two Scriptures by presenting the following suggestions for cross-examining the differences in the Scriptures. The few key considerations underlying the problem are the following:

1. The Bible was written before the Qur'an without any reservation for the succeeding Scriptures to follow (Dt 4:2; 12:32; Rev 22:18-19). This means there is no reserved Scripture to follow the Bible. Therefore the solution for continuity-discontinuity of the Qur'an from the Bible should not be found in the Bible.

Muslims would argue against this view as they see the Bible as a precursor to the coming of Mohammad (S 2:75-79; 46:10).[24] They would bring forth the issue of the prophecy of the coming Mohammad in John 1 where John the Baptist denies being "the Prophet" (Jn 1:21). Thus, "the Prophet," is treated by Muslim biblical scholars as a reference to Mohammad since it is capitalised in the English translation (Poston 2000:4). The promised Prophet in John is the same one God promised to Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt 18:15-19). The prediction of the coming of Mohammad in John and Deuteronomy was also the reason for changing or hiding the prophecy of the Prophet by the Jews at the time of Mohammad (S 2:75-79). However, the Old Testament's prophecy of the Prophet does not refer to Mohammad

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[24] See section 5.7.2 "Advent of prophet like Moses" for full discussion of the issue.

according to the Christian's interpretation. For example, Kaiser (1978:141) applied it to Jesus based on the theology of promised "seed" (Jesus) of Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). Kaiser also refers to the fact that the Prophet is further confirmed as Jesus in John 6:14 where the multitude near the Sea of Galilee exclaimed after they witnessed the miraculous sign of Jesus, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."[25]

In the same way, the coming of the Comforter in John (Jn 14:16; 15:26; 16:7) does not refer to Mohammad as many Muslims claim. Mohammad applies John's prophecy to himself in Surah 61:6 "And remember, Jesus, the Son of Mary, said: 'O children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.'" Based on this verse, one would say the Greek reading of the *paracletos* (παράκλητος, comforter) is a corrupt reading for *periclytos*, meaning *praise* or *glorified*, "which is almost a literal translation of 'Mohammad' or 'Ahmad'" (Ali 1989:148, 1461). However, the Textual Criticism of the 27th edition of Novum Testamentum Graece (NA27, by Nestle Aland) results in no variant of the Greek word, comforter (*paracletos*). The word refers to the promised coming of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament context. Therefore, the Bible has no indication of continuity of the Qur'an, and continuity of the Qur'an should not be claimed on a biblical basis. Instead, the issue of continuity-discontinuity may be decided based upon the homogeneity of the Qur'an and the Bible. This will result in an individualistic (egoistic) conclusion as the answer is dependent upon the interpretation of the content of the Scriptures.

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[25] John 1:45; 4:19, 29; Acts 3:22-26 also indicate the Prophet as Jesus.

2. The Qur'an speaks respectfully of all the prophets and messengers before Mohammad. The respect of godly men is extended to the prophets and the Scriptures (the Bible) they brought to the people.

For a Muslim to deny the prophethood of Moses (Musa), David (Daud), or Jesus (Isa) is to deny the true teachings of Islam (Kateregga & Shenk 1980:117). Believers must respect the previous Scriptures as Mohammad himself believed the Qur'an confirms, extends, and completes the former Scriptures (S 3:3; 10:37). For example, Surah 10:37 indicates: "This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it and a fuller explanation of the Book wherein there is no doubt from the Lord of the Worlds."

Furthermore the Qur'an refers to Christians and Jews as *Ahl al-Kitab,* People of the Book. To these people the Qur'an admonishes (S 5:68) to the degree that where Muslims have doubts about the truth revealed in the Qur'an, the Qur'an commands them to ask the People of the Book. Surah 10:94 reads, "If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee: the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in nowise of those in doubt." Therefore, Muslims should respect the Bible and its content whether it has been corrupted—according to their view—or not until the Bible is proved, with evidence, of corruption.

3. Due to the belief in the same God and the Scriptures, the Qur'an further encourages Muslims to live peacefully with the People of the Book.

Surah 29:46 commands Muslims to live amicably with Jews and Christians, "And dispute ye not with the People of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation) unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say 'We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).'"

Furthermore, the Qur'an describes the People of the Book as highly accepted people to Muslims in that the food and women of the People of the Book is allowed to Muslims.

> **Surah 5:5** This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers but chaste women among the People of the Book revealed before your time when ye give them their due dowers and desire chastity not lewdness nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects faith fruitless is his work and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).

The positive treatment of Jews and Christians indicates that Islam and the Qur'an are something more than simply a derivative from the Bible. It seems, at least from the view point of Muslims, that Islam may have been a sect of Judaism or Christianity or existed in close adherence to two faiths. This is seen in the emigration of more than a hundred faithful Muslims to Christian Ethiopia for the protection of the believers (Gatje 1971:9; Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 2:290, 307, 412, 425; 4:364; 5:212; 7:698).

4. Pertinent sources of evidence of the Qur'anic derivative from the Bible are from the vast number of Old and New Testament narratives, the account of the functional attributes of God, and Mohammad's statement in the Qur'an toward the People of the Book, such as to seek truth from the Bible (S 10:94).

Therefore, any discussion of the continuity-discontinuity of the Qur'an from the Bible should be discussed from the derivative for it provides some common ground of investigation of the Scriptures and theologies. Focusing on something that both Christians and Muslims can agree upon brings better understanding of each other's theology and pursues a common goal to discover God's ultimate truths; it may lead to avoidance of any conflict arising from the differences of the Scriptures.

5. Major evidence of the discontinuity of the Qur'an from the Bible is based mainly on the Muslim theological interpretation of the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an denies entire basic teachings of the New Testament, such as the Triune God and sonship of Christ (S 4:171; 5:73).

It must be understood that the Qur'an respectfully describes the Bible as its precursor explaining any unclear content of the Qur'an (S 10:94), yet at the same time it denies the content and theology of the Bible in selective cases. The various sources of the Qur'an,[26]

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[26] In addition to the argument of Gilchrist (2.4.2), Abd-Al-Masih ([s a]:63) says as Qur'an (S 7:156) indicates that Mohammad was illiterate and "did not have full command of the Arabic script, let alone Hebrew, Greek or Syrian. He never had direct access to any Biblical source or to the translation of an inspired source, and thus totally relied on hearsay and oral traditions." Gilchrist (1995:87) agrees on the issue of oral tradition: "These evidence appear to be conclusive in proof that the Qur'an can not be regarded as a divine revelation to Mohammad. It contains too many of the sort of plagiarisms from local Jewish folklore that would have been expected if his material was coming instead from what he heard and learnt in conversion with those around

such as non-biblical materials and apocrypha, and the adoption of biblical materials as the source of the Qur'an, may have caused the denial of Christian theology and biblical content in the Qur'an. For example, the word "Trinity" is not a biblical word and does not appear in the Bible, yet the Qur'an emphatically denies the concept of Trinity in various places to promote Islamic monotheism (S 4:171; 5:73; 38:7; 68:41). Surah 4:171 reads: "…do not say: 'Trinity'. Stop saying that, it is better for you. Allah is only One Deity…" Surah 5:73 also indicates, "So believe in Allah and His Rasools and do not say: 'Trinity'. Stop saying that, it is better for you. Allah is only One Deity..." Furthermore, "Everything on which Jews and Christians are not in agreement with the Koran is considered by Muslims to this day as a falsification of the truth" (Abd-Al-Masih [s a]:68). Therefore, when it comes to the differences between the Qur'an and the Bible, Muslims' tendency towards casual denial of the content of the Bible over the Qur'an should be noted. The content and theology of Islam and Christianity behind the differences should be carefully investigated.

6. In the process of the revelation there is clear evidence of God's transcendence in the Qur'an and God's immanence in the Bible. The different aspects of revelation may have been the cause of the differences in exegetical and theological interpretations of the Scriptures as God's presence (immanence) is directly involved in the context of the Bible while transcendence of God prevails in the Qur'an.[27]

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him." Furthermore, Ali Dashti (1985:56) says the Qur'an "contains nothing new in the senses of ideas not already expressed by others. All the moral precepts of the Koran are self-evident and generally acknowledged. The stories in it are taken in identical or slightly modified forms from the lore of the Jews and Christians, whose rabbis and monks Mohammad had met and consulted on his journeys to Syria, and from memories conserved by the descendants of the peoples of 'Ad and Thamud.'"

[27] The concept will be further discussed and proved in 5.5, "Implications for bibliology."

With the above mentioned key considerations in deciding whether or not the Bible and Qur'an have continuity, one may come to a double conclusion. On the issue of doctrine and the New Testament, there is a discontinuity between the Bible and the Qur'an. On the other hand, there is continuity in the textual studies, especially between the Old Testament and the Qur'an. This continuity is based on the Quran's use of biblical or other communal traditions while discontinuity is seen in the different manifestations of revelation and the interpretation of the Scriptures by their adherent believers. Then, in conclusion, the Bible and the Qur'an contain textual similarities as well as theological differences. To handle the similarities and dissimilarities, both Christians and Muslims must regard the Scriptures with respect. The attitude of respect to the others' Scripture as the "Word of God" should be maintained to promote harmony and unity among the believers of the two major religions of the world. In the same way, Jesus and Mohammad should also be regarded as respectable figures by both Christians and Muslims. This implies that both Muslims and Christians will have to treat their Scripture as the authorised Scripture for their respectable religious practice, including exegesis and theology. However, when they cross-examine each other's Scripture, they must first consider the "common" ground of the Qur'an and the Bible as a foundational starting point for theological and exegetical consideration. Focusing on something that is comparable with respect to the other Scripture rather than focusing on the differences will result in a better understanding of both the Bible and the Qur'an, promoting better Christian and Muslim relations.

CHAPTER 3

DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE:

A RELIGIO-HISTORICAL PORTRAYAL

3.1   INTRODUCTION

One expression of the relationship between God and the world is his transcendence. Transcendence in Christianity means that, "God is separate from and independent of nature and humanity. God is not simply attached to, or involved in, his creation. He is also superior to it in several significant ways" (Erickson 1985:312). However, Isaiah 57:15 indicates the paradox of transcendence, "For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite." Jeremiah 23:23 reads, "Am I only a God nearby, declares the LORD, and not a God far away?" These verses couple a statement of the transcendence of God with another expression of the relationship of God with his creation, namely his immanence. In contrast with transcendence, God's immanence indicates, "God condescends to enter into personal fellowship and live with those who have repented of their sins and trusted His son for their salvation" (Enns 1989:637). Within this transcendent-immanent nature of God, the people of the Old Testament entered into a covenantal relationship with God (Ex 6:4; 24:7; 34:27).

The term "transcendence" in Arabic is *tanzih*. It is defined as the elimination of blemishes or of anthropomorphic traits, which is the assertion of God's incomparability with the creation

(Glasse 2001:450). The opposite of *tanzih* is *tashbih,* the Arabic term for immanence. A literal translation of *tashbih* is "the making of comparisons or likeness" (Glasse 2001:452). It is understood as an expression of anthropomorphism, the assignment of physical attributes to God.

As seen from the descriptions of transcendence, the use of the terminology of transcendence differs from Christianity and Judaism to Islam. Furthermore, there is some disagreement in the definition of the term among scholars of the same religion. David Cairns (1967:25) expresses the problem in simple terms: "The concept of the transcendence of God is in danger of becoming as much of a wax nose which anyone can pull in any direction, or mould between warm finger and thumb, as is the concept of the supernatural–at present so much in disgrace among fashionable theologians." Cairns well illustrates the ambiguous definition of the transcendence of God.

Furthermore, the essence of immanence as contrasted with the definition of transcendence extends complications to the variegated definitions of transcendence. Lawrence Fragg (2003:560) states conclusively, "Analogies in the case of transcendence are challenging to justify. This is in part because there seem to be a number of definitions of transcendence, each characterised by a slightly different nuance. The situation is further complicated by the problem of how to distinguish transcendence from immanence." Fragg (2003:560) emphasises that a loose definition of transcendence is further weakened by clear definitions of transcendence and immanence. For him, the "two conceptions mutually endow each other with a sense of richness and completion that either alone would not have." There seems to be no clear black and white duality in the definition of transcendence and immanence, according to Fragg.

One of the landmark studies of the transcendence of God by the Australian Association for the Study of Religions tries to unify diverse concepts of the transcendence of God. In the book, "Ways of Transcendence: Insights from Major Religions and Modern Thought," edited by Edwin Dowdy (1982:1), the editor's rationale for the book indicates the problem of the various implications of the transcendence of God:

> In recent years transcendence has been a much-discussed topic. It has been prominent at conferences and in publications representing various areas in the study of world religions, philosophy and the social sciences. There are, however, big problems in the treatment of this topic. The words "transcendence", "transcending" and "the Transcendent" occur in many contexts, and those who want to explore them come with a variety of interests from quite different fields of study.

With openness to other religious traditions and from a middle ground between the extremes of definition and no definition, each contributor makes an approach to transcendence through the medium of "Reality" and "Experience." Dowdy (1982:2) says these two facets of the transcendence of God are "two principal perspectives, one that focuses upon the nature or ontology of transcendent reality, and one that is concerned with the realisation of some measure of transcendence by the human individual." These two aspects will be the major underlying principle of the review and discussion of the transcendence of God in this chapter. As a major influential religion for both Christianity and Islam, the transcendence of God in Judaism (Zuesse's view) is first presented as an inception to the understanding of the transcendence of God in Islam (Graham's view) and Christianity (Crotty's view) after a brief

overview of transcendence in other major religions, namely Hinduism and Buddhism, and other societies.

3.2　TRANSCENDENCE IN RELIGIONS AND SOCIETIES

3.2.1　Transcendence in Hinduism

As Hinduism represents a complex religious system (Brück and Rajashekar 2001:546), there are different ways of achieving and defining transcendence. Hereafter, transcendence in the Hindu religious tradition refers to the "quality of those experiences which lie outside the course of normal everyday life and which are of such a nature that the experiencer tends to associate a sense of either ontological or axiological ultimacy with them" which fall into the experience of "routine-transcending, ego-transcending and mundane-transcending aspects" (Sharma 1982:81). As the spiritual goal of the Hindu is to attain *moksa*, or liberation, from bondage to this world, which is characterised by involvement in the process of rebirth in keeping with the widespread Hindu belief in reincarnation (Sharma 1982:90), transcendence in Hinduism is represented by a state of *moksa.*[28] Similar to Buddhism, Hinduism looks forward to a self-transcending experience of a better life which is in the next life through reincarnation. It is not God's transcendence which is expressed and achieved but a self-focused transcendent state of better life, temporarily experienced through the worship of God and permanently achieved in the next life. In attaining the transcendent state of self, there are two levels in Hinduism, individual and communal in nature. The individual experience of

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[28] Related to the Buddhist *nirvana, moksa* is the salvation of Hinduism that means liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth by releasing one's soul from the attachment to the material world (Hammer 1982:189).

transcendence is achieved in Hinduism through the practice of different types of Yoga[29] while the communal level experience of transcendence is through participation in sacred activities[30] (Sharma 1982:86-89).

3.2.2 Transcendence in Buddhism

Buddhist tradition prefers experiential rather than conceptual knowledge. Therefore, Buddhism upholds the taste of transcendence rather than thoughts about transcendence (Jensen 1982:63). Transcendence in Buddhism refers to the self transcending from this world to another. It is not that God is transcending from his subject and creation but humankind is transcending to another world to be more like God, rather than identifying with the same situation that humankind encounter. The transcendent experience of Buddhism is expressed as "crossing the stream" from "this shore" of bondage to the "other shore" of freedom (Jensen 1982:63). This self-effort of transcending experience is achieved by means of both "thoughts" and "experience" of way of life. Jensen (1982:64) explains: "Changing one's conceptual map is a key to crossing the stream, yet this is not done simply by thinking. Instead, it means taking up a whole way of life which can involve "rules of training" covering everything from occupation to diet to ways of meditation. The question of psychological transcendence is not just how to think or how to feel, but how to be." It is self-denial of one's "reality" requiring self-disciplinary endeavours. The ultimate goal of the Buddhist path is to be released from the circle of phenomenal existence with its inherent suffering. To achieve

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[29] Sharma (1982:87) lists the type of Yoga as: Hatha Yoga (body), Rāja Yoga (mind), Karma Yoga (the path of action), Jñāna Yoga (the path of knowledge), and Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion).

[30] The sacred activities are expressed in contact with sacred images, visiting temples, or participating in festivals, etc. Sarma (1982:88) lists six models of sacred activities: temples, images, festivals, Kathās, Bhajans, and pilgrimages.

this goal is to attain salvation, *nirvana*,[31] the purpose of self-transcending experience in Buddhism (Brow 1982:44). Kärkkäinen (2004:133) explains that the Christian concept of the kingdom of God—a social, political and personalistic symbol—concerned with establishing justice and peace is an equivalent term of *nirvana,* an ontological symbol. Therefore, the ultimate reality in Buddhism is not God but *nirvana,* where one can attain enduring happiness by transcending all suffering through self-effort.

3.2.3   Transcendence in tribal and industrial societies

In Edwin Dowdy's book, "Ways of Transcendence" (1982), the discussion of transcendence in societies is divided into two parts, tribal and industrial society. In the discussion of industrial society's transcendence, Dowdy (1982:112) defines that "transcendent experience is that aspect of behaviour in which an individual attempts to contemplate, comprehend, or become something quite different from what is given in normal daily routine; it is a search for some significance apart from the mundane." In the sense of searching for a higher experience, transcendence in industrial society corresponds to the Buddhist and Hindu experiences of transcendence. However, as Dowdy (1982:111) states, western society–which is an industrial society according to his argument–has been deeply impacted and influenced by the idea of religion, especially Christianity. The discussion of transcendence is linked towards thoughts of a Supreme Being, especially under the influence of Christianity.

Hilton Deakin (1982:95-109) presents some thoughts on transcendence in tribal societies, where he defines "tribal" to be "those people whose social life is characterised by a wide-spread dependence on the operation of the principle of reciprocity." The underlining key

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[31] *Nirvana* is commonly described as 'nothingness' which is the state of complete absence of sensation including but not limited to earth, fire, air, sun, moon, foundation, and suffering (Metz 1982:234).

principle of Deakin's argument of transcendence in tribal societies is that there is no sharp distinction between "physical" and "spiritual" among primal people's life. "The world of the spirit imbues the natural or immediate world, and one can reach out and grasp the one with the elements of the other" (Deakin 1982:97). This "reaching out to other" is the basic meaning of transcendence according to Deakin (1982:98), for he defines the term transcendence as: "to mean or refer to the quality of those experiences which are outside normal living, and to which people attach deep meanings of purpose and being. Those experiencing such transcendence describe the experiences as not only 'release-from' but 'reaching-up to.'" Transcendence is expressed with the idea of "reaching out" to experience the oneness with people's ancestors that gives rise to feelings and experiences of well-being; this is the transcendent experience of tribal people according to Deakin's argument. The medium of the transcendence experience among tribal people is the work of the shaman or medicine-man who provides occasions for an experience with spirits. As long as the transcendent experience in tribal society looks forward to the experience of one's well-being, the experience is self-focused as in the case of other religions, except for the following three major religions discussed in the chapter, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

3.2.4 Concluding reflection

Richard Campbell (1982:148) remarks philosophically on the nature of transcendence:

> To transcend, so the dictionary records, is to be beyond the range or domain or grasp (of human experience, reason, description, belief, etc.); to excel, surpass. From this it can immediately be seen that transcendence is a highly paradoxical notion. For if something is really beyond the range of human description, how can that very fact even be stated? Is not the statement a form of description? And if it is, then we do not have a case of transcendence at all.

Campbell's comment on the paradoxical notion of transcendence is a philosophical question of transcendence which I agree is impossible to answer within the realm of philosophy. Yet, in theology, the question is answerable with God's transcendence, for he is "ultimate reality." God is, in fact, transcendent in societies and religions so that people long for the experience of transcendence to achieve the state where the union of God and man is possible. This, in Hinduism, Buddhism, and tribal societies, is expressed by the desire to escape the current life to a better life. If God were known to the adherents of the mentioned groups, they would look forward to experiencing the presence of God where the superior experience of reality is present. However, the aim of the transcendent experience is seen by them as an escape of current reality in order to achieve the transcendent experience from this life to another spiritual realm. If God, the supreme and ultimate reality, is known, the question of transcendence is answered through God. By knowing God, one achieves a state of transcendent reality, for God is the ultimate transcendent reality. On the other hand, in a situation where God is not known, transcendence shifts its axis to the self with the purpose of experiencing superior life by transcending from the current life situation to something better.

3.3   TRANSCENDENCE IN JUDAISM

Evan Zuesse's (1982) study of the transcendence of God reflects a foundational argument for the transcendence of God, not only in Judaism, but also in both Islam and Christianity. Zuesse (1982:25) approaches the study of the transcendence of God through the human experience of God. By rituals included in the Torah Jews can achieve and experience the transcendent God by different processes. The processes are discussed in the core belief of Judaism that extends to a monotheistic God; this is centred on the two poles of transcendental experience, "Wholly Other" and "Wholly the Same."

The two major terms, "Wholly Other" and "Wholly the Same" are articulated in his argument and can be summarised as the "Wholly Other" referring to the complete separation of God from mortals while the same God is present among mortals ("Wholly the Same"). He reasons that God became "Wholly Other" through Adam's failure to bring about God's desired result of holy and spiritual life but humankind, "repeat[ed] and confirm[ed] the primal sin and rebellion of Adam, making the material human world unspiritual by our denial of God. After so many generations of this denial, the world has become entirely opaque, dark, and filled with evil" (Zuesse 1982:28). The result of man's sinfulness and lack of spirituality is that God is "Wholly Other." God therefore sent the Torah to "provide in his mercy a way to heal the divisions wounding the world, to make all things transparent to God" (Zuesse 1982:28). Consequently, believers can experience the "Wholly Other" God through the Torah's ritual.[32] This involves experiencing God through the guideline of worship that transcends oneself to the presence of God, for God prescribed the Torah ritual for this purpose. On the other hand, the "Wholly the Same" God has been revealed in the history of the human race, and he can be experienced through the same Torah ritual. Based on the argument of the two poles of transcendental experience of God, Zuesse (1982:26) asserts that the task of the Jew is to make God 'One' throughout his everyday life, engaging and not annihilating the ego and the intellect of humankind while on this earth. Zuesse therefore sees this task of making God "One" possible through the Torah ritual.

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[32] The Torah ritual is the foundation for the mysticism of Judaism. Zuesse (1982:28, 30) defines the Torah as "the substance and form of repentance, and the re-opening of the heart to God's universe. The Torah dynamic also expresses itself in the opening of people to each other, actualizing love and justice in the world. So when the pious actualize Torah, they enact the will of God himself." Therefore, one experiences God by fulfilling the will of God prescribed in the Torah.

Even though Zuesse separates the process of experiencing the transcendent God into categories like rituals, community identity, moral action, repentance, and intellect, the whole argument is based on the implication of the Torah ritual and its education in the daily life of the believers. He also approaches the human experience of the transcendent God through emphasis on a personal relationship of "moral self-transcendence," identification of the self with the "trans-historical identity of Israel" and through "the intellectual discipline of Torah- and Talmud-study" (Zuesse 1982:30). These are Zuesse's fundamental modes of the experience of God, which can be simplified into two major aspects, namely the personal and community aspect of self-transcendence.

The personal aspect of self-transcendence by the Jews is realised through the adherence to the life of the Torah ritual. This includes the practices of the Synagogue ritual and prayers as well as the observance of Sabbath. Zuesse (1982:32) explains that "the Sabbath is a time of union on all levels of the universe, with God joining all things into a unity." Furthermore, he stresses the *halachah,* the commandments, as a "dispensation of life" that acts as a medium for uniting God and creation (Zuesse 1982:32). This experience is reinforced by the discipline of Torah and Talmud study by believers.

The entire individual mode of self-transcendence is also applied to the community of Jews. However, "in a peculiar way both Jews and non-Jews have agreed that the Jewish community has a transcendental value quite apart from the individual deeds of its members" (Zuesse 1982:34). Zuesse argues that the transcendental community of Jews originates from Genesis 32:28 where God created "Israel" (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [33] out of Jacob's struggle with God. The

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[33] Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) is a compound word derived from the terms אֵל (God) and שָׂרָה (to struggle, fight), and thus it means *he has struggled with God* (Duff-Forbes 1960:294).

community is further assured of their transcendental value through God's commission to the Israelites in Exodus 19:6 as "you [Israel] will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This would imply that by transcending all other nations of the earth to become a holy nation, Israel could access and experience the transcendent God by acting as a high priest for all nations. By means of an individual's communal living under the identity of Israel, both the individual and community can achieve self-transcendence in order to experience the transcendent God.

Zuesse's approach to the transcendence of God through the two poles, "Wholly Other" and "Wholly the Same" has provided a fundamental understanding of a Christian concept of the transcendent-immanent God and the absolute transcendent God in Islam. Zuesse's arguments for the transcendence of God are further reflected in the way Christians experience the transcendental God through Jesus (Jn 8:19; 10:38; 14:6, 7, 9) instead of the Torah. In Islam, "Wholly Other" is reflected in the absolute transcendence of God through emphasis on Islamic worship, as in the Torah ritual.

3.4   TRANSCENDENCE IN ISLAM

William Graham (1982:8) approaches the experience of the transcendence of God through the ritual of worship. He explains that the word "Islam" summarises the entire concept of the transcendence of God with respect to the human experience of God.

> As an Arabic word, it means simply "submitting" or "surrendering"; in Muslim usage, "submitting" only to God and His will. As a concept it is a profound affirmation of the commitment of finite creatures to worship and

serve the infinite Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Thus *islām* denotes all those acts of body and spirit that bind the contingent, mortal being to his or her omnipotent, eternal Lord. *Islām* is the action by which one transcends simply physical existence to become the fully human, obedient servant and worshipper of the Divine. This is the most basic level of 'transcending" in Muslims view.

The explanation of transcendence through the implication of "Islam" alludes to true worship. Graham (1982:8) considers the nature of true worship by using three themes: "first, God's unity, uniqueness, and perfection; second, His omnipotence and majesty; and finally, His specifically transcendent attributes of infinitude and everlastingness."

First, Graham argues that God's unity and singularity is evidenced from *al-shahadah* (witness of faith) and *tawhid* (declaration of divine oneness). The *al-shahadah* is a confession of faith and the first pillar of Islam. It says, "*Ashhadu an la ilaha illa 'llah; ashhadu anna Mohammadan rasulu 'llah"* which is "I witness that there is no god but Allah" (S 47:19), and "Mohammad is the messenger of Allah" (S 48:29). The first part of *al-shahadah* (there is no god but Allah) emphasises the singularity of God. Together with the second part (Mohammad is the messenger of Allah) Muslims repeat this confession at the event of conversion and during devotion to religious duties and practices. Graham (1982:9) further supports God's unity with the description of *tawhid.* He says *tawhid* "symbolises and summarises both the commitment to worship and serve God alone and also the acceptance of His injunction, 'take not two gods; truly, He is One God only….' (Q 16:51)." For this emphasis of oneness of God

among all others, Muslim scholars define *tawhid* as an equivalent term for the transcendence of God (Glasse 2001:450).[34]

The second theme of true worship, the omnipotence of God, is explained with the so-called "Throne-verse." Surah 2:255 says "His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. For He is the Most High the Supreme (in glory)." Graham (1982:10) explains "From a transcendent perspective, God of course controls all things absolutely: from a human perspective, the individual chooses and acts in accordance with or against God's commands, as he or she chooses." Therefore, this aspect of "God's omnipotence logically entails the acute awareness of human accountability" (Graham 1982:10). Having recognised the unlimited power and authority of God, the awareness of human accountability would result in the action of Islam, "submission" to God's almighty power. As God's omnipotence[35] is expressive of the transcendent character of God (Erickson 1985:318), acknowledgment or submission to God's power refers to the limit of human power before the transcending power of God.

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[34] The Oneness of God is also shown in the Bible as, "There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a saviour. There is none but me! Turn to me and be saved all you ends of the earth; for I am God and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, My mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked. Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, 'In the LORD are righteousness and strength'" (Is 45:21-24 also Dt 6:4; Ex 20:3; Is 44:8; Mk 12:29; Jn 17:3; 2 Cor 17:3; Gl 3:20).

[35] Omnipotence can refer to "functionally transcendental" in comparison with the "metaphysically transcendental" nature of God's character (Farley [s a]:186) as it means that "within the 'limits' of God's own attributes, God possesses the capacity to do everything" (Kärkkäinen 2004:55).

The third theme of Graham's discussion of the transcendence of God grows out of the first two. Both "the divine everlastingness" and "transcendent attribute of infinitude" are also expressed through the worship of God. Graham (1982:12) says, "Emphasis on divine transcendence is also evident in the constant praising of God that recurs in the *salat,* private prayers, and even everyday speech (e.g., in the common expression, *alhamdu lillah*, 'praise be to God!')." Furthermore, the expression of worship, *Allahu akbar,* states that God is the "greatest" with respect to everything; thus God is above all others in divine transcendence.

On the three themes of the God's transcendence–God's unity and singularity, the omnipotence of God, and the divine everlastingness–Graham rightly indicates the problem of emphasizing divine transcendence in Islam: that absolute transcendence of God must be maintained where the experience of God's reality is forbidden. He says, "The picture of God elaborated in the preceding pages seems to emphasise so radically the transcendence of the Divine that there is virtually no place left for human nearness to God, let alone human experience of divine immanence" (Graham 1982:13). This is an orthodox Muslim's position concerning the transcendence of God. However, Graham (1982:14) proceeds to present an occasion of the immanence of God in Islam:

> Transcendence is thus not only an ontological property of the Divine, but also a real presence in human history. Like Jews and Christians, Muslims see the hand of God not only in nature but also in the temporal process of history itself. The Transcendent is thus also in some measure immanent in the world, which is not merely a mechanism governed by a celestial clockwork but the arena of divine activity.

Here, Graham is referring to the immanence of God in general revelation. As I already distinguished between general and special revelation in reference to the transcendence of God in 1.7.2, it is sufficient to present his view here. Furthermore, the above-mentioned discussion of the immanence of God is basically an attempt of the theology of Sufis, who strive for the transcendent experience of God. Sufis represent a minority in Islamic theology, and thus Graham should maintain the argument within orthodox Islam. Nevertheless, Graham (1982:17) presents Sufism's paradoxical thought that God is both the infinitely transcendent Lord of the universe and also "closer to man than his own jugular vein."[36] He further provides several passages from the Qur'an to support the argument of Sufis and makes a conclusion on the transcendence-immanent God from the human experience, ". . . the state of the finite soul [believer] in union with the Transcendent [God], where one is lost to ego [transcendence] and then sustained and buoyed in the everlasting presence of the Divine [immanence]" (Graham 1982:18). In conclusion, in Islam, from the perspective of God, there is no sense of His immanence; it is the believers' hope of experiencing God (the immanent God) through their transcendent way of life that is evident in the Sufis. The God of the Qur'an maintains and reflects the absolute transcendence within the realm of special revelation.

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[36] This is from Surah 50:16, "It was We who created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein." However, this verse is not an indication of the immanence of God, but the omniscience of God, so that God knows the will of the believers. Omnipresence and omniscience are generally considered to be aspects of God's transcendence (Lemke 1981:552). Ali interprets it figuratively, "As the blood-stream [jugular vein] is the vehicle of life and consciousness, the phrase 'nearer than the jugular vein' implies that Allah knows more truly the innermost state of our feeling and consciousness than does our own ego" (Ali 1989:1348).

3.5 TRANSCENDENCE IN CHRISTIANITY

In Christianity, transcendence is a theological term referring to the relationship of God to creation which may mean difference or "otherness" and distance or remoteness (Marchant 1960:528). Immanence is the counterpart of transcendence. Philip Hughes (1960:280) concisely explains the two terms:

> Theologically, the former [immanence] connotes an indwelling of God within the world and its processes, the latter [transcendence] the superiority of his existence above and beyond the temporal sphere….God is immanent in the sense that he is everywhere present (Ps. 139) and that the order of nature unmistakably reveals his handiwork and his eternal power and sovereignty (Ps. 19; Rom. 1:20); God is transcendent in the sense that in being and majesty he is infinitely above all that is human and temporal.

Robert Crotty (1982:48) analyses the Christian origin of the transcendence of God from post-exilic Judaism. He compares the Old Exodus of the people of Israel with the New Exodus of the Christian church where the immanent activity of the transcendent God is tangible. Crotty initiates his discussion with a general definition of transcendence within the context of Christian theology, including the Christian antinomy, the transcendence and immanence of God.

First, Crotty (1982:48) delimits the Christian definition of transcendence of God as similar to Judaism's definition of God as the "Wholly Other." He says the transcendence of God is an

attribute of God indicating that he is outside and independent of the world. This definition is a confirmation of orthodox Christian theology that God cannot be confined to any spacio-temporal context (Erickson 1985:312; Grudem 1994:267). However, Crotty (1982:48) argues that there is "an historical involvement of the transcendent God in the cosmos and, above all, in human history." This aspect of transcendence confirms the Judaic concept of transcendence: the "Wholly the Same." For this legitimate corresponding definition of the transcendence of God, Crotty's approach to the study of transcendence through Judaism lends a valuable perspective to understanding the Christian doctrine of the transcendence of God.

Unlike Zuesse's approach to the transcendence of God within the Torah ritual in Judaism, Crotty (1982) observes the presence of a transcendent God through the concept of *Shekinah*.[37] The term *Shekinah* is derived from the Hebrew word שָׁכַן (to dwell) and indicates the presence of the glory of God. Payne Barton (1960:484) delineates the word from the localisation of God with the denial of any permanent or apprehensible presence of God. Furthermore, from the definition *Shekinah* derived from the implication of שָׁכַן, Crotty (1982:49) asserts that "The *Shekina* was an abiding, active presence which would fulfil the expectations of the people of Israel, and soon the very word functioned as a surrogate for the name of YHWH." *Shekinah* becomes a central and key component of the transcendent community of the people of Israel by the presence of God among them. Peters (2003:168) says this presence of God seems to be understood by the early Israelites as more literally and more communally, as God's dwelling among the people in an almost physical sense.

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[37] See further discussion of *Shekinah* in Christianity and Islam in 4.4.4, "*Shekinah* and the Ark of the Covenant."

If the Old Exodus event of *Shekinah* was realised under the historical Moses, then the New Exodus event of *Shekinah* took place in the person and activity of a Moses-like figure, Jesus of the New Testament. Having experienced Jesus' presence on earth, Christians confirmed the Old Exodus of *Shekinah* in the present time of the New Exodus under Jesus. This transcendent act of God is then explained with the new terminology of Christians, *Abba* (Father). Crotty (1982:51) explains that Christians, having experienced the immanent activity of the transcendent God, devised a new terminology, *Abba.* This Aramaic word for "Father" replaced the personal name of God (YHWH) to indicate familiarity and paternal closeness to God.

By using the intimate Aramaic term *Abba*, the early Christians demonstrated the *Shekinah* glory of God presented through the presence of Jesus on earth as "here" [on earth] and "now" [at our present time]. For the future presence of *Shekinah,* the Greek word *paraclete* ["comforter or Spirit of Jesus" (Jn 14:26)] fulfils the continuing presence of the transcendent God among the believers after Jesus' ascension. However, this experience of the transcendent God faced the development of an orthodox doctrine of the Trinity under the influence of the hellenisation of Christian thought that resulted in the emphasis of the transcendent God over the immanent God. This was a result of Greek philosophy (Platonism, Neoplatonism and Gnosticism) which exercised a vast influence on early Christian theology. Greek philosophy influenced Christian theology with the notion that the world of physical objects is an inferior kind of reality as "the material world was evil, the immaterial good" (Kärkkäinen 2004:61). Thus any human experience of God, which is physical and inferior to the spirit, would only be a distortion of the true perfection of the godhead (Crotty 1982:53).

Crotty (1982:57) proceeds to describe the origin of the "Death of God movement" from Bonhoeffer's attempt to reject Greek-based ideas of transcendence and the demythologization of Rudolf Bultmann in terms of the spatial distance of transcendence of God. Kärkkäinen (2004:173) concludes that Bonhoeffer believed that God can be found "out there" with ordinary life. This "God is everywhere" concept developed into the later thoughts of "God is not here" for everything with God means nothing is God. Therefore, "the death of God meant the unreality of the idea of God or the word *God*" (Erickson 1985:114). "The Death of God" movement bases its ideas on Philippians 2:7 where the Godhead "emptied" (*kenōsis*) itself thoroughly into Jesus and God became identical with humanity by negating his own objective existence through finite life and death. Thus, the movement emphasises the immanence of God which paradoxically results in the absence of God from the world or the nonexistence of God for "the God who is wholly transcendent has died" (Kärkkäinen 2004:171, 172). Due to his untimely death, Bonhoeffer failed to reintroduce the idea of the immanence of God (Crotty 1982:56) and thus the "Death of God movement" prevailed in the 1960's. The Death of God movement became a direct threat to Christian faith, and thus the Bultmann school of thought raised the question of eschatology that sees the birth of the "Theology of Hope." Crotty (1982:60) gives his conclusion of the discussion of Christians' thought of the transcendence of God based on the Theology of Hope:

> So, in summary, the God of the Theology of Hope is not the *Actus Purus* or the *Summum Bonum* of the Greek-based philosophies but he is essentially the power of the future which contradicts the negativeness of the present and frees man to overcome all negatives. The theological affirmation of divine creation does not refer to a primordial event in the past but to the eschatological future, for without such a future there is no Christianity and there is no God.

Then, according to Crotty's argument, the Theology of Hope calls for Christians to be future-oriented people whose present experience of reality through the Holy Spirit will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The presence of God, as reflected in *Shekinah* of Exodus and the Church, will continually exist among Christians with the presence of the *paraclete.* Yet, the Theology of Hope looks forward to balancing the trend of Christian emphasis on transcendence over the immanence of God. Crotty's argument of the transcendence of God adequately delineates the paradoxical argument of the transcendence-immanence of God through the concept of *Shekinah* with this Theology of Hope, which looks at the present and future of God's relationship with humankind.

3.6   CONCLUSION

Evaluating the transcendence of God in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, there is clear evidence that the concept of transcendence in Judaism has influenced both Islam and Christianity. For example, the two pillars of transcendence of God in Judaism, "Wholly Other" and "Wholly the Same" have a fundamental value for both Islam's and Christianity's concepts of God. Within these two pillars of the transcendence of God, Judaism explores the experience of God through the Torah ritual. God became "Wholly Other" for one cannot experience him unless he is in "an ecstasy of death" (Zuesse 1982:25). Drawn from Zuesse's (1982:24-25) argument of the "kiss of God"[38] from Exodus 33:20, I conclude that the "Wholly Other" is a result of God's withdrawal from the sinful world. As individuals and groups alike, people can be separated from this sinful world by observing the Torah ritual and

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[38] By "the kiss of God," Zuesse (1982:24-25) means that the experience of the oneness of God is intensely different from the ordinary ego consciousness that can be fulfilled only in an ecstasy of death based on Exodus 33:20. This context of Exodus will be further discussed in chapter 4.

becoming transcendent from the world. Then, the transcendent people may experience the "Wholly the Same" God by identifying with the historical Israel.

Similar to the "Wholly Other" of Judaism, orthodox Islam emphasises the separateness of God and approaches God through true worship. True worship in total submission to God emphasises the oneness of God, thus making God transcendent above all others. To experience this transcendent God, Islamic believers seek to achieve union with God through the expression of their worship and a total submission to God (Islam).

On the other hand, Christianity's argument for the transcendence of God is somewhat different from the arguments of Islam and Judaism. Both Judaism and Islam approach the transcendence of God with the aim of an active human experience of God while Christianity reflects God's active appearance that results in a passive human experience of God. Christianity sees the "Wholly Other" and "Wholly the Same" God. It approaches the transcendence of God through the Old and New Exodus. In the Old Exodus, the transcendent and immanent appearance of God is seen through the promise of *Shekinah,* that is "the presence of God" (Kärkkäinen 2004:274) consummated in the coming of Jesus (Kaiser 1978:82, 132; 1995:45). As God transcends ("Wholly Other") from creation through a cloud-like glory, his presence appears ("Wholly the Same") in the same cloud with God's self-declaration to make his dwelling place among the people (*Shekinah*). In the New Testament, God's dwelling became visual in the incarnation of Jesus and this immanence continues through the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension. This is called the New Exodus under the Moses-like figure of Jesus, as compared to the Old Exodus under Moses.

Judaism emphasises God's transcendence due to the "kiss of God" from the sinful nature of humankind as well as from God's immanence through the sanctification of the believer through the written guidelines of the Torah ritual. Islam expresses the unholy nature of humans, which causes the experience of the absolute otherness of God. Christianity maintains the notion of the Judaic transcendence of God with implications of *Shekinah* which result in a close fellowship of the believers with God. This is evident from the calling of God, "Abba." Then, though none of the three discussions directly mentions it, the argument for the transcendence of God underscores the sinful nature of man (in contrast to which we see the transcendence of God) while God is actively involved in human history (which shows the immanence of God). Believers are then able to know God because God's immanence is manifested among believers, but their experience is limited to what God reveals to the believers (the reality of God); believers can only know or experience him within that revelation.

From the above conclusion of the theoretical discussion of the transcendence of God in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, there are some feasible questions to be answered. They are in the area of the believers' experience of God within the limit of God's revelation, prohibitions to experiencing God based on the sinful nature of humankind, and misunderstanding of God's manifestation. These are some of the areas dealt with in chapter 4 along with the major investigation of God's immanence and transcendence in Islam and Christianity with regard to the limited experience of Adam, Abraham, and Moses.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSCENDENT GOD IN OLD TESTAMENT

AND QUR'AN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Glaser (1997:4) presents the problem of studying the Qur'an and the Bible in respect to the movement of seeing literary relationships between the Scriptures, begun by Waldman in 1986. "This is not an easy exercise, because the Qur'anic stories are not usually told in one place. In fact, they are seldom told as stories: it is more accurate to say that they are referred to as part of the Qur'anic discourse. Thus, for example, the Qur'anic Abraham story has to be pieced together from references in 15 different surahs."

Perhaps the problem of the various locations of the biblical stories in the Qur'an is due to the fact that "the Prophet felt that his sources were lacking in spiritual interpretation, and so remolded them in places" (MacDonald 1956:224). Therefore, the biblical story is written in a sporadic pattern within all aspects of the Qur'an. Others insist that "the Qur'an was intended as a sermonic book, written in a rhetorical, didactic style, and that it is false to attempt to find modern scientific inventions mentioned in it" (Nolin 1964:6). This means that whenever the occasion of the sermon took place, biblical accounts were freely used for the purpose of the above-mentioned sermon. Therefore the Qur'an was not indented to follow the narrative construction found in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Consequently,

interpretation of the biblical narrative in the Qur'an is inevitably dependent upon the Bible to complete the story presented in the Qur'an.

Although it is essential to follow one's interest in the interpretation of Scriptures and apply the result to their own contextual situation, there are problems of interpretation from both Qur'anic and biblical scholars in spite of several studies made. Glaser (1997:4) says:

> There have therefore been several comparative literary studies (Abdel Haleem 1990; Mir 1986; Rendsburg 1988; Waldman 1986). All these show that, although the stories are recognizably about the same people and the same events, they are used so differently that they tell very different stories about characters and motivations and therefore present different views of God and humanity.

The above mentioned problem routinely occurs in the corresponding stories between the Qur'an and the Bible, resulting in the omission of biblical accounts in the Qur'an. This may be due to the nature of the Qur'an as sermonic book, or the result of a redactor who removed some of the personal accounts of scandalous events of biblical figures due to the Muslim assumption of the innocence of prophets. Glaser (1997:4-5) confirms:

> All prophets are innocent….As Mohammad is the seal of the prophets, all previous prophets brought the same essential message as he did….The Qur'anic uses of the Genesis stories reflect these assumptions. Such scandalous events as Noah's drunkenness and Abraham's lies are omitted, and each prophet has some similarities to Mohammad.

Furthermore, Islam predetermines that should anything differ in the Qur'an and the Bible, it is because of the Bible being interpolated or corrupted by human involvement in the writing of the Scripture. Therefore, "It is not surprising that Muslims read the Bible on the basis of their own assumptions: in fact, it is to be expected" (Glaser 1997:7). For Christian scholars who study the Qur'an and Qur'anic materials, Glaser (1997:7) suggests two considerations that lead to provoking questions, which produce new insights into both Scriptures. First, Islamic comments can challenge consideration of how Christians' readings are determined by their own sets of assumption. Secondly, reading the biblical text alongside parallel Qur'anic material and commentary can bring more subtle challenges for interpretation. Then, Glaser suggests that Christians listen to the Islamic comments and enter into dialogue with them over the Christian's Scripture and their reading of it.

With the above conjectural considerations this chapter focuses on the exegetical and comparative studies of God's relation to his subjects limited to Adam, Abraham, and Moses in the Qur'an and the Bible. The focus of the investigation of the corresponding passages and episodes between the Old Testament and the Qur'an is to recognize the characteristic appearance of God's transcendence as revealed in the text. The general underlying principle of God's relationship with his subjects is that the God of the Qur'an is revealed as an absolutely transcendent God who does not permit the kind of personal relationship seen in the Bible. The Bible expresses both transcendence and immanence in God's relationship with the people of Israel including Adam, Abraham, and Moses.

4.2 TRANSCENDENT GOD AND ADAM

4.2.1 Introduction

There is extensive evidence of similarities in the creation story between the Qur'an and the Bible. Both the Qur'an and the Bible state that God's creation took six days.[39] The stories of the Garden, Adam, and the Fall are identical and important in both Scriptures as they establish the inception of God's relationship with his creation. The basic outline of the stories is identical in both Scriptures, yet there are some critical differences that may define different aspects of God's relationship with his creation.

The general expression of man's creation such as in Surah 38:71-72 and 15:28-29 refer to all humankind, not to Adam alone (Ali [1946] 1996:7).[40]

> **Surah 38:71-72** [71]Behold thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to create man from clay: [72]'When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit fall ye down in obeisance unto him.

> **Surah 15:28-29** [28]Behold! thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to create man from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape; [29]'When I

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[39] The Qur'an indicates the creation takes six days in Surah 7:54; 32:4; 57:4. In Surah 41:9, 10, 12 the creation took eight days in total.

[40] As both the Qur'an (S 15:28-29) and the Bible (Gn 1:26) use the word "man" to indicate humankind, *the word "man" is interchangeably used with humankind in this thesis.*

have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit

fall ye down in obeisance unto him.'

These accounts of Surah 38 and 15 correspond to the biblical account of Genesis 2:7 where it says: "the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." However, the approach to the creation story of Adam in Islam is somewhat confusing. For example, Nolin (1964:7) upholds a compromising interpretation by promoting the idea that a factual story does not need to exclude the symbolic at the same, or vice versa. He especially rejects the traditionally literal interpretation of Adam's creation from mud (*min tin,* S 7:12; 17:61; 38:71, 76) by saying that no Muslim should ever be obligated to believe it, because it means that Adam's material substance is of the earth. The reason behind his argument is based on the purpose of the Qur'an, being primarily teaching material, and the explanation of man's nature and the origin of the evil forces within it.

The purpose of man's creation or his nature seems to agree between the Qur'an and the Bible. In the Qur'an, the purpose is clearly indicated as a deputy-ruler over the earth for Surah 2:30 declares: "Behold thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.'" Genesis 1:26 states, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'" According to the Scriptures, man's ruling over the earth seems to be a primary purpose for God's creation of man.

However, the relationship between God and man (Adam and Eve) in the creation and the Garden of Eden seems to hold an important position in the understanding of God's

transcendence in the Qur'an and the Bible. This relationship could affect the remainder of God's relationship revealed in the Qur'an and the Bible, as the account of Adam occurred in the primal place of God's entire self-revelation to his creation. Specifically, Adam's role in the creation process, the location of the Garden and its purpose, and the reaction of God reflected in the Fall of Man may provide some insight into God's transcendence and immanence in respect to his spatial revelation as well as man's ability to transcend over creation.

4.2.2   Adam and the creation

God displays his mighty power over his creation by causing it to come into existence. The power of creation has established God's transcendent state over creation. The creation of the first man, Adam, is considered an irrefutable example of God's creational power. Both the Qur'an and the Bible indicate that God has a purpose in the creation of man.

The Qur'an states the purpose of man as: 'I will create a vicegerent [*khalefah*] on earth' (S 2:30). The Arabic word *khalefah* is derived from the verb *khalafa* (he succeeded), thus meaning "successor." In this verse, the word is used as an allegory to denote man's rightful supremacy on earth. Furthermore, the word *khalefah* is written in English as "Caliph" and used to indicate a title given to the successor of Mohammad, who is vested with absolute authority in all matters of state, both civil and religious (Huges 1998:263). This implies that "Man is, thus, not the master; he is only His deputy and does not possess any powers of his own except those which are delegated to him by the real Master" (Maududi 1977:58). In other words, the task of the *khalefah* is to manage God's world on God's behalf. This is the *'ibādah* or "service of God" which is God's purpose of creation of man. "That is why man

was honoured as the best of creation and angels were asked to lie prostrate before him" (Rahman 1967:10).

Similarly, the Bible reports that man is to look over God's creation, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'" (Gn 1:26). The word "rule over (רָדָה)" is generally limited to human rather than divine dominion (White 1980:833). In the Old Testament, there are other purposes of man besides ruling over God's creation (Gn 1:26). They are "to praise," "worship," and "obey God" (Is 43:21; Gn 2:15). The purpose written in Genesis 2:15 will be discussed in the later part of this chapter (4.2.3.2).

Both the Qur'an and the Bible indicate that man is to exercise self-dominion within the limit of God's approval. The fact, as seen in the Qur'an and the Bible, that man is to look after the creation of God displays the superior power of man over all other creation. It indicates God's superior power over man as he imparts authority to rule over his creation. This upward transcending movement, from the creation to man and man to God, illustrates God's absolute transcendence over his creation.

However, if Adam somehow would have participated in the process of God's creation, then God would be seen as less transcendent from man than any other creation, since man has demonstrated the power of creation, which is limited to God. As God demonstrates his absolute transcendent state through his creation of the world, there would be a lesser degree of transcendence of God compared to man if Adam's participation in the creation process is proved.

In Genesis 1, every time God finished the creation according to the daily order, he completed the process by conferring its name. Therefore, the naming process is the final stage of the creation (Westermann [1974] 1984:87). However, on the sixth day, after the creation of animals, God left the naming process to man (Gn 2). What, therefore, would be the implication of Adam giving names to the animals? Both the Qur'an and the Bible account for the naming of animals:

Genesis 2:19-20 [19]And the LORD God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name. [20]And the man gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts; but for Adam no fitting helper was found.

Surah 2:31-33 [31]And He [Allah] taught Adam the nature [name] of all things; then He placed them before the angels and said: "Tell Me the nature of these if ye are right." [32]They said: "Glory to Thee of knowledge we have none save that Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom." [33]He said: "O Adam! tell them their natures." When he had told them Allah said: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?"

In the Qur'anic account, God taught Adam the names of the animals (*kull –ha thumma,* "all things"), and Adam recited them before the angels (S 2:31-33). Then God commanded the angels to bow down with respect to Adam for reciting the names perfectly. All the angels

bowed down as God commanded, but *Iblis* (Satan) refused to bow down to Adam in his arrogance (S 2:34).[41]

The words used in the Qur'anic account of naming are "taught" (*callama*) and "told" (*qaala*). The Arabic word *qaala* is used to convey a message from one to another in the Qur'an. The major use of this word is as an imperative in directive form. For example, "Say [*qul*]: 'Obey Allah and His Apostle'" (S 3:32). It is never used with the authority of the speaker. Conversely the word *callama* is exclusively used to indicate God's teaching in the sense of imparting knowledge to his followers (S 2:239, 251; 12:37; 53:5; 55:4; 96:4, 5). God imparted the names to Adam and Adam simply recited the names of the animals perfectly. Therefore, the Qur'anic account of naming the animals and birds is a demonstration of man's superior position over all creatures, including the angels (S 2:34). At the same time, it is "demonstrating God's power and knowledge, not Adam's" (Timm 1990:48). This would qualify man as a vicegerent (*khalefah*) on earth; one who has rightful supremacy on earth (S 2:30).

Furthermore, Islam treats the naming account with reference to the functional base of the name. Rahman (1979:11) states: "Now, 'naming' things implies the capacity to discover the properties of things, their interrelations and law of behaviour. When I call something a stone, a tree or electron, I know something about its behaviour, am able to find out more about it and to predict it." He continues: "That is to say, man is distinguished from the rest of the

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[41] The theory of fallen angels is not accepted in Muslim theology (Ali 1989:25). However, the context shows that Satan was in the company of the angels (S 2:34). Also, Surah 18:50 says Satan was in the company of angels who are invisible (*al-jinn*). Muslims consider Satan as Jinns (*al-jinn*), a spirit or invisible force separate from the angels due to the belief in the perfection of God's creation, which denies the fallen angels.

creation through his creative, scientific knowledge of things…." Rahman's statement would qualify man to be a vicegerent as man has a distinguished and superior functional power over all creation. Furthermore, the teaching of the names by God means "the bestowal of the ability to perceive and comprehend the scientific truths inherent in the world" (Nūsair 1985:155). This is due to the fact that the name of thing is its symbol in a defined, conceptual form.

The biblical account is significantly different from the Qur'an. After God's creation, Adam was to name all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air (Gn 2:19-20). It is Adam's first act of dominion over creation, as God had commanded man to take dominion (1:28). The man had demonstrated his own power in naming God's creation. By giving all the beasts and the birds names Adam proved himself their lord (Keil & Delitzsch [1891] 2002:55).

In the Bible, the naming process seems to create ownership of objects or change the nature of the object (Von Rad [1961] 1972:53, 83). "The Bible also illustrates the significance and power associated with certain names and with the act of naming" (Pike 1985:683). Moreover, the naming privilege is not limited to God alone but also to man. First, as we have already seen, as Genesis 1:5, 8, and 10 unfold, God named his creation in the stages of forming it. God's creation activity can be divided into two major stages: as "days of forming" when God made foundational substances (light, water, land), and the "days of filling" when God filled the foundational substances with lights, moving creatures, birds, animals and man. God only named (called, קָרָא) his creation in "days of forming." The naming of God's creation is followed by Adam's naming of the animals, the birds, and the woman (Gn 2:19-20, 23). After Adam named the woman (Gn 2:23), God named both man and woman as "man" (Gn 5:2). Furthermore, a person's name is changed by God to indicate a different character or nature of

the person, such as Abram (father of elevation) to Abraham (father of a multitude, Gn 17:5) and Jacob (supplanter, or holding the heel) to Israel (soldier of or contender with God, Gn 35:10).[42] When man gives a new name to another person, it usually indicates ownership through submission, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar naming Daniel "Belteshazzar", Pharaoh naming Joseph "Zaphenath-Paneah" and many others (Gn 41:45; 2 Ki 23:34 ; 24:17; Da 1:7). Furthermore, God expressed his ownership over Moses when he said "I know you by name" (Ex 33:12).

In the biblical account of the naming of the animals and birds (Gn 2:19-20), there are three possible interpretations. First, both the introduction and conclusion of the context show that the process of naming was part of a search for a mate for Adam. After finishing creation God took Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden (Gn 2:15) and gave instructions for managing the Garden (Gn 2:16-17). Then God declared: "I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gn 2:18). Immediately God brought all living creatures and paraded them before Adam (Gn 2:19). However, the context concludes by finding "no suitable helper" for Adam (Gn 2:20). After failing to find a mate for Adam, God proceeds to the creation of woman from Adam (Gn 2:21-25).

In Genesis 2:18, the Hebrew word אֶעֱשֶׂה (I will make) used to indicate God's desire for creating Adam's helper supports the naming process as a notion of finding a mate. The root of the word אֶעֱשֶׂה is עָשָׂה, which has the basic meaning of "do" or "make." In the creation account of Genesis the words עָשָׂה and בָּרָא (shape, create) are used interchangeably to

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[42] The definitions of the names are derived from the Hebrew words following the *Fausset's Bible Dictionary* (2003) entries.

indicate God's creational act. However, the word בָּרָא carries the thought of the initiation of the action involved. "It always connotes what only God can do and frequently emphasises the absolute newness of the object created" (McComiskey 1980:701). On the other hand, the word עָשָׂה is much broader in scope, connoting primarily the fashioning of the object with little concern for special nuances (McComiskey 1980:701).

Both words, בָּרָא and עָשָׂה, appear together in Genesis 2:3 as: "And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work [מְלַאכְתּוֹ] of creating [בָּרָא] that he had done [לַעֲשׂוֹת]." Wenham (1987:36) comments on this unusual phrase (cf. Gn 2:2): "The combination of the verb ברא 'to create' and עשׂה 'to make' covers all of God's creative activity in the six days, reminding the reader of all that has been achieved." Bowie (1952:489) agrees with Wenham's view by saying the phrase is "the unnecessary repetition of God; probably an explanatory gloss on work."

However, the "infinitive with ל is very often used **after a verb** to express an action which gives more details about or explains the preceding action" (Joüon 1993:437). Accordingly Joüon translates Genesis 2:3 as a gerund: "*He ceased all his work which God had created by doing.*" This verse (Gn 2:3) concludes the entire process of God's creation as "from his work" (מְלַאכְתּוֹ). As Joüon translates, the two Hebrew words explain what God's work is. The word בָּרָא refers the main work of God which is his creation, and the word עָשָׂה completed the creation by taking action of the work. Conclusively, the word בָּרָא indicates "create something out of nothing" while the word עָשָׂה refers to "creating something from which already exists." For example, in Genesis 1:16, God made (עָשָׂה) two great lights out of "light" which were created previously in Genesis 1:3. Therefore the word עָשָׂה in Genesis 2:18 indicates that God would want to find and adopt one of the creatures and fashion it into

Adam's helper. If God wanted to create a completely new creature suitable to be Adam's helper, he would have used the word בָּרָא instead of עָשָׂה. This is further supported by the following verse 22, "Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man" (Gn 2:22). In this verse the word for made is not בָּרָא nor עָשָׂה but בָּנָה (to build). This word is a synonym to עָשָׂה with the nuance of "rebuild." It "introduces us to the realm of craftsmanship where material products are made out of different kinds of material" (Wagner 1975:167). God is building a woman out of man which he already created (בָּרָא) in Genesis 1:27.

Zlotowitz (1980:105) supports the first interpretation and brings out another interpretation of Genesis 2:19-20. He says, "God brought the animals to man for a double purpose: to have man name the animals and thus establish his lordship over them; and to satisfy man that he could not hope to find from among them a suitable companion—to serve the dual function of helping him physically and spiritually, and at the same time be his intellectually equal." The delineation Zlotowitz makes in establishing man's lordship over animals has valuable argumentation in reference to God's statement in Genesis 1:26-28.

In the creation narrative, only the man has been given dominion in God's creation (Gn 1:26-28). The dominion is expressly declared to be over all other living creatures in the sky, sea, and land. The command of domination over creatures was repeated—once before the creation of man (v. 26) and after the creation of man (v. 28)—to emphasise God's intention in man's creation. Moreover, after God placed man in the Garden (Gn 2:15), the duty of man was to name all living animals and birds (Gn 2:19). The word used to indicate dominion of man is רָדָה (rule over) in verse 26 and 28. The root of the word רָדָה is related to the Akkadian word

radu, which means "tread" as in Joel 4:13 [Eng. 3:13].[43] It is generally limited to human rather than divine dominion (White 1980:833). Human dominion over creation is confirmed by God's final commission to man in verse 28, "*Be fruitful* and *increase in number*; *fill* the earth and *subdue* it. *Rule over* the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" [Italics mine]. The five imperatives in this verse, as indicated in italics, are direct imperatives. Unlike indirect volitive which express the notion of purpose or consecution (Joüon 1993:381), these words express independent command or permission from God to emphasise the rule of man over God's creation. God's entrusting man with dominion over all other creatures is further confirmed in the New Testament: "In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him" (Heb 2:8; cf Ps 8:4-6).

However, naming the animals and the birds is more than "ruling" over creation. In Genesis 2:19-20, the word קָרָא (called) is used to indicate that Adam gave names to the animals and the birds. The word קָרָא first appears in Genesis 1:5 highlighting ownership or God's dominion over all creation when he named (called, קָרָא) the light "day." Hamilton (1990:12) relates these as, "For to confer a name (*qaral*) is to speak from a position of authority and sovereignty." Furthermore, in an ancient view of names, "The Hebrew did not perceive the name as incidental, but as a given essential" (Gunkel [1901] 1997:12). In Exodus 33:12 and 17, the Lord knows Moses by name. Hannah (1985:157) interprets it as Moses belonging to God. Furthermore, Isaiah 43:1 implies that "by name" means owned by the creator: "But now, this is what the LORD says--he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.'"

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[43] The Hebrew numeration of 4:13 corresponds to 3:13 in English; the number in brackets indicates the English numeration.

The king of Egypt, Pharaoh, changed the name of Joseph to Zaphenath-Paneah in order to indicate his ownership or dominion over Joseph even after the exaltation of Joseph (Gn 41:41-45). Isaiah 43:7 expresses that giving a name is having ownership of the creator. It reads "everyone who is called by my name, whom I created [בְּרָא] for my glory, whom I formed [יְצַר] and made [עָשָׂה]." Kaiser (1976:363) concludes well on the issue of giving names: "When one gives a name to another, he thereby establishes a relation of dominion or possession to him."

The naming process may imply the exercise of finding a mate for Adam, establishing man's lordship over the creation, and displaying man's ownership of creation. If these implications are applied to the creation account, it is possible to interpret that man participated in God's creation by exercising ownership and sovereignty over the creation, which confirms that man is created in the image of God, *imago Dei* (Gn 1:16). By conferring names that are essential aspects of animals and birds, man had demonstrated his superior status over the creation and completed the creation of God which God left for man to finish. Adam finally establishes *imago Dei* by naming his wife "woman" after God created her for him (Gn 2:23).

In summation, the Qur'anic narrative of Adam's naming of the animals is viewed as God's grant to man, that is, the capacity of knowledge that supersedes all creation including angels. The Qur'anic Adam received the names from God as a prophet receives God's will while the biblical Adam did not know the names in advance but conferred the names by himself. Thus, the two accounts of the naming of animals suggest a different kind of authority and responsibility upon man. As Glaser (1997:11) suggests, the names of the animals, which presumably completes their creation in Genesis 1:24-25, suggests that the human being as an image of God is to work with God in his world. Adam is not only the *khalifah* who receives

the information that he needs in order to rule as God permits; his nature is to be creative and to rule in his own right, but in relationship with God.

Consequently man's actions in naming God's creation seems to imply something more than the simple practice of finding a mate for him or practicing dominion over the birds and the animals. By the power conferred by God, man took part in God's creative process by giving the essential natures to the animals and the birds. By naming creation, man transcends other creatures with authority and dominion, which belongs to God. Adam has completed God's creation and God's transcendent state is diminished by Adam's power of creation for he has proved his status of being in the image of God. However, Islam denies that man took part in creation. By denying man's participation in creation, the transcending attribute of God as creator remains with God alone. For that reason, the Qur'anic account simply indicates man's superior qualities of learning and memory over other creation, while the biblical Adam reflects the first example of *imago Dei*.

4.2.3 Spacio-relationship of God in the Garden

One of the arguments regarding the transcendence of God is to approach God's transcendent state through God's presence in space: the spacio-transcendence of God. In both Islam and Christianity, God can manifest himself in every place (Jr 23:23-24; Mt 18:20; Eph 1:23; S 2:115; 7:7; 43:84). However, can God physically manifest himself in space? The location of the Garden and the temptation of Satan[44] may shed some light on the spacio-transcendence

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[44] In Gn 3, the serpent tempted the woman (Eve). However, the serpent is referred to "that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan" (Rv 12:9; 20:2). In the Qur'an (S 2:36; 7:20), Satan is indicated as the one who tempted Adam and Eve.

of God, which reflects the spacio-relationship of God with his creation. Furthermore, God's relation to man in the Garden, displaying the possibility of God's dwelling with man, may diminish the transcendent state of God but increase God's immanent state with man. The Qur'an and the Bible describe the Garden in connection with Adam.

Genesis 2:8-15 [8]Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put [וַיָּשֶׂם] the man he had formed. [9]And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. [10]A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. [11]The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. [12](The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) [13]The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. [14]The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. [15]The LORD God took the man and put [וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ] him in the Garden of Eden to work it [לְעָבְדָהּ] and take care of it. [וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ]

Surah 2:35 [7:19] We said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the garden and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will but approach not this tree[45] or ye run into harm and transgression."

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[45] Here the tree is identified as "the tree of life eternal" (S 20:120). However, Ali (1989:25) asserts that "The forbidden tree was not the tree of knowledge for man was given in that perfect state fuller knowledge than he has now (ii.31); it was the tree of Evil, which he was forbidden not only to eat of, but even to approach."

Surah 2:36 [7:24] Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden) and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: "Get ye down all (ye people) with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time."

In the Qur'an, the passage in Surah 2:35-36 (cf 7:19, 24) is the only direct reference to Adam in the Garden. The account of Adam dwelling in the Garden corresponds to Genesis 2:15-17. Contrary to the biblical account, the Qur'anic account does not mention the name "Eden." It simply indicates "the garden" (*al-jannah*). However, the name "Eden" (*cadn*) in Arabic occurs in the Qur'an eleven times (S 9:72; 13:23; 16:31; 18:31; 19:61; 20:76; 35:33; 38:50; 40:8; 61:12; 98:8). Out of these, nine times are used (with plural form of *jannah*) as *jannaat cadn,* "the Gardens of Eden," in the Malik translation and eleven times in the Pickthall translation.[46] Other translations, including the Ali translation, use words such as "the Gardens of Eternity" or "the Gardens of Perpetual Bliss." This word "Eden" appears in the Sunni tradition of dividing heaven into eight stages (Mishkat 2:1 see also Shahih Al-Bukhari 4:479, 644; Figh-us-Sunnah 1:34; Sahih Muslim Hadith 104). This division of the heavens is based on the Qur'an, which frequently speaks of the creation of seven heavens by God (S 2:29; 17:44; 23:86; 41:12; 65:12; 67:3; 71:15). However, "Tradition adds an eighth, since Heaven ought to have one division more than Hell, to show that Allah's mercy exceeds His justice" (Thomas 1992:75). Hughes ([1885] 1998:449) lists the eight different heavens or paradises: (1) The Gardens of Eternity, *Jannatu 'l-Khuld,* (2) The Dwelling of Peace, *Daaru's-Salaam,* (3) The Dwelling which abideth, *Daaru 'l-Qaraar,* (4) The Gardens of Eden, *Jannaatu 'l-And,* (5) The Gardens of Refuge, *Jannaatu 'l-Ma'waa,* (6) The Gardens of

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[46] The Qur'an translation, Malik, Pickthall, Asad, Ali, Transliteration, and Hadith are extracted from the computer program, *The Alim* (Version 6.0).

Delight, *Jannaatu 'n-Naiim,* (7) *Illiiyun,* and (8) The Gardens of Paradise, *Jannaatu 'l-Firdaus.*

By examining the eight stages or eight names for heaven, one could easily perceive that the name of each heaven is the description of itself. Furthermore, due to the plural (*jannaat*) use of the Garden (*janaah*), some scholars say that the residence of Adam, the Garden, is different from the Gardens of Eden (Hughes [1885] 1998:133). However, the sixty-nine uses of a singular heaven or garden (*jannah*) and sixty-seven usages of plural heavens or gardens (*janaat*) in the Qur'an are interchangeably used to describe heaven in the life to come, not the earthly garden.[47]

Furthermore the descriptions in Surah 2:36 and 7:24 indicate that after the Fall, Adam fell to earth, and the earth became his dwelling place. The Qur'an reads, "Get ye down all (ye people) with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time." Therefore, according to the description of the Qur'an, the Garden of Eden is located in heaven, and it was Adam's first dwelling place. The Qur'an indicates that after the Fall, men are to go down to earth, which will be the dwelling place of people (S 2:36, 38; 7:24; 20:123). The purpose of man's creation spelled out in Surah 2:40, "I will create a vicegerent on earth," indicates that man is to live on earth, not in the heavenly Garden from which Adam was expelled due to the Fall. However, in Surah 2:35 God commands Adam to dwell (*uskun*) in the heavenly Garden. The Arabic word *uskun* is an imperative form from *sakana* (to inhabit, rest) with the nuance of permanent residence which

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[47] The statistics are from the research tool in the computer software, *The Alim* (Version 6.0).

is cognate with Hebrew word שָׁכֵן. Therefore, the question of the original dwelling place remains.

In the Genesis account, the Garden is physically located on earth where two known rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, were among the four rivers that flowed from the Garden (Gn 2:10-14). The Garden is the place where Adam named all the animals and the birds. Since neither the Qur'an nor the Bible attests to the presence of animals in heaven, the Garden must be on earth. Furthermore, the fact that God had formed animals and birds from the ground (of the earth, מִן־הָאֲדָמָה) and brought them to Adam, shows that the biblical account of the Garden is the more logical explanation of its earthly location than the Qur'anic account (Gn 2:19). In addition, Lot's testimony of the whole plain of the Jordan in Genesis 13:10 shows that the Garden was physically located on earth. Genesis 13:10 indicates, "Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD [Eden], like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah)." Finally, the presence of guards in the Garden of Eden prohibiting man to reach the 'Tree of Life' is a clear indication of the earthly location of the Garden. Genesis 3:24 states, "After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life." The guards are not placed there as temporary but as permanent guards to protect the way, as God used the word שָׁכֵן (to settle down permanently) to denote an English translation of "he placed."

After confirming that the biblical Garden of Eden is located on earth while the Qur'anic garden shows a heavenly location, it is logical to turn to the question of the kind of activity or purpose of Adam being in the Garden. Furthermore, the implication of the location of the Garden may provide a different insight into God's transcendence.

4.2.3.1 Activity in the Garden and the believers: Islamic view

Both Christians and Muslims agree that heaven is the dwelling place of God and believers (S 54:55; Mt 6:9). In the presence of the angels, including Satan, God commanded Adam to repeat the names of all things in Surah 2:31. The first incident of God's immanent presence in heaven with Adam and the angels has been testified to in the Qur'an. Furthermore, Surah 54:54-55 shows that believers are in the presence of God in heaven, "As to the Righteous [believers] they will be in the midst of Gardens and Rivers. In an Assembly of Truth in the Presence of a Sovereign Omnipotent [God]." However, this immanent presence of Adam and the believers is marred by the division and activities of believers in heaven described by the Qur'an.

The Qur'an frequently speaks of the creation of seven heavens by Allah (S 17:44; 23:86; 41:12; 65:12; 67:3; 71:15). In those seven heavens there are different inhabitants: Adam in the first heaven, John the Baptist and Jesus in the second, Joseph in the third, Enoch in the fourth, Aaron in the fifth, Moses in the sixth, and Abraham in the seventh, where Allah is supposed to be present (Nehls and Eric 1996:13; Hughes [1885] 1998:170). Since Mohammad sits in heaven within two bow's lengths of the throne of Allah (S 53:9; Musk 1989:151), he is one of the closest to Allah in heaven, bestowed with the highest honour by Allah.[48] This confirms the contradiction in the Qur'an, namely that some prophets excel above others (S 2:253; 3:33), but all prophets are without distinction between them (S 2:136, 285; 3:84). Adam, being far away from God after returning to heaven, would not maintain the closeness of Surah 2:31-33, where he had the privilege of receiving honour before the angels.

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[48] Two bow-lengths is interpreted as two bow-shots (200 to 300 yards) which would be a clearly visible distance (Ali 1989:1378), yet it is feasible distance to maintain God's ontological transcendent state.

The division and different inhabitants would indicate the fact that God has maintained selective manifestation before believers. Even within heaven God selectively maintains his spacio-transcendent state from the believers.

On the issue of the heavenly activities of the believers the Qur'anic account has no implications of the seven divisions of heaven. The believers are in "the Garden (*jannah*)," a more general and interchangeable term for heaven (S 4:124). For Muslims, heaven is essentially the same kind of life as the present time, except that it is eternal. The Qur'an speaks about heaven as a reward for being good servants of Allah (S 4:124, 9:22; 43:72; 52:19; 56:24). As a reward it is a place of fulfilling material comfort and sensual pleasure, which were limited while in this age.

For Muslims, heaven is a green garden, eternal home, and lofty mansion with rivers flowing beneath it (S 3:15, 198; 4:57; 9:72; 15:44; 18:31; 22:3; 37:42 ff.; 38:49 ff.; 47:15; 56:11 ff.; 76:5 ff.). The majority of Islamic concepts, including the aforementioned concept of heaven, can be traced to the religion's roots in the desert, where hardship of life dominates in the harsh desert environment. In the hot barren wastes of Arabia, a dreamland would be conceived as a series of gardens with flowing brooks, with plenty of food and drink and virgins for companions (S 56:1-40; 69:21-24).

The most graphic expression of activities in heaven comes from Surah 56:1-40. In the Garden of Bliss, believers will recline on couches made of expensive gem stones and will be served by youths (young men) of perpetual freshness while drinking from the river of wine without being intoxicated, eating fruits and meats as they wish, and enjoying the companionship of perpetual virgins with beautiful, big, lustrous, pearl-like eyes. A Muslim commentator

expressed "The companionship of Beauty and Grace is one of the highest pleasures of life" (Ali 1989:1410). These activities are basically forbidden on earth, but allowed in heaven as a reward to believers for their good deeds in the past life. Muslims also teach that heaven is a place where one's desire can be fulfilled as described in Surah 78:31: "Verily for the righteous there will be fulfilment of (the Heart's) desires."

The main issue of the heavenly activities of Muslims is not what they do but what they are supposed to do. If God wanted to maintain his immanent relationship with his people, the Qur'an would reflect the believers' activities of having worship or fellowship with God. However, the Qur'anic account of activities totally avoids God's immanent state toward the believers. The majority of the Qur'anic account of heaven is a description of believers being served by young servants or slaves, men and women, when they are supposed to be having worship or fellowship with God. This implies that after Adam sinned against God, God maintained his transcendence from sinful man by expelling Adam to earth. Afterward, even in his abode, heaven, God maintains his transcendence toward man.

4.2.3.2 Activity in the Garden and the believers: Biblical view

For Christians, heaven is a place of personal fellowship with God. It is the dwelling of God and the source of blessing, a setting of life, and the place where God's planned salvation is already present. Heaven is the completion of the Christian's pilgrimage, the end of the struggle against flesh, the world, and the devil (Erickson 1985:1230; Grudem 1994:1158-1165). Heaven, for the Christian, is not something to earn but God's free gift to his children so that they may have intimate fellowship.

In contrast to the self-focused heavenly activities in the Qur'an, Christians enjoy intimate fellowship with God in heaven, for God is their Father (Jn 1:12). Smith (1980:190-200) provides a description of Christians' activities in heaven such as worship, service, authority, fellowship, learning, and resting. Before the throne of God, believers serve and worship the triune God (Rv 7:15;19:1-8; 22:3; Ps 29:2; 95:6; 96:9; 132:7; Heb 1:6). The believer has authority with Christ (Rm 4:13; Lk 19:17, 19; Mt 25:21, 23; Ps 2:8), fellowship with God in glory (Heb 12:23; Rv 19:19), and fellowship with fellow believers (Lk 16:23). The believers will have perfect knowledge (1 Cor 13:9-12; 1 Jn 3:2) and rest from sin but not from worship (Zph 3:17; Heb 3:11, 18; 4:9-11).

Since heaven is the place of believers after this life, activities in the biblical Garden of Eden, which is on earth, may shed a better understanding of the transcendence of God. We have already discussed the naming of the birds and the animals as man's participation in God's creation, and thus closing the gap on the innate quality of the transcendence of God. In addition to the naming process, Genesis 2:15 ("The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it") may lead us to another insight into God's transcendence in the Garden of Eden.

The majority of English translations of Genesis 2:15 provide a plain implication of God's purpose for man as servant or gardener in the Garden of Eden. However, there are two important interpretative issues in the Hebrew words. First, the literal translation of the verse hints that the verse means something more than a simple gardener, "And Jehovah [*the LORD*

in NIV][49] God took the man, and caused him to rest [*put* in NIV] in the garden of Eden, to serve [*work* in NIV] it, and to keep [*take care* in NIV] it."

The New International Version and other English translations give the verbal ideas of the word, וַיַּנִחֵהוּ (נוּחַ), as "put" or "place." However, the word נוּחַ is frequently used to indicate "rest" (Gn 8:4; 20:11; 33:14; Nu 10:36; 11:26; Dt 3:20; 12:10; Jos 1:15; etc.), especially when it is associated with God's action. It means "(giving) rest" rather than "place" in Genesis 2:15. Sailhammer (1994:7) confirms the interpretation, "Man was 'put' into the garden where he could 'rest' and be 'safe,' and he was 'put' into the garden 'in God's presence' where he could have fellowship with God (3:8)." Furthermore, the Midrash confirms the "rest" nuance of the word by saying that God gave Adam the precept of Sabbath (Zlotowitz 1980:99).

Other interpretive issues are connected with God's purpose for man in the Garden. After creating the Garden (Gn 2:8), God placed (וַיַּנִחֵהוּ, caused to rest) man in the Garden to work it (לְעָבְדָהּ) and to take care of it (וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ). The issue here is the meaning of the verbs and the feminine suffix ending in both words. The word עָבַד (work) could be translated as "serve" or "worship" (Ex 12:31), while the word שָׁמַר (take care, keep) can mean "observe" or "obey" (Ex 34:11). In fact, עָבַד is more often translated as "serve" and "worship" (166 times) than "work" (27 times). The word שָׁמַר is almost equally translated as "take care" (113 times) and "obey" or "observe" (90 times) (Kohlenberger III & Swanson 1998:1158, 1612). With these

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[49] The NIV translation of "the LORD" comes from the Hebrew word, יהוה, which is God's personal name in the Old Testament (Ex 3:14-15). This divine name was considered too sacred to be pronounced; so the consonants of this word were written in the text while the reading and translation followed the vowel points of the Hebrew word, אֲדֹנָי "Lord" (Weingreen 1959:23).

nuances in the words with the word נוּחַ as "rest" or "placed safely," Genesis 2:15 could render its meaning as "the LORD God took the man and rested him safely in the Garden of Eden to worship and to obey him." However, the interpretation of the feminine suffix ה in the two verbs, עָבַד and שָׁמַר, will determine the meaning of the text.

The argument of the final ה is the gender of its controlling words in Genesis 2:15. The controlling words, "in the Garden of Eden, בְּגַן־עֵדֶן," are both masculine singular, and thus logically the final ה (feminine singular) is not referring to man's work in the Garden. Sailhammer (1994:7) supports the argument of gender difference by providing the purpose of man as not working in the Garden. He asserts that "'to work the ground" is said to be a result of the Fall, and the narrative suggests that the author had intended such a punishment to be seen as an ironic reversal of the man's original purpose."

In light of the above objections, Sailhammer (1994:7) concludes the meaning of the two words is "to worship and to obey." He asserts that man is put in the Garden to worship God and to obey him. His argument of Genesis 2:15 under the large scope of Genesis makes a valuable discussion in biblical theology. As God created man to worship him (Is 43:7), man's purpose in the Garden is more logically concluded to be worship of God rather than to merely work in the Garden or ground, as this is the result of sin in Genesis 3:23. However, Sailhammer does not provide arguments on the syntactical problem of the final ה.

Waltke and O'Connor (1990:104), in their discussion of "Zero-marked Gender Nouns," reckon that there is an exception as the head noun continues to control the gender of the phrase and the place name determines the gender of the phrase. They say: "There are exceptions to this pattern, in which the place name determines the gender of the phrase; for

example, גַּן is usually masculine, but the phrase גַּן־עֵדֶן is feminine (Gen 2:15)." The exception to the head noun controlling the phrase provides an answer to man working on the ground of the Garden. However, the word "garden" appears as a feminine noun form (גַּנָּה) in the Old Testament in the following verses: Numbers 24:6; Esther 1:5; 7:7, 8; Job 8:16; Ecclesiastes 2:5; Song of Songs 6:11; Isaiah 1:29, 30; 61:11; 65:2; 66:17; Jeremiah 29:5, 28; Amos 4:9; 9:14. Therefore, if the writer intended to refer to the final ה as the Garden of Eden, then it would be logical to use the word גַּנָּה, not גַּן. Another look at the final ה may confirm the true intention of man being in the Garden.

Skinner (1980:66) produces another possible reading based on the final ה. He says: "Since גן is nowhere fem., it is better to point לעבדה לשמרה." Skinner provides a simple solution for the problem by changing the verb עבד (to work) into a feminine noun עבדה (service, worship). This is possible, since in the Old Testament there are many examples of this usage (Ex 1:14; Lev 23:7, 8, 21, 25, 35, 36; Nm 4:23, 47; 28:18, 25, 26; 29:1, 12, 35; Dt 26:6; Lam 1:3; Ex 29:18). However, there is only one example of the biblical usage of the verb שמר (to keep) as a feminine noun שמרה (guard, watch) in Psalms 141:3.

Another possible interpretation of the final ה is to treat it as an external reference. God said, "but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Ex 20:6). This is God's promise of blessing to his people who are to faithfully keep and obey his commandments (feminine noun). The original purpose of man's creation reflects this conditional blessing as in Genesis 1:28, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" It is God's first act after his creation of man, reflecting the purpose of man's being. Consequently,

God placed man in the Garden in order to bless them by giving them the condition to worship and obey it (the commandment). This is one of the major biblical themes which is evident throughout the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 11:27-28 clearly reflects the theme of blessing and curse depending upon the believers' obedience to God's commandments: "the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known." Then, in Genesis 2:15, it is possible to look at the final ה as a reference to God's commandment and translate as, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to *worship* and *obey the commandment.*"

With respect to man's purpose in the Garden before the Fall, to worship and perform service to God, it can be said that man was with God. Adam, then, was reflecting a spacio-relationship between God and man when he was fulfilling his purpose in the Garden. In the Qur'anic account, the man's purpose of dwelling in the Garden is for a trial of the heart before God would set him as vicegerent on earth (Maududi 1977:60, 62). In the biblical account, if man is to worship God in the Garden while God is in the Garden, then there is no spatial-transcendence between man and God. The Qur'an already indicates that man was in the heavenly Garden which is a dwelling place of God while the Bible indicates the Garden is on earth where the transcendence of God is clearly manifested.

The Old Testament provides a few indications of God's presence in the Garden. Isaiah 51:3 reads that God will restore Zion [Jerusalem] like Eden which is "the garden of the LORD." Ezekiel 28:13 also says that Eden was the garden of God. Hence a figure of divine presence is in his own Garden, as we read that God walked about there (Gn 3:8). Furthermore, it seems

that the presence of cherubim at Eden's entrance (Gn 3:24; Ez 28:14) reflects the presence of God in the Garden for "Wherever one finds a cherub (whether as a decorative feature or a mythical creature), one finds divine presence" (Sommer 2001:49).

The Qur'anic account of the Garden may have been composed to avoid showing the presence of both man and God on earth, while the biblical account displays the immanent relationship of God with man. The spatial-transcendence of God becomes clear with the reaction of God toward the Fall in Genesis 3, where God is walking around the Garden before expelling man from his presence. This is further discussed in the following section (4.2.4). The Qur'anic account displays the spatial-transcendence of God as a result of man's sin. They were expelled from the heavenly garden toward earth (S 7:24).

4.2.4   Fall of Man

Both the Qur'an and the Bible render an account of the Fall of man. There are three major references to the Fall in the Qur'an: Surah 2:35-39, 7:19-25, and 20:120-123. Of these three references, Surah 7:19-25 is the most comprehensive reference to the corresponding biblical reference, Genesis 2:16-17 and the entirety of Chapter 3. The Qur'anic account of the Fall is more detailed than the corresponding biblical account.

God's command to man appears to be identical in both the Qur'an and the Bible. "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the garden and enjoy (its good things) [literally 'eat' as in S 2:35] as ye wish: but approach not this tree or ye run into harm and transgression" (S 7:19). This account also appears in Surah 2:35 and is comparable to Genesis 2:16-17. The difference is that the biblical account indicates the man is not to eat from "the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil" while the Qur'anic account says not to approach the tree. The Tree of Eternity [life] in Surah 20:120 is identified as "this tree" in Surah 7:19 and "the tree of life" in Genesis 2:9. Surah 20:120 confirms "this tree" (S 7:19) is the tree that Satan tempted with, by deceptive suggestions.

The temptation of Satan appears in Surah 2:36, 7:20-21, 20:120, and Genesis 3:1-5:

Surah 7:20-21   [20]Then began Satan to whisper suggestions to them bringing openly before their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before): he said "Your Lord only forbade you this tree lest ye should become angels or such beings as live for ever." [21]And he swore to them both that he was their sincere adviser.

Genesis 3:1-5   [1]Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" [2]The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, [3]but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die." [4]"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. [5]"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

According to Satan, God forbade the fruit because man may become angels or immortals in the Qur'anic account (S 7:20), while the biblical account indicates that the man may "become like God, knowing good and evil" (Gn 3:5). Since Islam defines the immanence of God

(*tashbih*) based on the assignment of man's physical attributes to God, the literal understanding of the biblical account of "became like God" may be avoided by replacing God with angels, which is lower in finite status of glory, for angels must bow to man (S 2:34).

The account of the Fall and God's reaction toward the Fall are in Surah 7:22, 20:121, and Genesis 3:6-11. Surah 7:22 provides an overview of the Fall and God's reaction as, "So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree their shame became manifest to them and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies. And their Lord called unto them: 'Did I not forbid you that tree and tell you that satan was an avowed enemy unto you?'"

The biblical account (Gn 3:6-7) provides details of the Fall proceeding from woman to man while the Qur'an simply states the fact. The major events of the Fall (the Fall, man's and God's reaction) are identical in both accounts. However, the Qur'an seems to provide a simple narrative to both accounts of the Fall and God's reaction. The Qur'an merely states that God called man and spoke to them, while the Bible provides evidence of God's spatial-immanence in the presence of Adam and Eve as indicated in Genesis 3:8: "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden."

Man's defensive act and God's individual punishment to woman, man, and Satan are shown in Genesis 3:12-19. The Qur'an has no details of the defensive act of man nor the announcement of the individual punishments. On the other hand, Surah 7:23 shows that man repented of their sin: "They said: 'our Lord! we have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive

us not and bestow not upon us Thy mercy we shall certainly be lost.'" Then they were forgiven their sin (S 2:37). For this reason, Islam denies the doctrine of original sin. Since the biblical Adam and Eve did not repent of their sin, the sinful state and condition of man became hereditary as man marred the image of God that was originally intended to be upon the man (Gn 1:26-27).

The man and the woman's collective punishment is shown in the form of expulsion from the Garden of Eden in the Bible and the Qur'an (Gn 3:20-24; S 2:36, 38; 7:24-25; 20:123).

Surah 7:24-25   [24](Allah) said: "Get ye [Man and Satan] down with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood for a time." [25]He said: "therein shall ye live and therein shall ye die; but from it shall ye be taken out (at last)."

Genesis 3:19-24   [19]By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." [22]And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." [23]So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. [24]After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

The biblical account clearly shows that man, as Adam and Eve an allegory of human destiny, was punished for their disobedience through the expulsion from the Garden. However, the Qur'an is unclear on this issue. Based on the purpose of man as vicegerent on earth (S 2:30; 7:129; 24:55; 35:39; 38:26) and God's forgiveness of the sin of the man (S 2:37), it seems that man's descent to earth was not punishment for the man but fulfilment of the purpose of man. Maududi (1977:17) confirms that the destiny of man as *khalifah* on earth is due to man's repentance of their sin. He argues that God's command to man, "Go down" should not give rise to the misunderstanding that they were exiled from Paradise as a punishment for their disobedience. On the other hand they were sent to the earth as God's vicegerents, and this was the very purpose of the creation of man.

However, the language of the biblical account shows that expulsion is the punishment for the man's sin. God imposed upon man the task of working on the cursed ground that "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food" (Gn 3:19). Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were free to eat from any tree in the Garden (Gn 2:16), but now are to work in order to survive. Furthermore, God used the language of *expulsion* such as "banished" and "drove out" the man from the Garden in contrast to the language of *accommodation* as, "put [caused him rest]" him in the Garden before the Fall (Gn 2:15). Finally, guarding the Garden from man and prohibiting him to enter and eat from the tree of life, which was previously allowed to him to eat from it freely and live forever, shows that man was to die because of his sinful act toward God.

From the above observation of the text of the Qur'an and the Bible, it is evident that the accounts of the Fall are quite similar. However, there are some critical differences in understanding the text. There is a difference in the purpose of the exile from the Garden. The

biblical account shows that the exile is a form of punishment for man's sin while the Qur'anic detail indicates the fulfilment of the man's purpose as vicegerent on earth. The Fall was their test in the Garden for their obedience. Furthermore, man has repented and God forgave him in the Qur'anic account while the Bible indicates that man did not repent nor was the sin forgiven. For this reason, the sinful nature of man remains in humankind in Christianity while Islam denies the need for the atonement of mankind.

The most notable difference in the accounts of the Fall is man's relation to God. In the temptation, Satan indicates that man can be like angels in the Qur'an (S 7:20). The biblical temptation indicates that man "will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gn 3:5). The Qur'anic reference to man becoming like angels, avoids any possibility of man's ability to transcend over other creation to bridge the gap of God's transcendence from the creation. However, the Bible opens the possibility of man's approach to God with his God-like character of "knowing good and evil."

The man's subsequent response to the Fall indicates another aspect of man's relation to God. The Qur'an says, "when they tasted of the tree their shame became manifest to them and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies" (S 7:22). Adam and Eve felt the shame of their nakedness after they tasted the fruit and covered themselves from each other. Maududi (1977:13) confirms: "Then Satan tempted them so that he might reveal to them their shameful parts which had been hidden from each other." Conversely, Genesis 3:10 indicates that Adam and Eve were hiding their physical exposure of nakedness from God. This would mean, at least from the understanding of Adam and Eve, that God could be present in the Garden in their ontological understanding. They perceived that they were naked and made the coverings themselves, and they wanted to hide from God. The reason that they

made a covering (Gn 3:7) is not to hide from each other but from God. Wenham (1987:76) asks the same question: "But who are the couple trying to hide from? From each other or from God?" Then Wenham (1987:76) concludes that Adam and Eve's behaviour before meeting God shows that they had a sense of guilt before God addressed them. Their sense of guilt and the reaction in Genesis 3:8 where they show the intensive-reflexive (*hithpael*, וַיִּתְחַבֵּא) act of hiding from God confirms that they were hiding from God. Thus this biblical account undoubtedly indicates the immanence of God as Adam and Eve were hiding from God. On the other hand, the Qur'anic account does not hint of any possibility of the presence of an immanent God as Adam and Eve were hiding from each other, not from God.

Further indication of God's presence in the Garden in the biblical account is shown in God's reaction to the Fall. In Genesis 3:8 God was "walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Then the man and his wife heard the sound of God walking about and hid among the trees of the Garden. The NIV and other English translations[50] indicate that God is physically present in the Garden as he is "walking," which implicitly communicates that God is not completely transcendent from his creation. Baker and Kohlenberger III (1994:10) see the context of Genesis 3:8 as a prefiguring of God's appearance at the mountain Sinai as "there too the people 'heard the sound of the LORD our God.'" This is a definite sign of God's presence among the people as well as with Adam in the Garden. The passage has been accepted generally that God appeared to be taking a customary daily stroll in the Garden of Eden as seen in many different versions of the translation of the phrase, "in the cool of the day" (הַיּוֹם לְרוּחַ). For example, Wenham (1987:76) is of opinion that: "a daily chat between the Almighty and his creatures was customary." Furthermore, the Jewish text, Jubilees, indicates

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[50] E.g., The *Revised Standard Version, Young's Literal, New American Standard, JPS Tanakh, King James, LXX Brenton English, New Revised Standard,* and etc.

that the Garden of Eden is God's dwelling (Wicks 1971:46). Hence, in the Garden, God is present in the biblical account of the Fall. This view possibly brings a conflict of divine transcendence since God and man appear in the same spatial location, which the Qur'an emphatically denies.

The new interpretative approach to Genesis 3:8 may shed a different understanding of God's reaction to man's Fall. The recent interpretation of the verse is based on the cognitive interpretation of the word הַיּוֹם (the day) and קוֹל (sound). Based on the Akkadian and Ugaritic uses of the words, Niehaus (1995:159) translates the verse as, "Then the man and his wife heard the thunder [קוֹל] of Yahweh God going back and forth [מִתְהַלֵּךְ] in the garden in the wind of the storm [לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם], and they hid from Yahweh God among the trees of the garden." In this translation, the Lord God appeared in Genesis 3 not for his customary stroll in the Garden of Eden, but in a storm theophany appropriate to the ensuing scene of judgment (Grundke 2001:548). Kingsbury (1967:206) provides examples of God's appearance as a storming figure in a theophany: Psalms 18:9-14; 68:7-8(9); 77:16-19, Judges 5:4-5, Deuteronomy 33:2-3, Habakkuk 3:3-4, and Zechariah 9:14. These verses portray God's appearance before man as not friendly but as an intimidating circumstance. Furthermore, the fierce appearance of God is apparent when the following activity of God is examined. There was neither man's seeking for forgiveness nor God's forgiveness of man's sin; there was, instead, the curse of Adam and Eve and the serpent for their sin in Genesis 3. The announcement of the penalty of sin in Genesis 3 indicates God's appearance is not friendly but hostile toward Adam and Eve.

Taking into account God's appearance in the form of a storm theophany, Niehaus' translation would be feasible in the context of the transcendence-immanence of God in the Garden. The

man perceives the presence of God through the storm theophany, yet God maintains his transcendent status from man by concealing himself from man's sight, encompassed by the storm. Regardless of which translation is correct, both the traditional and the storm theophany translation in the biblical account of the Fall indicate the presence of God in the Garden on earth, while the Qur'an denies both the location of the Garden on earth as well as the presence of God with Adam on earth.

Furthermore, in the Old Testament account, the word מִתְהַלֵּךְ "going back and forth" indicates God's immanence. In Deuteronomy 23:14, God moves about in the camp of Israelites in order to protect them. The verse indicates that the condition of God's immanence is maintaining holiness (קָדוֹשׁ) of the camp. Similarly, 2 Samuel 7:6 indicates that God has been moving from place to place with his dwelling (tent) among the people of Israel. Even when the word (מִתְהַלֵּךְ) is used with a human, it indicates physical closeness to its subject. For example in Esther 2:11, Mordecai walked back and forth (מִתְהַלֵּךְ) near the courtyard of the harem where Esther stayed. In the biblical account, it is clear that God's immanence is noticeable to Adam and Eve.

The presence of God in the Garden is further supported by the representation of the cherubim and the flaming fire in the biblical account. Once the man and woman have sinned against God and are expelled from the Garden, God places the cherubim and flaming sword on the east side of the Garden of Eden (Gn 3:24). Both the fire and cherubim represent the presence of God in the Old Testament. The fire indicates God's judgment with the immediate presence of God as in the case of Nadab and Abihu. When they made unauthorised fire before God, fire came out from the presence of God and consumed them (Lev 10:1-2, cf. Nm 3:4; 26:61; Lev 9:24; 10:2). The presence of cherubim denotes God's physical presence throughout the

Old Testament (Sommer 2001:49), as the cherubim serve as God's throne (1Sm 4:4; 2 Sm 6:2; 1 Chr 13:6 Is 37:16). God rides on and speaks from the middle of cherubim (2 Sm 22:11; Ps 18:10). Furthermore, it is God's garden (Is 51:3; Ez 28:13) that cherubim are supposed to guard and protect (Ez 28:14; 10:3) from trespassing by man. Therefore the presence of cherubim and the flaming fire in the Garden are positive indications of God's presence in the Garden of Eden.

The final concern of the Fall is the implication of the temptation of Satan. In the biblical account of the temptation, there were two trees planted in the middle of the Garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gn 2:9).[51] Even though it was not directly indicated in the account of the temptation, the woman was clearly tempted with the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for she says, "desirable for gaining wisdom" (Gn 3:6). The serpent also says, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gn 3:5). Furthermore, God prohibited man to take fruit from the tree of life after the Fall and banished man from the Garden with cherubims and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree (Gn 3:22-23). Evidently, the man and woman took the fruit of the tree of knowledge and planned to take the other fruit, the tree of life, to live like God as in Genesis 3:22, "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."

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[51] Some regarded the two trees as actually one tree (Wenham 1987:62). Both are said to be located in the middle of the Garden (Gn 2:9). The implication of the Hebrew phrase "in the middle of the garden" (בְּתוֹךְ־הַגָּן) as the exact centre of the Garden, one exact location, and the function of וְ, and the singular reference of the tree (הָעֵץ) in Genesis 3:3 may call for further study. However, the fact that God mentioned the tree of life after the Fall indicates that they are two different trees (Gn 3:22-23).

Genesis has already stated that man was created in the image of God (Gn 1:26, 28). However, the result of the Fall shows yet another aspect of man's likeness to God, for God responds to the Fall by saying, "The man has now become like one of us [God]" (Gn 3:22). This could be interpreted to mean that man has become like God by acquiring a characteristic of a divine being ("knowing good and evil"), against God's will (Gunkel [1901] 1997:23). Therefore, the biblical account confirms man's likeness to God.

On the other hand, the Qur'anic account of the temptation seems to deny man's bearing the attributes or the likeness of God. Satan uses "the Tree of Eternity" to tempt man to live forever (S 7:20; 20:120); this correlates to the biblical Tree of Life. Even in God's rebuke to man, he identifies the tree as the one Satan used to tempt man, the tree of eternity (S 7:22). The Qur'an itself testifies that the biblical creation account was accessible to Mohammad and others during the Qur'anic period as the source of the Qur'an (S 3:3; 4:47; 5:49: 10:37). However, the account of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil may have been left out perhaps because of the biblical implication that man is like God in knowing good and evil. In response, because Muslims view the Bible as inauthentic, they will argue that Christians altered the Bible to fit their beliefs (Jomier 1964:28). This possible work of a redactor to the Qur'anic text provides some understanding of the difference between the Bible and the Qur'an, and may also shed some light on Islam's understanding of the transcendence of God.

The Qur'anic view of the Fall starts with the creation of man. In the beginning of God's creation of man, the God of the Qur'an bestows upon man his attributes: knowledge and free-will (Nolin 1964:9). The knowledge is first reflected in the narrative of Adam's naming of the animals. Nolin (1964:10) defines free-will as: "the capacity *not* to follow His commands by making him capable of choosing to follow either one of two choices." The passages in Surah

20:120-121, 7:20-22 and 2:36 deal with Adam's sin based on this free-will. However, on the argument of the innocence of the prophet from all sins, Shafi (2005a:179) reasons that Adam's sin against God was based on his error through a misunderstanding or just forgetfulness. It is never a deliberate and wilful transgression of divine commandment. And the result of sin causes Adam's separation from God; he was sent down to earth from the heavenly garden (S 7:24-25). Within the references to the passages in Surah 2:36, 38-9, 7:24-25, 20:123-124, "Muslim interpretation has emphasised the repeated Qur'anic phrase translated here 'temporarily,' *ila hin,* thus taking this as a temporary deprivation for an isolated act, rather than a symbolic act in which all mankind is deprived of fellowship with God" (Nolin 1964:10). Here, in the Muslim viewpoint, Adam is definitely acquitted of his sin as God also forgave him (S 2:37), and is able to continue his fellowship with God. However, at the time of Adam's residency on earth, he is separated and isolated from God's presence. In other words, God's transcendent state from man is due to man's temporal rebellion based on his free-will against God. While maintaining God's transcendent state, the interpretation provides for the possible future immanence of God, as the transcendence in this context is temporal and based on an isolated act of man.

On the other hand, it is clear that the biblical account of the Fall indicates the movement of God's immanence to transcendence. The result of the Fall indicates the expulsion of man from the presence of God in the Garden of the Eden as well as the self-provision of the daily necessities of man (Gn 3:19) rather than God's provision of food (Gn 2:16). As God is capable of fellowship with man (Smith 2003:27), he initiates his immanence with man by creating man and the Garden to be a place of fellowship. However, it is man's wilful action which results in the transcendence of God, with God having maintained a distance from man who is now sinful and not willing to return to God. The Qur'anic Adam and Eve turned back

to God and God restored their status of *khalifa*. The Qur'anic God maintains his absolute transcendent state by sending them to earth. On the other hand "the Genesis pair deliberately turn away from God and so do not turn back. The consequences of the turning away are extensive, and the guard over the entrance to Eden (3.24) shows that there is no return" (Glaser 1997:15). As a result, Adam and Eve of the Bible, representing the entire human race, created spatial distance between God and man because of their consequences of sin.

4.2.5 Conclusion

The origin of God's relations with man in the Bible and the Qur'an has been shown in the account of Adam. In the biblical account of Adam, there is both an immanent and transcendent relationship with God. The spatial relationship of God in the Garden shows God's immanent acts with man. God allows Adam to name the animals and birds as well as fellowship with him in the Garden. The account of the Fall indicates that God was locally in the Garden with Adam and Eve. The Fall was also the beginning of God's spatial transcendence from man. As the result of sin, Adam and Eve were expelled from the presence of God and thus God's spatial transcendence was initiated.

On the other hand, the Qur'anic account of Adam and Eve indicates that God created man for his *khalefah*. Adam and Eve were tested in the heavenly garden before they were sent to earth to fulfil the purpose of man's creation. They were tested through memorizing the names of all things as well as tested for submission to prove the quality of *khalefah*. They repented of their sin against God, which proved their submission to God. Therefore, they were sent to earth, creating the spatial transcendence of God. Even in the account of the activities in the

heavenly garden, there was no indication of God's immanence. Thus, in the Qur'anic account of Adam, God maintained absolute transcendence status before man.

4.3 TRANSCENDENT GOD AND ABRAHAM

4.3.1 Introduction

Abraham is regarded as the father of all nations as well as an example of outstanding faith in the One Supreme God by Jews, Christians and Muslims. The Bible records accounts of Abraham in Genesis 11:26 to 25:10 and Joshua 24:2-3. The Old Testament account is well summarised in the New Testament by Stephen in Acts 7:2-8. In the Qur'an, the account of Abraham appears more than sixty times spread out over twenty four different Surahs (S 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 19, 21, 22, 29, 33, 37, 38, 42, 43, 51, 53, 57, 60, 87).

In Islam, Abraham (Ibrahim) is treated as one of the six great prophets to whom God sends down revelation. The six prophets and the revelation given are: Adam (*Sahifah*), Abraham (*Suhuf*), Moses (*Taurat*), David (*Zabur*), Jesus (*Injil*), and Mohammad (the Qur'an). Tradition also adds Seth (*Sahifah*) and Enoch (*Sahifah*) as prophets who received a revelation from God (Hughes [1885] 1998:475). Among the six prophets, the Qur'an deals with Abraham prominently. The major Quar'anic episodes of the account of Abraham, such as his travelling with Lot and the promise of progeny, the angels' visit and announcement of his son, his pleading for Lot, and the sacrifice of his son, can be easily identified and compared with those from the Bible. However, there are some stories that do not appear in the Bible.

As a prophet Abraham received a revelation for mankind (S 87:19; 53:36-37). Today, the copy of this revelation is considered to be lost (Ali 1989:1638). Furthermore, as the most forceful preacher, Abraham preached against idolatry and the worship of heavenly bodies in many places (S 6:74-82; 19:42-48; 21:52-65; 26:69-84; 29:16-17; 37:85-96; 43:26-27). Abraham even dismantled the idol and faced a plot of assassination by fire, which the Qur'an indicates in Surah 21:57-58 and 29:24,

Surah 21:57-58 [57]And by Allah I have a plan for your idols after ye go away and turn your backs" [58]So he broke them to pieces (all) but the biggest of them that they might turn (and address themselves) to it.

Surah 29:24 So naught was the answer of (Abraham's) people except that they said: "Slay him or burn him." But Allah did save him from the fire: verily in this are Signs for people who believe.

Additionally, Abraham appears in the Qur'an as the builder of the Kaaba (S 2:125-127; 3:96-97) and the one who purified it (S 22:26). As Abraham and Ishmael settled in Mecca, they probably built the Kaaba. Ishmael later became the ancestor of Meccans or Arabs (Busse 1998:88). However, according to other traditions, the founding of the Kaaba is traced back to Adam who erected the Kaaba exactly below the spot of its heavenly model (Hughes [1885] 1998:257).

Finally, Islam does not consider Abraham a Jew nor a Christian, but having his own religion, since the Scriptures of both religions were revealed after Abraham's time (S 2:130; 3:58-60).

He is called *Hanifite*, one who has yielded to God and become his friend. Surah 3:65-67 confirms:

> **Surah 3:65-67** [65]Ye people of the Book! why dispute ye about Abraham when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have ye no understanding? [66]Ah! ye are those who fell to disputing (even) in matters of which ye had some knowledge! but why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge? It is Allah Who knows and ye who know not! [67]Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian but he was true in faith and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam) and he joined not gods with Allah.

However, due to the implication of the meaning of *Hanifite,* Islam has a tendency to treat Abraham as a first Muslim. Tottoli (2002:26) confirms this tendency of interpretation of Abraham in Islam that he was a *hanīf* who is a pure monotheist, neither Jew nor Christian. Thus, he is a precursor of the pure monotheism that is Islam.

Treating Abraham as a prophet and preacher, the builder of Kaaba, and a founder of his own religion is clearly so alien to the Bible that it is justified not to deal with it within the context of God's transcendent revelation in Islam as compared to the Bible. However, as the Qur'anic narrative contains a great deal of biblical materials, there are many accounts of Abraham which readily correlate with the biblical account. Examining these corresponding circumambient incidents of Abraham with God may reveal his transcending relationship with man in the Qur'an and the Bible.

4.3.2 Abraham as friend of God

Both the Qur'an and the Bible identify Abraham as "the friend of God." In the Qur'an, "friend" is translated from many different terms. The words *casher* (S 22:13) and *sadeq* (S 24:61; 26:101) are less popular terms indicating friends between men. When the Qur'an indicates a loyal or close friend or a relative, it uses the word *hamen* (S 70:10; 69:35). The more frequently used words for "friend" are *saahib* and *waley*. The word *saahib* is more likely used as "companion" or "inhabitant" (S 2:39; 7:42; 56:8) while the word *waley* indicates protection, which comes from God, Satan, or humans (S 12:101; 7:30; 5:55).

In reference to Abraham, the word *khalil* is used to indicate that God accepted him as a friend in Surah 4:125, "Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah does good and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend." In this verse, Abraham is identified as the one who sets an example for the believers. Therefore Ali (1989:225) comments on his status that "he was the fountainhead of the present monotheistic tradition, the Patriarch of the prophetic line, and is revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims."

For Abraham's faithfulness to God, God chose him to be his beloved friend as Asad (S 4:125) translates it: "God exalted Abraham with His love [Abraham for a friend]." Elsewhere in the Qur'an, the word for friend in the text, *khalil,* is used to indicate friendship against enmity (S 17:73; 25:28; 43:67). In these instances, the word *khalil* refers to relationship among men.

The derived words of *khalil, khalla* (mutual befriending) and *khullah* (friendship) are used in Surah 14:31 and 2:254 in reference to Surah 6:94 to express the impossibility of "ransom" through intercession on the Judgment Day. Surah 2:254 says: "O ye who believe! spend out of (the bounties) We have provided for you before the day comes when no bargaining (will avail) nor friendship [*khullah*] nor intercession. Those who reject faith they are the wrong-doers." This is the context where the word "friendship" means ransom for one's own sin. Usmani (2002a:144) confirms: "the Unbelievers wronged themselves by their own self-will to their own misfortune that they will neither avail themselves of any friendship [ransom for their sin] nor intercession in the Hereafter."

The biblical word for friend for Abraham is אָהֵב. This word is used instead of the regular word for friend, רֵעַ, which refers to human relationships (Swanson 1997:8276). The word אָהֵב means "love," and is used twice for Abraham as God's friend (2 Chr 20:7: Is 41:8).[52] In both instances, the word refers to God's love toward Abraham and thus is translated in that context as "friend." This is supported by the LXX translation where the word, ἀγαπάω, is used to indicate divine love. The use of Greek word ἀγαπάω reflexes God's greatest solicitude for Abraham in the context (Gingrich 1983:2).

There are others whose name means "friend of God" in the Old Testament such as Moses' father-in-law, Reuel (רְעוּאֵל). This name appears eleven times in the Old Testament (Gn 36:4, 10, 13, 17 (x2); Ex 2:18; Nm 2:14; 10:29; 1 Ch 1:35, 37; 9:8). As Hebrew names reflect a man's personal character or his essence (Neusner 1996:448), the name "Reuel" (friend of

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[52] In the English translation Job 29:4 and James 2:23 indicate both Abraham and Job as a friend of God which will be discussed in the next section (4.3.3).

God) may express man's wish to be close to God, using the word "friend" (רֵעַ). However, from God's point of view, friend is meant to be someone who is loved by him, and thus he uses the word אָהֵב (love). In the case of Abraham, being called "friend of God," it is in a different context where God initiated the relationship by calling him his friend, not from a human desire to be a friend of God.

The Qur'anic use of the word *khalil* for friend may correspond to the biblical word for friend in reference to Abraham in the sense of a "beloved" or "faithful" servant. However, the Qur'an openly uses the word in the context of enmity between two companies (S 17:73; 25:28). With this reasoning, Surah 4:125 may indicate the fact that there is no enmity between God and Abraham due to his faithfulness.

Meanwhile, the biblical word for "friend" (אָהֵב) associates with the fellowship between two parties, such as a father's love for his children (Gn 37:3), husband to his wife (Gn 24:67), between master and servant (Ex 21:5), keeping the commandments of God (Ps 119:97), loving aliens (Dt 10:19), and loving God (Dt 6:5).

In the New Testament, James (2:23) refers to Abraham as "God's friend," referring to 2 Chronicles 20:7 with a citation from Genesis 15:6. According to Genesis 15:6 where it reads "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness," the meaning of "God's friend" seems to correspond to the Qur'anic account of friendship with God. However, the New Testament's testimony became clear with the treatment of the word, "friend," by Jesus. John 15:15 reads, "I [Jesus] no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I

learned from my Father I have made known to you." The root word for "friend" (φίλος) used by Jesus is φιλέω (to love, kiss) which means "'to treat somebody as one of one's own people.' It is used for the love of spouses, of parents and children, of employers and servants, of friends, and of gods and those favoured by them" (Stählin 1985:1262). Here, in the context of John 15:15, Jesus would mean a nullification of servanthood into the co-operative relationship of friend. A servant or a slave does not have to know the will of the master but a friend is the one who knows the will of another. The disciples, in this context, became true friends to Jesus by knowing the will of God which was formally limited to Jesus "for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn 15:15).

Then, as Abraham was friendly with God in the Qur'an, he may have been an example of the believer who is respected by all believers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although the friendship of Abraham indicated in the Qur'an lacks immanent fellowship with God, it reflects approval of his faith. On the other hand, through fellowship with God in the Bible, Abraham became respectable and opened the possibility of the ontological experience of fellowship, a movement toward immanence over transcendence of God, as indicated in the next section of "God at the entrance of the tent."

4.3.3   God at the entrance of the tent

In modern English translations[53] of the Old Testament, Job can also be called God's friend. In Job 29:4 we read: "Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate

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[53] New International Version (1984), New Revised Standard Version (1989), New American Standard Version (1995), etc.

friendship [בְּסֽוֹד אֱלֽוֹהַּ] blessed my house [אָהֳלִי, my tent]" (NIV). The Young Literal translation indicates God's presence in the tent of Job: "As I have been in days of my maturity, And the counsel of God upon my tent." The same context of friendship (סוד, counsel) is the heavenly counsel of angels in the tent of Abraham (Gn 18; S 11, 15). The Qur'anic account, Surah 15:51-53 and 11:69-74 present a detail of the honoured guests of Abraham. The corresponding biblical account of the guests of Abraham is from Genesis 18 with an account of Sodom and Lot in the following chapter, Genesis 19.

Surah 15:51-53 [51]Tell them about the guests of Abraham. [52]When they entered his presence and said "Peace!" He said "We feel afraid of you!" [53]They said: "Fear not! we give thee glad tidings of a son endowed with wisdom."

Surah 11:69-77 [69]There came Our Messengers to Abraham with glad tidings. They said "Peace!" He answered "Peace!" and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf. [70]But when he saw their hands went not towards the (meal) he felt some mistrust of them and conceived a fear of them. They said: "Fear not: we have been sent against the people of Lut." [71]And his wife was standing (there) and she laughed: but We gave her glad tidings of Isaac and after him of Jacob. [72]She said: "Alas for me! Shall I bear a child seeing I am an old woman and my husband here is an old man? That would indeed be a wonderful thing!" [73]They said: "Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you O ye people of the house! for He is indeed worthy of all praise full of all glory!" [74]When fear had passed from (the mind of) Abraham and the glad tidings had reached him he began to

plead with Us for Lut's people. [75]For Abraham was without doubt forbearing (of faults) compassionate and given to look to Allah. [76]O Abraham! seek not this. The decree of thy Lord hath gone forth: for them there cometh a Penalty that cannot be turned back! [77]When Our Messengers came to Lut he was grieved on their account and felt himself powerless (to protect) them. He said: "This is a distressful day."

The corresponding account of Abraham in the Bible is the entire chapter of Genesis 18. Here the text is reproduced in an abbreviated format.

Genesis 18:1-33   [1]The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. [2]Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them… met them…said…[5]Let me get you something to eat…[8]While they ate, he stood near them under a tree…[10]Then the LORD said…Sarah your wife will have a son….[12]So Sarah laughed…"After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"…Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do…[20]Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great…[22]The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. [23]Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? [24]What if there are fifty righteous people in the city…only ten can be found there?" He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." [33]When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

The first observation is the corresponding appearance of the guests of Abraham in both the Qur'an and the Bible. In the Genesis account (Gn 18:1), it begins with an editorial comment of God's appearance before Abraham (Wenham 1994:45) with the three men representing the presence of God (Gn 18:2). Throughout the account the text assumes that the third man is God and thus addresses him as "the LORD" (יהוה, Yahweh), God's personal name. The Qur'an uses an editorial introduction to the story, saying, "There came Our Messengers to Abraham with glad tidings" (S 11:69). The Qur'an inter-changeably uses "guests" (S 15:51) and "messengers" (S 11:69) to refer to the visitors of Abraham.

The hospitality of Abraham follows immediately in both accounts. The Genesis account describes an extensive hospitality including washing feet, resting, and feasting with bread and tender calf. Yet, the Qur'an simplifies the account with the serving of food, a roasted calf, only. The difference in this account is that of the reactions of both the visitors and the host.

In the Bible, Abraham as the host, did not eat with the visitors but stood next to them as a servant (Gn 18:8). Mutual dining is seen throughout the Bible where the host sits with the guests and they eat together. For example, in Genesis 24:54, the chief servant of Abraham ate together with Laban's family, and in Judges 19:6 a hosting father sat down and ate together with his son-in-law. In Jeremiah 41:1, Ishmael son of Nethaniah with his ten men came to Gedaliah son of Ahikam and they ate together. In the case of Joseph and his brothers, there was the Egyptian cultural issue of not eating together with foreigners or shepherds (Gn 43:32; 46:34). In spite of this cultural barrier, they did eat together by serving Joseph's brothers at separate tables. Yet, Joseph, as the host of the meal, shared portions of his meal with his brothers, enabling all the guests at the meal to eat and drink gratifyingly (Gn 43:32, 34).

However, the visitors in the Qur'an did not eat the meal before them. This brought Abraham to fear them (S 11:70). In response, the visitors comforted Abraham by announcing their purpose of visiting. In the introduction to the story the first purpose of visiting is clearly indicated as bringing "glad tidings." This is the announcement of Abraham's son Isaac by the visitors. Unlike the biblical account, the announcement of the son includes the name, "Isaac." The Bible only indicates a son, whom God had already promised to Abraham in Genesis 17:19 and 21. The name "Isaac (he laughed)" was given to the son of Abraham because of his laughter at God's word in Genesis 17:17.

The second purpose of visiting becomes evident as Abraham is afraid of the visitors. In response to Abraham's fear of hostility shown by the visitors who refuse to eat, the guests of the Qur'an comfort Abraham by announcing the judgment of "the people of Lut" (S 11:70). The announcement of the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah is readily agreeable with the biblical account. However, the Bible brings forth extensive dialogue between God (the LORD) and Abraham, indicating a counsel on the subject. A large portion of Chapter 18 is dedicated to God's announcement and Abraham's supplication for the righteous people in the city (Gn 18:16-33).

From observing the particular incident of the story of Abraham's visitors in the Qur'an and the Bible, there are a few major questions in reference to the transcendence of God. The Qur'an identifies the visitors as "guests" or "messengers" while the Bible inter-changeably uses God and men. In the process of finding God's relationship with Abraham in the text, the question arises: why does Yahweh appear to have a counsel with Abraham asking a kind of permission or informing the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, while the Qur'an only indicates the simple announcement that judgment must be dealt? These questions, including

how the text indicates the visitors and whether Abraham recognised them and behaved accordingly as the text indicates, will provide insight into Abraham's ontological understanding of God.

As the Old Testament begins the story of Abraham's visitors with "The LORD [יהוה] appeared to Abraham" (Gn 18:1), the identification of the visitors is crucial to the discussion of the transcendence of God. Followed by the introduction of editorial comment, the text indicates that there are three visitors (אֲנָשִׁים, men), commonly understood as angels (הַמַּלְאָכִים, messengers) in Genesis 19:1. Throughout Genesis 18 and 19, the narrator indicates that one of the three angels is God by referring to him as "the LORD." The terminology of God, "the LORD" is derived from the practice of reading Hebrew based on *kethibh* (it is written) and *qere* (to be read). It is a deliberate change in reading which is made in reverence to the divine name (יְהוֹה) that replaced the reading of the Hebrew word for the lord (אָדוֹן). Thus, the English translation of the divine personal name (יְהוֹה) became the translation of *qere* אָדוֹן, "the LORD," in all capital letters while the normal use of אָדוֹן is translated as "the Lord." From the text it is clear that the third angel is understood by later readers as God. However, the understanding of the identity of the third angel by Abraham may differ from the text.

Even though Abraham understood that the three guests were an important party and the text indicates the third man as God, Abraham addresses him with the normal reference of a person who is superior to one, "the Lord" (אדון). This would indicate that Abraham, when he faced God, understood his identity to be no more than a man. This is supported by the context where the guests of Abraham eat the food he provides, while Abraham observes them eating (Gn 18:8). The fact that Abraham called God "the LORD" in Genesis 15 and later as "the Lord" (Gn 18) does not make any difference since the context in Genesis 15 is a vision, not

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an actual manifestation of God. In Genesis 18 God appears before Abraham as a man, since Abraham recognised God and the other two as guests and provided them with food, which they ate. Even after finishing the meal, Abraham walked along with the guests (Gn 18:16). Therefore, Abraham's reference to God as "the Lord," reflects his understanding of the manifestation of God.

Furthermore, Genesis 18:22 indicates the locality of Abraham with God when they discuss the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the discussion, Abraham pleads with God by addressing him, "Judge of all the earth" (הֲשֹׁפֵט כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, Gn 18:25). This reference to God is only used here in the Old Testament. However, God is also portrayed as "the Judge" (הֲשֹׁפֵט) in Judges 11:27. With the scope of God's judgment "of all the earth," the phrase "Judge of all the earth" delineates God. Furthermore the acknowledgement of Abraham's recognition of God's ability, to judge Sodom and Gomorrah which Abraham accepts as fact, is beyond any human ability. Therefore, it is clear that both "the Lord" and "the LORD" in Genesis 18 refer to God himself.

Meanwhile, the Qur'an has only two guests in the story. The Qur'an does not use the word for angel (*malak,* מַלְאָךְ) in connection with the guests of Abraham but rather the words messengers (*rusulnaa,* our messengers, S 11:69) and honoured guests (*dayf al-mukramen,* S 51:24). The term "our messengers" is often used to refer to heavenly messengers and angels (S 2:98; 10:13, 103; 13:32, 38; 18:106). The dual ending (*-en*) of the "honoured guests" indicates there are two angels who appeared to Abraham and Lot. In the Qur'anic context there is no mention of the biblical account of the third angel, who is identified as God (Gn 18:1ff.; cf. Gn 16:7, 13). However, Shafi (2005b:653), indicates that there are three angels,

Jibra'il, Mika'il, and Israfil. Even in this allegation of three angels appearing before Abraham, there is no indication of God's appearance before Abraham. Then, was there any possibility that the Qur'anic Abraham understood the guests as divine?

Abraham's reaction to the visitors may indicate that they are at least figures of authority and power. However, the motive for hosting the guests is not clear in the text. At any rate, from the respect of consuming his animal, Abraham recognises them as guests who deserve notable treatment. Immediately after the guests reject the meal, fear grows within Abraham because he understands the rejection as a sign of hostility. This fear further shows that the guests were more powerful than he was. Then comes Abraham's turning point in recognizing the guests as God's messengers in Surah 11:74.

Surah 11:74 indicates Abraham's recognition of the guests: "When fear had passed from (the mind of) Abraham and the glad tidings had reached him he began to plead with Us for Lut's people." Abraham accepts the announcement of his son Isaac's birth despite the old age of Sarah and himself. This acceptance removes his fear of the guests as he recognises that the announcement is from God. Subsequently Abraham immediately begins to "plead with Us" for Lot's people. This is another recognition of the guests as the ones who have the power of destruction. The request is answered by the guests negatively as: "O Abraham! seek not this. The decree of thy Lord hath gone forth: for them there cometh a Penalty that cannot be turned back!" (S 11:76). The guests' answer to Abraham's pleading for Lot shows that they are not divine figures as they are referring to the command from God.

In the biblical account Abraham pleads with God while the two angels are moving toward Sodom and Gomorrah. However, in the Qur'anic account, the two guests answer the plea of

Abraham, which indicates they have not yet departed from Abraham's tent. It is noticeable that Abraham pleads with God as the text indicates, "plead with Us." In this context, the guests are referred to in the third person while the narrator uses the first person. It is evident from the entire flow of the account that the narrator is God himself as the narrator uses the term, "Our messengers" repeatedly. If Mohammad is meant to be the narrator, then the messengers are from Mohammad while the text clearly indicates that they are from God. Then the context would pose another question concerning Abraham's understanding of the guests. Did he actually understand them as men, as messengers of God, and then as God when he pleaded for Lot? Or was God with the guests, but the text did not indicate his presence, because the Qur'an tries to avoid the immanence of God? Or rather, is it Abraham's supplication to the transcendent God through the interceding of the immanent guests? In view of the Islamic understanding of God the last solution is probably correct. Nonetheless, referring to the biblical account, there is the presence of the third guest in the Qur'anic account which is not displayed in order to avoid the immanence of God.

The final issue of the transcendence of God in the story of Abraham and his guests will be the question of who initiated the counsel, especially in the biblical account of Abraham's pleading for Lot. Both the Qur'anic and biblical accounts show that the guests came to Abraham. The Qur'an simply states that the guests came upon Abraham, but the biblical account shows that Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent and looking outward (Gn 18:1-2). This may be the habitual mid-day activity of Abraham (Wenham 1987:45). On the other hand, after having been promised a son by God (Gn 17), Abraham might have expected a visitation of God or messengers of God. This view may qualify as an argument because of Abraham's following behaviour in hosting the guests as significantly important. This can also

be true in the Qur'anic account as it has a limited explanation of the account and bases its story upon the Old Testament account.

The issue is, then, God's initiation of his counsel to Abraham concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the Qur'anic account, the account of God in the counsel is not confirmative since only the two guests answered Abraham's plea (S 11:70-76). However, in the biblical account, God remained with Abraham while the two angels left towards Sodom (Gn 18:22). In the first of the Tiqqune sopherim (ancient scribal corrections) of the Masoretic text, it is further intriguing as it is written, "the LORD stood before Abraham." The text was changed to "but Abraham remained standing before the LORD" on grounds of piety (Wenham 1994:37; Hamilton 1995:23). This would mean that God stands before Abraham voluntarily in order to have counsel with him. According to Genesis 18:22 the text here refers to God's initiation of the counsel. Abraham did not call to or approach God but God came to Abraham.

God's standing before man is not limited to the context of Abraham. There are similar incidents where God stands before man and conducts either counsel or gives commands to man. In Exodus 33:9-10 and Number 12:5, God speaks to man while he stands before the entrance to the tent of meeting in the form of a pillar of cloud. Thus, the counsel of God with Abraham is justified with other examples of God's communication throughout the Old Testament. Why, then, did God ask permission and why was he willing to negotiate the fate of Sodom with Abraham?

One possible view of why God seeks consent from Abraham is based on the issue of Sodom and Gomorrah being ancestral places belonging to Abraham. However, Keil and Delitzsch ([1891] 2002:147) oppose the view:

> God then disclosed to Abraham what he was about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah, not, as *Kurtz* supposes, because Abraham had been constituted the hereditary possessor of the land, and Jehovah, being mindful of His covenant, would not do anything to it without his knowledge and assent (a thought quite foreign to the context), but because Jehovah had chosen him to be the father of the people of God, in order that, by instructing his descendants in the fear of God, he might lead them in the paths of righteousness, so that they might become partakers of the promised salvation, and not be overtaken by judgment.

Either view would mean that Abraham is not a mere subject under God, but as his title "friend of God," indicates, he is someone who has access to God and is able to stand with him. In this view of friendship, the argument of God's appearance before Abraham—instead of through an oracle, vision, or voice as he had done before—is to test Abraham and to have fellowship with him, making a coherent argument. As a friend of God, God allows Abraham to be able to have fellowship with him, including negotiating with him, as reflected in Genesis 18.

As in a friendship, the counsel at the entrance to Abraham's tent reflects intimate fellowship with mutual assessment in the biblical account. This fellowship with God in the proximity of the tent implies the desire of an immanent God as is first seen in God's promise of his

dwelling in the tent of Shem (Gn 9:27).[54] This is followed by Abraham's tent and then Moses' tent in the wilderness. Then, a tent in the Old Testament, when associated with God, implies the immanence of God, evidently reflected in this story of Abraham's tent and the counsel of God.

On the other hand, there is no account of the tent in the Qur'an. The Qur'an simply presents the account of Abraham without introduction of the tent. Therefore, it diminishes any indication of the biblical immanence of God. Furthermore, the Qur'anic Abraham's reaction was purely the ontological understanding of the guests. He, thus, was afraid of the guests when they refused to take the meal. Moreover, when Abraham is in counsel with the angels, it seems he understood that they were messengers from God. Thus, in the Qur'anic account of Abraham's tent, there is no indication of God's immanence but the absolute transcendence of God is reflected, as compared to the biblical account of the immanent God who maintains his ontological transcendence in the form of angel.

4.3.4 Test of Abraham

God tests man in order to know what is in the heart of man (Dt 8:2) and to build his faith in order to prevent him from sinning (Ex 20:20). In a similar way the Qur'an portrays, "Allah

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[54] Kaiser (1978:83) interprets Gn 9:27 as the later concept of Mosaic theology of the Shekinah glory of God where the presence of God over the tabernacle was evident by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. He perceives Gn 9:27 as a promise of Seed who will dwell among the line (tent) of Shem, the heir of Jesus. The NIV translates it as: "May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave." However, in Hebrew, there is no word such as "Japheth" in the second clause. It is simply "may he live…." Due to the consecutive narration of God's action of prophecy upon all three sons (two sons and one grandson), it is proper to translate as "may God live in the tents of Shem."

might test what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts: for Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts" (S 3:154). Surah 34:21 also indicates, "We might test the man who believes in the Hereafter from him who is in doubt concerning it: and thy Lord doth watch over all things." The test of God in the Qur'an implies that God does not know the heart of man, and thus he "tests," "may try," or "might know" the secret of man. However, Islamic commentators explain it as a case where God does know the will of man but is testing him in order to help the man subjectively, to train the will, and purge man of grosser motives (Ali 1989:167, 1091).

The way God tests Abraham with his son and the subsequent provision for the sacrifice is the same in both the Bible and the Qur'an. Both Scriptures identify the episode as a test of Abraham. In the test, one of the possible contradictions between the Qur'an and the Bible is the identity of Abraham's son who accompanied him to the site of sacrifice. In the Qur'anic account, Abraham and his unidentified son (Ishmael)[55] are the main figures of the story in Surah 37:102-113.

> **Surah 37:102-113** [102]Then when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! do as thou art commanded: thou will find me if Allah so wills one practicing Patience and Constancy!" [103]So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah) and He had laid Him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice) [104]We called out to him "O Abraham!" [105]"Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!"

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[55] The Qur'an does not identify the son of Abraham, but the son is unanimously accepted as Ishmael among Qur'anic scholars and believers alike.

thus indeed do We reward those who do right. [106]For this was obviously a trial [107]And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: [108]And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times: [109] "Peace and salutation to Abraham!" [110]Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. [111]For he was one of Our believing Servants. [112]And We gave him the good news of Isaac a prophet one of the Righteous.[113]We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right and (some) that obviously do wrong to their own souls.

Unlike the Qur'anic account of Abraham's test, the biblical account indicates the identification of the son as Isaac in Genesis 22:1-19. The New Testament account testifies that the son was Isaac. James 2:21 reads, "Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?" The Genesis account of the story includes much more detail than the Qur'anic account, including the location of the sacrifice, provisions for sacrifice such as fire, fire wood, knife, and the travelling method with the servant.

> **Genesis 22:1-19** [1]Some time later God tested Abraham…"Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering…Abraham...saddled his donkey …took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac…took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. [7] Isaac spoke up…"Father?"…where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' [8] Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."…they reached the place…Abraham built an

altar…bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar…took the knife to slay his son. [11] But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. [12] "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." [13] Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. [14] So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." [15] The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time [16] and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, [17] I will surely bless you… [19] Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Both the Qur'an and the Bible convincingly indicate that the purpose of sacrificing the son was to test Abraham. Genesis identifies the test in the beginning of the episode as an introduction (Gn 22:1) while the Qur'an makes clear that the story is a test in the middle of the story (S 37:106). The purpose of the test is not indicated in both texts but the results were identical. Abraham was blessed by God in the generations to come. Genesis 22:17-18 indicates that the offspring of Abraham will spread through the world and that all people will be blessed by Abraham's offspring (cf. Gn 12:3). The Qur'an first indicates blessings similar to Genesis in Surah 37:108 as "(this blessing) for him among generations to come in." In addition to Abraham's future blessing, Allah promises him a son, Isaac, in Surah 37:112. The

Pickthal translation shows the coming birth of Isaac as a result of Abraham's test, "And We gave him tidings of the birth of Isaac, a Prophet of the Righteous" (S 37:112).

Besides the content of biblical account, the Qur'an contains additional details of the test of Abraham; especially the response of the son is exclusively presented. In the Bible Isaac asked a simple observational question concerning the lack of a sacrifice animal, "The fire and the wood are here…but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (Gn 22:7). There is no immediate indication of Isaac's faith in God as compared to the Qur'anic account of the unidentified son. Surah 37:102 describes the faith of the son: "O my father! do as thou art commanded: thou will find me if Allah so wills one practicing Patience and Constancy!"

The unidentified son in the Qur'anic story is generally identified as Ishmael. Because the promise of the birth of Isaac is clearly written in the text as a result of the test (S 37:112), the unidentified son is most likely considered to be Ishmael in the Qur'an. However, according to the context of Abraham's requests, the son can be interpreted as Isaac.

In Surah 37:100 Abraham requests a son: "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)." This request is answered in Surah 37:113 where it indicates both Abraham and Isaac. There is no mentioning of Ishmael who was supposed to deserve the blessing due to his faith in God when he faced the offering as: "We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right and (some) that obviously do wrong to their own souls" (S 37:113). Furthermore, the anonymous expression of the son in the actual text as well as the Semitic expression of the narrative provides room to interpret the unidentified son as Isaac. Surah 37:112 indicates Abraham and Isaac, followed by God's blessing upon them in Surah 37:113, "We blessed him and Isaac." Here once again, "him" is identified as Abraham, not Ishmael,

due to the consecutive nature of narrative. This interpretation is supported by the biblical text where it reads, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac" (Gn 22:2). However, against the argument that Isaac was the only son of Abraham, Ali (1989:1150) expresses the Islamic view: "Ismail was therefore 14 years older than Isaac. During his first 14 years Ismail was the *only* son of Abraham; at no time was Isaac the *only* son of Abraham. Yet, in speaking of the sacrifice, the Old Testament says (Gen. xxii. 2): 'And He said, Take now thy son, thine *only* son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah.'" Of course, at the time of the test, the first born son of Abraham (Ishmael) was on the scene. However, for Yahweh, the one who initiated the test, the child of Sarah, Isaac is the only legitimate son as God had promised a son to her to establish his covenant with Isaac. Genesis 17:21 reads , "But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." As for the blessing of Ishmael, the Bible indicates that "he will be the father of twelve rulers and I will make him into a great nation" (Gn 17:20).

However, it is orthodox to treat the unidentified son as Ishmael in Islam (Shafi 2003:466).[56] The argument is that because of the faith of Ishmael, the Christian and Jewish peoples are blessed (S 37:113); the blessing is not a result of Isaac's obedience in being tied upon the altar. Ishmael, as a young man, was able to refuse his father with his physical strength, yet he submitted to God's will as in Surah 37:103: "So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah) and He had laid Him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice)." Note that here, both Abraham and Ishmael are being laid upon the altar voluntarily. They were being self-sacrifices in reference to Surah 22:37: "It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah:

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[56] Shafi (2003:466) also listed that there are many Islamic commentators and historians who interpreted the unidentified son as Isaac.

it is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to you: and proclaim the Good News to all who do right."

Then, the question remains as to why theological controversy exists between Christians and Muslims about the son of Abraham. Why the anonymous reference to the son in the Qur'anic text? To make it clear in the text, as it is in the biblical text, the editor of the Qur'an could insert the name of Ishmael without being obligated to change the text. Furthermore, it is not unusual to use the name Ishmael together with Abraham in the Qur'anic narrative. In fact, whenever the father and the son, Ishmael, appear in a story in the Qur'an, both names are clearly written in the text (S 2:127, 136, 140; 3:84; 4:163). The question of anonymous reference to Ishmael will remain with the question of the redactor's work; otherwise there will be an uprising of conflict between the interpretation of the texts of the Bible and the Qur'an.

As both texts indicate that the test came from God (Ex 20:2; Dt 8:2; S 3:154; 34:21), another interpretative question refers to the degree of God's involvement in the test. The overall trait of the Qur'anic account is God's narration of Abraham's test, while the biblical account is a direct conversation between God and Abraham with the narrator's introduction serving as the prelude to the story. Qur'anic Abraham receives instruction for the test through a vision (S 37:112), the normal method for God's revelation in the Qur'an (S 42:51). In this way of revelation, God possibly maintains his ontological transcendent state from Abraham, compared to the immanent-transcendent state in the biblical account of Abraham, which is discussed below. Furthermore, God called out, (*wa- naadaynaa –hu*), ransomed the son with "a momentous sacrifice"(*wa- fadaynaa -hu bi- dhibh. caz.em*) and rewarded Abraham with blessings. These are the words of a narrative that does not hint at any nuances of either the

transcendence or immanence of God in the process. In fact, it was the angel *Jibrā'il* who brought a ram before Abraham (Shafi 2003:466). Thus the Qur'anic account of Abraham's test maintains the absolute transcendence of God from Abraham and the son.

Unlike the Qur'anic account, the Bible uses the language of transcendence where God is directly involved in the narrative. Genesis 22:11 says "But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven." Here the term "the angel of the LORD" is inter-changeably used to refer to the image of the invisible God in the Old Testament (Gn 16:7, 9, 13; 22:11, 12; 31:11, 13; Ex 3:2, 6, 14).[57] The term, "angel of the LORD" prevents direct human encounter with God. The Old Testament uses this term to indicate God's appearance to humans such as in Abraham's case in Genesis 18 as well as in Genesis 16 where Hagar saw the angel of the LORD (Gn 16:7, 9, 11). Hagar later says, "She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me'" (Gn 16:13). The clause "I have now seen the One who sees me" (הֲגַם הֲלֹם רָאִיתִי אַחֲרֵי רֹאִי) literally meant "Even here have I looked behind my beholder?" Wenham (1994:11) comments that "The Hebrew of this half-verse has caused much perplexity and prompted many emendations." However, the phrase "looked behind" is the same expression of God's granting Moses to see his back (Ex 33:23) which is dealt with in section 4.4.5.3. The expression here is, then, that Abraham saw and perceived the presence of God. This revelation of God through "the angel of the LORD" is presented in the Old Testament in order to maintain his transcendence from man while God is immanent with Abraham as in the case of Moses (Ex 33).

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[57] Erickson (1985:443) and Grudem (1994:401) confirm the use of the phrase "the angel of the LORD" is inter-changeably used to refer to the image of the invisible God.

Furthermore, "calling out of heaven" is the typical method for maintaining the transcendence of God in the Bible. In Genesis 22:11 and 15, "the angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven." When Israelites recall this incident, they repeat God's revelation as: "You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good" (Neh 9:13). Heaven is the dwelling place or the abode of God in both the Old and New Testament; from there God looks down on humanity, hears their cry and reaches out to his subjects (Johnston 2000:542). Making a physical gap between heaven and earth, the phrase "calling out of heaven" is a convincing indication of divine transcendence in the context of direct communication with Abraham (Gn 22:11, 15) and Hagar (Gn 21:17) as well as in Deuteronomy 4:36, Nehemiah 9:27-28, and Revelation 18:4. Consequently, maintaining his transcendence in the language of "the angel of the LORD" and speaking from heaven, God was present in the scene of the test on the mountain. From an ontological understanding of Abraham's perspective of him, God was present at the scene of the sacrifice and directly interfered with the sequence of Abraham's sacrifice.

The most important fact of God's involvement in the story is how Abraham understood the presence of God. Abraham, when asked by Isaac, says God will provide the lamb for the burnt offering in Genesis 22:8. Was he aware that God would actually replace Isaac with a lamb or was this the language of deceiving his son? Whatever the meaning of "God will provide," the text was fulfilled as God provided a ram trapped in a thicket (Gn 22:13).

In response to God's providence of a sacrificial ram, Genesis 22:14 indicates: "So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided'" (וַיִּקְרָ֧א אַבְרָהָ֛ם שֵֽׁם־הַמָּק֥וֹם הַה֖וּא יְהוָ֣ה ׀ יִרְאֶ֑ה אֲשֶׁר֙ יֵאָמֵ֣ר הַיּ֔וֹם בְּהַ֥ר)

יְהוָה יֵרָאֶה). Literally the text means "and Abraham called the name of that place 'God will see (יְהוֹה יִרְאֶה),' which it is said today on a (the) mount, 'God will be seen (יְהוֹה יֵרָאֶה).'" In this literal translation and other traditional English translations (NIV, KJV, ASV), there are at least two major issues in the exegetical arguments; the application of the word 'to see' (רָאָה) and the state of the noun "(on) the mountain" (בְּהַר).

The Hebrew word רָאָה (to see) is used twice in Genesis 24:14. The first occurrence appears as a reference to the place where the test took place. It is used in NIV as, "The LORD will provide [יִרְאֶה]." The Hebrew word for "will provide" is יִרְאֶה which literally means "he will see." In the second half of the verse the word רָאָה is used in a passive nuance as "…it will be provided [יֵרָאֶה]." Once again, the literal translation means "he will be seen." In Genesis 22:8, Abraham uses the word to answer for the provision of the sacrifice as "God himself will provide [יִרְאֶה] the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Here the Hebrew word יִרְאֶה means "he will see" as in verse 22.

Wenham (1994:111) comments on the verb ראה toward God's appearance before Abraham:

> Abraham named the mountain. As already noted, the name Moriyyah (v2) is here alluded to in the name of the mountain (יהוה יראה *Yahweh yireh*) "In the mount of the LORD he may be seen." Here the same root, ראה "see, provide," is used in the niphal, which is regularly used of the LORD appearing to men (cf. 12:7; 17:1; 18:1), thus making a link backward with Abraham's past experience and forward to Israel's future experiences on the mountain of God (Ex 3:1-2; Lv 9:4, 6, etc.).

According to Wenham's definition of the root word ראה (see, provide), the idiom, "he will see" (יִרְאֶה) could mean "he will provide." In the context of Abraham's answer to Isaac's question concerning the absence of a sacrificial animal (Gn 22:8), the Hebrew word can be translated to indicate God's provision of the lamb. Genesis 22:8 reads, "Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide [יִרְאֶה] the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.'" However, it is not clear whether Abraham trusted that God would replace Isaac with a lamb, or Abraham understood God's command literally (sacrificing Isaac). In either way, Abraham's answer is meant to see God's sovereignty. If Abraham meant to emphasise the sovereignty of God, the phrase could be translated in the literal sense of the word, "to see" throughout Genesis 22.

Other than the context of Genesis 22, the word רָאָה is not translated into "to provide" in the Old Testament. The consonant value of "he will provide" (יראה) can mean either the simple (qal) or passive (niphal) future of the verb "to see." Furthermore, it can be the feminine singular noun "fear," or the simple past tense (qal perfect) of "to fear." Of the seventy one uses of the same consonant value (יראה), eleven times are used in connection with the word "fear" and the other fifty seven are used either as "see," "regard," "look," or "appear." Only in Genesis 22 is the word translated three times with the nuances of "provision."[58] Then, due to the uncommon use of the word ראה in the sense of provision, exegetes should also consider the meaning of the word apart from the traditional translation, "provide."

So far, three major considerations have been discussed on the meaning of the word יראה: (1) the above facts of word usage in the Old Testament, (2) Abraham's possible expectation of the lack of any substitute for Isaac, and (3) an expression of submission to God's will: "God

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[58] The statistics are produced by the research tool in a computer software, *BibleWorks* (Version 7.0).

will see" and the normal use of the word "see." The LXX translation may confirm the above discussion as well as the obvious understanding of Genesis 22:14 as: "καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Αβρααμ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου κύριος εἶδεν [he had seen] ἵνα εἴπωσιν σήμερον ἐν τῷ ὄρει κύριος ὤφθη [he was seen]." Brenton's LXX translation of Genesis 22:14 indicates the perceptible appearance of God: "And Abraham called the name of that place, The Lord hath seen; that they might say to-day, In the mount the Lord was seen." In this verse as well as in Genesis 22:8 the Hebrew word for "provide" (יראה) was translated with ὁράω (to see, observe), in the aorist active which indicates that the appearance of God took place in the past, before the time when the narrative took place (Gn 2:14). In Genesis 22:8 the Greek word ὁράω is in the future tense which indicates a continuation of God's immanence.

The second exegetical issue comes from the Hebrew vowel pointing to the word בְּהַר. It is noteworthy to see how the Hebrew vowel pointing can change the meaning of the text as we have already seen with the word יראה. Likewise, English translations of the second part of Genesis 22:14 have not been the same. For example, recent English translations like the NIV, NAU, and NRS translate it as "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." The older KJV translates it as "In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen." The modern Jewish translation of Tanakh reads "On the mount of the LORD there is vision." All these translations treat the Hebrew word בְּהַר (on/in a mountain) as in a construct state with the LORD (יְהוֹה). Thus it is translated as "on the mountain of the LORD." In Hebrew, masculine singular nouns do not have different forms of absolute or construct states. Therefore the word בְּהַר can be either in the absolute or construct form. If it is in the absolute state the translation would be "in the mountain, the LORD will be seen." However, modern English translations follow the Masorites' vowel pointing, which was settled at a time around A.D. 700

(Würthwein 1995:21). In this vowel pointing of the Hebrew and translation, God's appearance on the mountain is diminished as the phrase "it will be seen/provided" would refer to the lamb in the context.

However, in the original vowelless Hebrew text, it is possible to read such as בְּהַר (in a mountain) or בָּהָר (in the mountain). In later cases, the translation should be "on the mountain, the LORD will be provided," or more likely "on the mountain, the LORD will be seen." This is exactly how the LXX and YLT[59] translate it. The literal translation of YLT is "in the mount, Jehovah doth provide." And LXE[60] reads "In the mount the Lord was seen [ἐν τῷ ὄρει κύριος ὤφθη]." The translator of LXX understands the vowelless word בהר as "the mountain" and thus provides room to interpret the text in the context of God's appearance before Abraham.

According to the alternative literal translation of the vowelless text and the LXX, Abraham may understand and perceive the presence of God on the mountain when God interferes with the sacrifice of Isaac. The statement, "The LORD will see…the LORD will be seen" (יְהוָֹה יֵרָאֶה…יְהוָֹה יִרְאֶה) may have been Abraham's understanding and his statement of perceiving the presence of God. This is a solitary account of the Bible as the Qur'an does not indicate any similar incident in the account of Abraham's test. The Qur'an does provide for God's involvement in the test of Abraham by ransoming "him with a momentous sacrifice" (S 37:109). The ransoming process was preceded by God's interference. Surah 37:104 reads,

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[59] YLT (Young's Literal Translation, [1862]1898).

[60] LXE (LXX English Translation, Brenton).

"We called out to him 'O Abraham!' [*wa- naadaynaa -hu 'an yaa 'ibraahem*]." This account of God's calling out to stop the sacrifice and providing the ransom are identical with biblical account. Nevertheless, the Qur'anic account does not provide the location of God's calling as it does in the Bible.

4.3.5   Conclusion

Both the Qur'an and the Bible give Abraham the title of "friend of God." The title brings the questions of the manner of fellowship Abraham had with God to be qualified "friend of God." The Qur'an indicates the friendship as mere faithfulness to God resulting no enmity toward God, while the Bible indicates the personal relationship of mutual bonds between two parties. In the incident of the guests of Abraham, the Qur'an avoids God's presence in the scene by excluding the third guest which is recounted in the biblical story as the appearance of God before Abraham. The Qur'an maintains the transcendence of God in the account of Abraham. The biblical accounts of Abraham reflect an immanent God, who maintains his transcendent state through a perceivable appearance such as "the third guest" and "the angel of the LORD." This aspect of God's perceivable appearance is known in the biblical accounts of Abraham's guests and test, as well as throughout the Old Testament but especially in Exodus. Similarly to the testing of Abraham, God appeared on the Mountain of Sinai to Moses and his people, who perceived his presence. Was there the same kind as Abraham's ontological understanding of God's appearance among Moses and his people? The answer will clarify and confirm any unanswered question of God's appearance to Abraham.

4.4 TRANSCENDENT GOD AND MOSES

4.4.1 Introduction

God's relationship with his people is expressed extensively in the incidents surrounding the Exodus of the Israelites from the Egypt. The main figure of the Exodus is Moses whom the Qur'an speaks of mostly as among the prophets. The details of Moses' life are written about to a greater extent than any other prophet's life even compared to the biblical Moses. Concerning Moses in the Old Testament Wessner (2002:109) says, "Throughout the narratives of the Hebrew Bible, perhaps no other biblical character is portrayed as being more intimate with God than Moses, the unequalled leader of the ancient Israelites." The general outline of the life of Moses in Surah 28 closely traces the account in Exodus 1 to 15.

The narrative of Moses begins with the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt (Ex 1; S 28:1-6). The birth of Moses and his adaptation to Pharaoh's family appears in both the Bible and the Qur'an with his foster parent being the wife of Pharaoh in the Qur'an (S 28:7-13; 20:37-40) and the daughter of Pharaoh in the Bible (Ex 2:10). This story is followed by Moses' killing of an Egyptian (Ex 2:12; S 28:14-21; 20:40; 26:18-20) which resulted in his exile in Midian (Madyan). In Midian, Moses first helped two women of an unnamed father in the Qur'an while the Bible identified him as Reuel or Jethro (S 28:22-28; Ex 2:15-18). The Qur'an provides details of the marriage between Moses and Zipporah with a pact of service for eight or ten years while the Bible indicates the consummation of marriage and the birth of the son Gershom (S 28:27; Ex 2:21-22).

Moses' encounter with the burning bush is disclosed in both the Bible and the Qur'an (Ex 3:1-4, 17; S 28:29-35; 20:9-23) as well as the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh (Ex 5—12; S 28:36-39; 20:24-36; 7:104-123; 10:75-82; 17:101-102; 20:49-60; 11:96-99; 40:24). The ten plagues against the Egyptians in Exodus 7 to 12 correspond with the nine signs of Moses in Surah 7:133 and 17:101. However the "institution of the Passover, the sacrifice of the firstborn, and other details are not dealt with in the Koran, evidently because Mohammad did not feel they were important" (Busse 1998:97).

The Exodus and inundation of Egyptians into the sea (Ex 12—14; S 28:40-42), worship of the golden calf (Ex 32; S 7:148-153; 20:83-98), the company of Korah (Karun) (Nm 16:32-35; S 28:76-82; 29:39), and the wanderings in the desert, water from a rock and the feeding of quails (Nm 10—22; S 7:154-160; 20:80-81) are shown in both Scriptures. The story of Korah in the Qur'an has varied from the Bible with additional biblical figures, Haman, and the Haman's tower that refer to the tower of Babel in the Bible (Gn 11:1-9; S 28:38).

The Decalogue appears in Exodus 20 while the Qur'an briefly mentions it in many places with allusions to the Decalogue of the Bible (S 17; S 7:142-145; 6:151; 25:63-72; 16:90-94; 23:2-8). However, the third commandment is not recounted in the Qur'an. The story of sending out scouts and the refusal to enter the Holy Land for fear of the giants is indicated in Number 13 to 14 and Surah 5:23-26.

In their accounts of the Exodus, both the Qur'an and the Bible testify the presence of God and his relationship with Moses and Israel in a similar way. The calling of Moses from the mystic fire and on Mount Sinai, the pillar of cloud and the Ark of the Covenant are mentioned in both the Qur'an and the Bible. This section will concern itself with an examination of the

divine-human relationship depicted in both Scriptures, in particular with the influence of pre-understanding of biblical knowledge in the process of revelation of the Qur'an as well as the issue of biblical theophany. In the Old Testament, there are many appearances of God before a human audience. In the case of Moses, "the term 'theophany' is used here not in its figurative sense of 'encounter with the divine,' but, in keeping with the Greek fainein, 'to appear,' it [theophany] implies the presence of a visual component in addition to verbal interaction" (Savran 2003:120). As Savran says, there will be a concern of Moses' and people's understanding of God's presence with reference to the "visual component" in both Scriptures.

4.4.2   Moses and the mystic fire

4.4.2.1   Introduction

The call narrative of Moses appeared in Exodus 3:1—4:17, Surah 20:10-24, 27:7-14, and 28:29-35 introduces Moses as a mediator between God and people (Den Hertog 2002:227). In the Exodus account Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the desert when he encountered the burning bush (Ex 3:1). On the other hand, the Qur'anic Moses was returning to Egypt after fulfilling his marriage vow of serving his father-in-law for ten years when he saw the burning bush (S 28:29). The basic outline of the Qur'anic account of the burning bush and Moses' calling follows that of the Bible. However, the Qur'an does not have the account of God's instruction to Moses concerning his identity and specific instructions on dealing with the elders of Israel. The major identical accounts are Moses' perceiving and his approaching the fire (Ex 3:3; S 20:11; 27:8; 28:30), hearing the voice from the fire (Ex 3:4; S 20:11-12; 27:8; 28:30), the lordship announcement (Ex 3:6, S 27:9; 28:30),

homage to the holy ground (Ex 3:6; 20:12; 27:8; 28:30), God's commission to Moses (Ex 3:10; S 20:13), rod and white-hand for the sign of Moses (Ex 4:2-6; S 20:17-22; 27:10-12; 28:31), and Aaron being the helper to Moses (4:15-16; 20:29-36; 28:43).

From the above identical elements of the account of the burning bush, God's appearance before Moses seems to play an important role in both the Qur'an and the Bible. The context of the burning bush and the conversation between God and Moses should reflect either God's transcendence or immanence. The texts are as following:

Exodus 3:1-6 [1]Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. [2]There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. [3]So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." [4]When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." [5]"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." [6]Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Surah 20:10-13 [10]Behold he saw a fire: so he said to his family "Tarry ye; I perceive a fire; perhaps I can bring you some burning brand there from or find some guidance at the fire." [11]But when he came to the fire a voice was

heard: "O Moses! [12]Verily I am thy Lord! Therefore (in My presence) put off thy shoes: thou art in the sacred valley Tuwa. [13]I have chosen thee: listen then to the inspiration (sent to thee)."

Surah 27:7-9 [7]Behold! Moses said to his family: "I perceive a fire; soon will I bring you from there some information or I will bring you a burning brand to light our fuel that ye may warm yourselves." [8]But when he came to the (Fire) a voice was heard: "Blessed are those in the Fire and those around: and Glory to Allah the Lord of the Worlds! [9]O Moses! verily I am Allah the Exalted in Might the Wise!...

Surah 28:29-30 [29]Now when Moses had fulfilled the term and was travelling with his family he perceived a fire in the direction of Mount Tur. He said to his family: "Tarry ye; I perceive a fire; I hope to bring you from there some information or a burning firebrand that ye may warm yourselves." [30]But when he came to the (Fire) a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley from a tree in hallowed ground: "O Moses! verily I am Allah the Lord of the Worlds...

As seen from the above list of the verses, the accounts of Moses' encounter with the burning bush in the Qur'an and the Bible contain minor differences. Both accounts identify the location as a mountain region (Mount Horeb and Tur). Moses and God are the main figures of the story and the fire is important in both stories. However, a few details have been observed as different. The following is a brief comparison of the two accounts of Moses' encounter with the burning bush.

Exodus 3	**Surah 20, 27, 28**
v.1 Introduction & location at Mt. Horeb, Mt of God	20:9; 28:29 Introduction & location at Mt Tur
v.2 Angel of the LORD appeared and Moses misunderstood it as fire & said,	20:10; 27:7; 28:29b He saw a fire & went to get a fire and direction
v.3 "I will go over to investigate …"	
v.4 God saw and called Moses & Moses answered	20:11; 27:8; 28:30a A voice was heard
v.5 "Do not come closer; take off your sandals"	20:12; 27:9; 28:30b "I am your Lord (Allah) & take off your shoes. You are in a sacred valley Tuwa (right bank of the valley)."
v.6 "I am the God of your father . . ." Moses was afraid to look at God	
v.7-9 God's recognition of Israel's suffering in Egypt	
v.10 "I am sending you to Pharaoh"	20:13 "I have chosen thee"

From the above lists, it is evident that Moses' perception of the fire is somewhat different. The Qur'an indicates that when Moses first saw the fire, he understood it as actual fire. Therefore, Moses headed toward the fire to get a firebrand for his family, as well as direction about the surrounding area (S 20:10; 27:7-14; 28:29ff.). In the biblical account, Moses saw the angel of the Lord, who appeared in flames of fire, and mistook it for an actual fire that does not burn the bush. So Moses approached the fire in order to investigate the strange sight (Ex 3:3). When Moses got near the fire, there came an announcement to him.

In the Bible, the origin of the calling of Moses is "from within the bush" while the Qur'an indicates "a voice was heard." Exodus 3:4 states that the calling is from God as "God called

to him [Moses]" and the following narrative between God and Moses indicates a direct conversation between the two. However, the Qur'an is unclear as to how God speaks to Moses as the voice was heard. The origin of the voice and the mode of God's speaking to Moses will determine the nature of the presence of God with Moses at the burning bush. Furthermore, the nature of the fire and Moses' understanding of fire could shed light on the metaphysical transcendence and immanence of God in this account.

It is arresting and helpful to note that the background of Moses' presence in the desert is different in the Qur'an and the Bible. Exodus 3:1 indicates that Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law. He led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb[61] when he encountered the fire. It seems that Moses was alone in tending the sheep since the Exodus account does not indicate any other person in the context. In Surah 28:26-29 Moses was contracted to work for minimum of eight years, or if he preferred, for ten years as a bride price. When Moses fulfilled the term he was travelling near Mount Tur at the time of his encounter with the fire (S 28:29). Johns (1990:162) concludes that the purpose of his travelling with family was due to homesickness and thus he was returning to Egypt. He provides the purpose of ten years of exile, with which biblical scholars readily agree, as "to give him the wide experience of life he needed to prepare him for his task and to preach his message effectively" (Johns 1990:163).

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[61] Horeb is called the mountain of God which is Mount Sinai in the Old Testament. In the Qur'an, Mount Sinai is referred to with different Arabic terms, Mount Tur, Mount Tabari, Jabal Musa. The sacred valley Tuwa in Surah 20:12 also refers to the valley just below Mount Sinai.

4.4.2.2 The mystic fire

The Qur'anic Moses simply stated that he perceived a fire and assumed that there were some local people who could provide him information about the surrounding area and a firebrand for his family. The biblical Moses saw the unnatural phenomenon of fire, a fire which did not consume the bush. Then he went over to investigate why the bush does not burn up. Qur'an commentator Ali (1989:766) asserts that Moses first perceives the fire as a real fire (*naar*) and then discovers that the fire is the glory of God. Despite the fact that the word *naar* refers to physical fire, Ali (1989:768) interpreted the fire as a sign of the glory of God, or a shining divine light (*nuur*) such as Moses' hand, which turns white (S 20:22). The Arabic word for "fire" is feminine (*naar*) and refers to physical fire. It is carries the Qur'anic concept of hell, the opposite of *janna,* heaven in Surah 2:81-82 (Nevo 2002:144). The Qur'an uses a masculine word *nuur* (fire) to indicate a divine attribute of "light." This usage of the two words for fire also appears in the biblical use of words for fire.

In Old Testament Hebrew, the words נֵר and נוּר are cognitive to the Arabic words for fire, *naar* and *nuur*. The Hebrew נֵר (*ner*) is used forty-four times and it can always translate as a light-producing lamp (Kohlenberger III 1998:110). Another word for fire comes from the Aramaic portion of the Old Testament. The Aramaic word for light, נוּר (*nuur*) is only used in Daniel where it occurs thirteen times with the article. In the definite status of light, it is always used as consuming fire while the other four times it is used without an article. From these four times, thrice in Daniel 7:9-10, the word נוּר describes non-consuming fire that indicates the presence of God and thus confirming the usage of the Arabic words.

Fire in the Old Testament has three major usages (Neusner 1996:227). First, the most common reference to fire in the Old Testament is a destructive fire (Gn 19:24; Nm 11:1; 21:28; 26:10; Neh 1:3; etc.). The second use of fire as purification is seen when Isaiah's lips are purified when touched with a burning coal (Is 6:6-7). The third usage of fire refers to God's involvement in this world as "the divine world as fire" where fire is associated with the presence of God such as the pillar of fire (Ex 14:24) and God's chariot of Ezekiel's vision. Sommer (2001:61) reminds us that a fire that came "from God's presence (יְהוָה מִלִּפְנֵי)" (Lv 10:2, cf. 9:24) incinerated Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu during the inaugural ceremonies of the tabernacle's dedication as they offered unauthorised fire before Yahweh. This shows that the fire is a token of divine presence and a reminder of divine unpredictability. Furthermore, the continual presence of God is symbolised by the ever-burning fire on the altar (Lv 6:12-13). In the case of the burning bush where the fire is continuously lit but does not consume the bush, the fire indicates God's continuing presence (Neusner 1996:227). However, in spite of God's presence in the proximity of the bush, Moses could not approach the fire, for the fire is in the third category, "the divine world as fire" which is also "unapproachable holiness."[62]

4.4.2.3   The holy ground

The "unapproachable holiness" is further reflected in both Scriptures with reference to taking off Moses' shoes and an indication of the place being holy ground. In the biblical account, it is proceeded by another of God's commands to Moses: "Do not come any closer [אַל־תִּקְרַב הֲלֹם], God said. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Ex 3:5). The root word for "come closer" (קרב) refers to both spatial as well as temporal

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[62] Ross (1985:56) also indicated the fire thus: "Fire represents the consuming, cleansing zeal of Yahweh as well as His unapproachable holiness, which are interrelated."

proximity. Most commonly, it is used in a spatial sense to denote physical proximity describing the divine-human relationship (Lemke 1981:542). Durham (1987:31) describes human approach to the presence of God this way: "the verb forbidding too close an approach by Moses, קרב 'approach,' is frequently used in the OT as a technical term to describe an approach to the Presence of God in worship, or to seek an oracle." The dual usage of קרב is further supported by the derived form of the word, קָרֹב. The adjective form of the word *qarob* [קָרֹב or קָרֹוב] occurs seventy seven times in the Old Testament (Kohlenberger III & Swanson 1998:1427). An examination of these occurrences reveals that the word is used in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. Furthermore, it refers to both spatial as well as temporal proximity. Most commonly the adjective is used in a spatial sense to denote physical proximity such as in Genesis 19:20, where Lot says: "Look, here is a town near [קְרֹבָה, fs] enough to run to." In the context of Exodus 3, it is evident that the word is used to indicate Moses' physical proximity to God. The temporal use of the word is eliminated due to the narrative which involves the physical movement of Moses instead of time reference. Then, as Den Hertog (2002:217) infers, the word is used in this context for the purpose of avoiding the idea that the Lord is immediately recognisable and to maintain God's distance from Moses.

In the sequence of the account of the burning bush, the command to take off his shoes is immediately followed by the command, "Do not come any closer." In the biblical and Semitic cultural context it was a mark of respect and honour to take off one's shoes before someone or someplace (Cragg 1959:26). Besides this occurrence with Moses (Ex 3:5; Ac 7:33), only Joshua 5:15 indicates the taking off the shoes because of holy ground. "The commander of the LORD's army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so" (Jos 5:15). The commander of the LORD is identified as God and Joshua's action is seen as paying respect to God (Campbell 1985:340; Jos 6:2).

Just as in Joshua's case, Exodus 3:5 says, "Take off your sandals, for [כִּי] the place where you are standing is holy ground [אַדְמַת־קֹדֶשׁ]." Here, the reason for taking shoes off is followed by the causal conjunction כִּי which is translated as "for" or "because of." The clause followed by the conjunction may indicate God's presence in the story, designating the location as "holy ground" due to the existence of God's presence.

In the Old Testament holy ground is a sign and place where God's presence existed. In Deuteronomy 23:14, God, being the protector of Israel, is portrayed as moving about (מִתְהַלֵּךְ) in the camp of Israel in the desert. The Hebrew word used to indicate God's movement is the intensive-reflexive form (*hithpael*) of verb, הלך (to walk), which implies God intensively moves himself around. This intensive movement of God is an indication of God's immanence among the people of Israel. The condition of God's presence is indicated in the second half of the verse as, "Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you" (Dt 23:14b). The holiness of the camp is the condition to be met by the people in order to accommodate Yahweh as the transcendent God, while the immanence of God is reflected through his presence with Israel.

Moses acknowledges that God is with him when he is on holy ground and heard God's self-declaration of his identify as the God of his ancestor. Exodus 3:6 indicates "Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God [אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים]." It is not surprising to see the article ה with the plural noun אֱלֹהִים (God or gods) as it appears more than 366 times in the Old Testament. The same noun occurs without the article about 680 times (*BibleWorks* 2007: האלהים). The function of the article attached to the word "God" could be interpreted in a couple of ways. It could be an anaphoric treatment in which the article functions equivalent to a weak demonstrative (Joüon 1993:507). Moses is referring back to Exodus 3:5 where God

identified himself as the God of Moses' ancestor. Another option is to understand the article as a distinctive reference (Williams 1976:19) referring to God as "true God" as in 1 Kings 18:39 (cf. the river, הַנָּהָר, in Genesis 31:21 also translated as "the *Euphrates* River" in NAU). Moses might understand God as the one true and real God who spoke and appeared before him. Here, the focus is God's spatial appearance before Moses. Either way of understanding the article indicates God's presence with Moses. Moses' understanding of God at this point in the story indicates the ontological presence of God with him. This is a clear sign that Moses now perceives that the holy ground is where the presence of God existed. Furthermore, without a doubt, he perceives the burning bush as the physical appearance of God. Niehaus (1995:187) supports this view by saying Moses may have seen an "angelic" appearance of God's fiery theophany. If so, from the beginning, Moses saw non-physical fire and may have perceived it as the appearance of the Lord as noted by the way he reacted in Exodus 3:6, where "Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God."

The Qur'anic account indicates that the place is holy ground. Surah 20:12 renders the reason, "Verily I am thy Lord! Therefore (in My presence) put off thy shoes: thou art in the sacred valley Tuwa." In this verse the reason for taking off Moses' shoes is that he is in the sacred valley of Tuwa.[63] However, it is not clear why the valley of Tuwa is holy ground. The translation in the parenthesis "in My presence" would refer to God's presence, yet the original Arabic does not indicate it; the parenthesis is the translator's interpretation, which was added to the text.

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[63] Asad translation (1986-1999) indicates the "Tuwa" as twice emphasizing the holiness of the ground as, "thou art in the twice-hallowed valley."

Two other Qur'anic verses concerning Moses may show the reason for Moses' taking his shoes off. In Surah 28:30 the voice was heard from "the right bank of the valley" and Surah 19:52 reads, "We called him from the right side of Mount (Sinai)." In Islamic thought, "the right side" can be interpreted in the literal manner as well as in the figurative sense which refers to blessed or sacred ground (Ali 1989:755). It is difficult to distinguish whether the presence of God is indicated by the phrase "holy ground" or "right side" in the Qur'anic account, due to the absence of the direct appearance of God before Moses. However, the location of the origin of the voice may clarify the presence of God before Moses in both the biblical and Qur'anic accounts.

4.4.2.4 Origin of the voice

Another indication of the presence of God in the bush is the origin of the voice of God. In the Qur'an, as in the Bible, it seems that God is the one who addresses Moses. Yet, the origin of the voice may be other than God. Surah 27:8 says, "But when he [Moses] came to the (fire), a voice was heard: 'Blessed are those in the fire and those around: and glory to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.'" In this verse, a few differences from the Bible are observed. Initially, the clause "a voice was heard" does not correspond with the biblical account, "God called to him from within the bush" (Ex 3:4). The exact location of the source of the voice is not indicated in the Qur'anic account. The biblical location of the voice is "from within" (מִתּוֹךְ) the bush.

The exegetical problem here is that if the voice is interpreted as being God's and as coming from the bush, then the phrase "glory to Allah" makes Allah a self-glorifying God. Furthermore, if the voice originated from God, God, being incarnated into fire, is absolutely against the concept of *Tawid*, the oneness of Allah (Shafi 2005c:573). Tradition indicates the

fire may have been God's curtain which separates God from his subject during a revelation process as, "His curtain is the fire or His curtain is the light" (Usmani 2002b:1661). Furthermore, there are indications that a multitude is present at the scene, as the text explains "those in the fires and those around." Thus, there is a possibility that the voice originated from one of "those," not from God. Usmani (2002b:1661) indicates that those around the fire are either the angels or Moses himself. Shafi (2005c:572) presents different commentators' views of who was inside the fire and around it. They are either Moses or angels in opposing explanations. Thus it is most likely that the voice originated from the angels.

Moreover, the verb forms of "call" used in the Bible and the Qur'an communicate different implications about the origin of the calling. In the Bible, it is God who calls out to Moses (וַיִּקְרָ֨א אֵלָ֤יו אֱלֹהִים֙). The voice of the verb (יִקְרָא) here is in the active form, which shows that God is the active agent in the calling. On the other hand, the Qur'an uses a passive voice (*nudiya*), which indicates that God (Allah) received the action.

Ali (1989:939) translates the verb *nidiya* as "a voice was heard." However, the actual word means, as Pickthall translates, "He [Allah] was called," which is a perfect passive of *nada* (to call, proclaim). It is not Allah who speaks actively, but he receives the action of calling passively. This answers the question: "whose voice is this?" This passive form of the verb conveys that the voice was the sound of angels proclaiming the glory of God from the midst of the fire. By using the passive form of the verb *nada*, the Qur'an again protects the principle of the total transcendence of God. In the Bible, there are similar cases of protecting the transcendence of God by using the passive voice. In Daniel 4:28 (Eng. 4:31) God's voice came from heaven (קָ֗ל מִן־שְׁמַיָּ֣א נְפַ֔ל) to reveal judgment to the king Nebuchadnezzar. The Aramaic word נְפַל is active (peal) perfect of "to fall down" which indicated that God's voice

originated from the heaven. Also, in the New Testament, 2 Peter 1:17 uses a passive verb in the passage, "the voice [of God] conveyed (φωνῆς ἐνεχθείσης) to him by the Majestic Glory," protects the transcendence of God by avoiding the idea that God himself speaks directly (cf. Ex 20:22, "I [God] have spoken to you from heaven").

Another key interpretative element is how God communicates in the Qur'an. God only communicates with man through inspiration, behind a veil, or by sending messengers (S 42.51; 16.2). Surah 42:51 confirms, "It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for he is most high, most wise." Surah 20:77 and 26:52 indicate that God's communication to Moses is through inspiration. Surah 20:77 reads, "We sent an inspiration to Moses." As the word "sent" implies that an angel carries the message, the voice heard in Surah 27:8 is the context which should be understood with Moses' inspiration through the angel who is not accountable by name. Surah 20:25 shows that Moses is speaking to God in a similar way as in the biblical account, for it says, "(Moses) said: 'O my Lord! Expand me my breast.'" The word for "Lord" is *rabb,* which generally refers to God. However, the word *rabb* is used to address the angel who appears to Mary (S 3:47). Furthermore, the method of the revelation of the Qur'an through the angel (S 42:51) indicates the word *rabb* refers to an angel, who is speaking or giving inspiration to Moses in the context. Thus the Islamic interpretation of the burning bush eliminates a direct confrontation of God with Moses, while the biblical account confirms that God is manifested in a fiery glory before Moses, a manifestation of God that Moses first misunderstands as an angelic appearance in the burning bush.

4.4.2.5   God's name and Moses

Another interpretative observation comes from the abrupt transition from the LORD (יהוה) to God (אֱלֹהִים). Exodus 3:4 suggests that there are some implications of the use of God's name. Den Hertog (2002:217) observes that the generic name God (אֱלֹהִים) is used to create the consequent need to maintain his distance since the personal name (יהוה), which is used in Exodus 3:14, reveals God's personal involvement in the event of the burning bush. Den Hertog means that God's official name אֱלֹהִים reflects the transcendent God while his personal name יהוה implies the immanent God. Den Hertog's suggestion can be supported by God's self designation (v 2) as "the angel of the LORD." This designation of God as an angel of the LORD shows that God's personal involvement with man is somewhat indirectly indicated, while it is a clear reference to God in many places in the Old Testament (Gn 16:7; Jdg 6:12; 13:3). In the biblical context "the angel of the LORD" is used interchangeably with "the LORD (יהוה)" as here. Cole (1973:64) calls this term a "reverential synonym for God's own presence." In the context of Moses, the term "the angel of the LORD" may be explained as an indication of his inability to recognize God. Therefore there are possibilities that Moses misunderstood God for the angel of the LORD, or the phrase is used as literacy device for the immanence of the transcendent God.

It is notable that there are textual variances of the reference to God in Exodus 3:4. In the Samaritan Pentateuch, both "the LORD" (יהוה) and "God" (אֱלֹהִים) are written as "God" while the Greek translation (LXX) uses the word, "*kurious*" (κύριος), a translation of "יהוה" in *qere*. The Greek word κύριος is a translation of the word יהוה as אָדוֹן (lord, master). Aramaic Targumim translates in the same pattern as the LXX by using the word, יוי (the Lord). The majority of English translation follows the practice of *qere*. In the Samaritan

Pentateuch, the reason for using the same word for either reference to God is not affirmatively known today. According to Den Hertog's argument on the use of the name, Samaritans may have understood the account of the burning bush as a more legalistic event where God's presence is shadowed by the usage of the legal name אֱלֹהִים. On the other hand, the elders of Israel who translated the LXX understood God in the burning bush account as a personal God of Moses and their ancestral God. Therefore the Greek and Targumim translations used יהוה (κύριος, יוי) to indicate personal relationship in the account.

The Qur'anic text indicates that it was God who called Moses by using two different titles (Allah and Rabb). The Qur'an uses the two words interchangeably as in Surah 28:29, "O Moses! Verily I am Allah [*allah*] the Lord [*rabb*] of the Worlds…" and in Surah 20:12 says, "Verily I am thy Lord!" Unlike the Hebrew word "the LORD" which has a form of *qere* and *katib*, the two Arabic words for God appear in the absolute state. Originally the word *allah* is a composition of the article *al* and god *ilah*. However, as it appears 2,697 times in the Qur'an *allah* is treated as the "Proper name of the Almighty and Supreme Being" (Omar 2003:29). The name embraces all divine attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and thus functions as a collective proper noun, meaning as God of the Qur'an which should distinguished from personal gods of other religions (Omar 2004:28). In the same way, the word *rabb* is being treated as unique: "We must admit that all other languages lack an equivalent of the word [*rabb*]" (Omar 2004:198). However, in general, the word *rabb* conveys the basic meaning of a lord or master who has power that can be exercised over another. Thus, the word *rabb* does not indicate any ontological implication of the transcendence of God in reference to the use of God's name in the Qur'an.

Tuft (1983:20) presents the trend of the interpretation of the Qur'an thus: "From the time of Tabari to the present, the main objective of *tafsir* has been to provide a paraphrase translation of that context."[64] Accordingly, the majority of the scholars approach the incident of the burning bush as a stage in Moses' spiritual growth, which provides believers with a model of spiritual growth. For example, Khodr (1981:171) refers to this encounter with a burning bush as a presentation of a prototype of believers in spiritual growth. Moses, in his earnest quest, "has to leave his country and his family to walk by narrow paths in which divine Fire (the Burning Bush) burns all the impurities of passion in him and leaves him with one sole desire, that of seeing God face to face." Khodr (1981:173) further explains that Moses' progression in spiritual growth is completed with a mystical union with God as "The Burning Bush—at the same time created flame and uncreated Voice—becomes thus for al-Hallaj the symbol of a mystical union in which the human subject and the Divine subject discourse together, each witnessing to the Reality of the other." Even though Khodr provides a hint of an immanent God appearing in the episode as "…each witnessing to the Reality of the other," this aspect of the interpretation of the account is referred to as *tanzil* which reveals God's will to his prophet. Moses being God's prophet, the interpretation maintains the transcendence of God from Moses.

4.4.2.6   Conclusion

In summation, we can observe both the transcendence and the immanence of God in the biblical and Qur'anic accounts of the burning bush. One of the clear indications of the transcendence of God in the Qur'anic text is derived from the passive voice of the verb "He is

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[64] The Arabic word *tafsir* means "Qur'anic exegesis."

called" which denied God's presence in the story. This is supported by Moses' understanding of the fire as an actual fire which the text did not reverse to God's glory. The text simply uses the word that indicates firebrand in Arabic. The Qur'an does not provide any possible link to God's immanent presence with Moses since the account diminished the immanence of God by using the passive voice. Furthermore, Moses' understanding is shown as an incident where God called him as a prophet through inspiration.

On the other hand, the Exodus account reflects both a transcendent and an immanent God who appears before Moses. God called Moses from within the bush which shows that the commission took place in God's spatial-immanent manifestation. This is further supported by the fact that the presence of God is manifested in the holy ground and the un-consuming fire, representative of the continuing presence of God in the Old Testament. As God appears before Moses, he maintains his distance from Moses through the implication of the unapproachable fire and the outer limitation of the holy ground. The Qur'an similarly implies the holy ground in its account. However, its presentation of the holy ground is in a wider spectrum and figuratively presented while the Bible directly hints that holy ground is locally limited and directly expressed as the place where God's presence is presented. Furthermore this transcendence–immanence of God is seen in the use of God's personal name (יהוה) which reflects his personal involvement with Moses while the legalistic name (אֱלֹהִים) reflects his official transcendent state.

4.4.3   God and the pillar of cloud

The cloud motif, as representative of the presence of the Lord, is presented through the entire Bible (Wessner 2002:113). In the Old Testament, within the context of the Exodus of the

Israelites from Egypt, the unique phrase "pillar of cloud" is used twelve times (Ex 13:21, 22; 14:19, 24; 33:9, 10; Nm 12:5; 14:14; Dt 31:15; Neh 9:12, 19; Ps 99:7). In the New Testament a cloud is openly mentioned with regard to both the presence of God (cf. Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:34) and the coming of Christ or ascension of Christ to the heavens (cf. Mt 24:30; 26:64; Mk 13:26; 14:62; Lk 21:27; Ac 1:9; 1 Th 4:17; Rv 1:7). Wessner (2002:113) comments, "The pillar of cloud is reserved for God himself as he makes his presence known among his people, often as a means of divinely legitimizing the recipient, or 'seer' of the cloud. That is, one of the primary functions of the pillar of cloud is to portray the presence of the Lord visually." Furthermore, in the biblical account of the Exodus, the pillars of cloud and fire were the Israelites' guide in the desert and protection from Egyptian attack. In the later stage of Exodus, the pillar of cloud was God's way of revealing himself to Israelites. The Qur'an refers to the biblical account of the cloud in two verses. The following are key verses of the account of the cloud in Exodus that appear in the Bible and the Qur'an.

Exodus 13:21-22   [21]By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. [22]Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Exodus 14:24   [24]During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion.

Numbers 12:5-6   [5]Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the Tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When

both of them stepped forward, [6]he said, "Listen to my words: 'When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.

Surah 2:57   And We gave You the shade of clouds and sent down to you manna and quails saying: "Eat of the good things We have provided for you"; (but they rebelled); to Us they did no harm but they harmed their own souls.

Surah 2:210   Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds with angels (in His train) and the question is (thus) settled? But to Allah do all questions go back (for decision)

The biblical account illustrates the function of the cloud within the text. Numbers 12 indicates that God is standing before people speaking in a pillar of cloud. The cloud prevents the direct sight of God by the people. In a figurative use of cloud, Lamentations 3:44 indicates that God hides within the cloud as, "You have covered yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through." In a similar way the cloud in the Exodus account is an expression of God's method of his transcendence from the people. Furthermore, it seems that God dwells or abides (שָׁכַן as in Ex 40:35) in the cloud. He guides and protects Israelites from their exodus to their wandering into the desert as in Exodus 13:21 and 14:24. Sommer (2001:57) calls this is a divine immanence (associated with the root שׁכן) which was always subject to divine transcendence, and God's permanent dwelling in heaven (associated with root ישׁב). God reveals himself as the immanent God with his temporal abode in the pillar of cloud and fire while maintaining his state as the transcendent God with his permanent dwelling place

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in heaven. In 1 Kings 8 the filling of the cloud in the temple refers to the glory of the LORD (vv 10-11). Furthermore, it is Solomon's testimony that "The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud" (1 Ki 8:12, cf. 2 Chr 5:13-14; 6:41). The earthly dwelling place of God (שָׁכַן) in the pillar of cloud later became the tabernacle and then the temple, where 2 Chronicles 6:41 indicates שָׁכַן is the resting place (לְנוּחֶךָ) of God. The phrase "the resting place" is primarily a spatial reference which signifies not only absence of movement but being settled in a particular place with overtones of finality (Coppes 1980:562). This visible manifestation of God later became the *Shekinah* in the Targumim, which the Targumist used to signify God himself, for legal Judaism dislikes ascribing form or emotion to a deity (Stewart 1982:1101).

In brief, the pillar of cloud in the biblical account provides the following four functions: (1) external manifestation of the invisible God as discussed above; (2) protection of Israel from Egypt; (3) provision of direction in the wilderness and initiating departure of the camp; and (4) provision of shade in the wilderness. However, the Qur'an uses the word cloud (*ghamān*) in a lesser degree than does the Bible (S 2:57, 210; 7:160; 25:25). In the surrounding incident of the Exodus, the cloud only indicates a simple provision that covered the people from the heat. Surah 2:57 indicates that God sent a cloud along with manna and quails as an essential item for surviving in the desert. The phrase "the shade of clouds" refers to a shade made by a pillar of cloud that helped the people to stay cool under the sun when the Israelites travelled through the desert. The Qur'an has no indication of the cloud being God's abode as in the biblical cloud.

On the occasion of the word "cloud" used with reference to God's appearance in Surah 2:210, it seems as though the cloud corresponded to the biblical account of the pillar of

cloud. Surah 2:210 says, "Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds with angels (in His train) and the question is (thus) settled? But to Allah do all questions go back (for decision)." Shafi (2005a:516) interprets that such a coming of Allah will be fulfilled on Doomsday, and it pertains to the *Mutashābihāt*, statements of hidden meaning.[65] Therefore, the meaning of the "canopies of clouds" is not clear in the Qur'anic context, yet it seems to correlate with the biblical context of the second advent of Christ which accompanies the final judgment as described in Revelation 1:7 and Acts 1:11. Revelation 1:7 reads: "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen."

As both the Qur'an and the Bible mention the cloud in reference to the account of the Exodus, some issues of the pillar of the cloud must be dealt with. The cloud mentioned in the Qur'an and the Bible could have been the identical one. The cloud in the Qur'an reflects the ordinary understanding of the environment of the desert where the heat by day and the cold by night is apparent and fire is needed for heat. In this sense the Israelites could also have perceived the cloud for shade from the hot sun as well as God's guidance and pillar of fire for keeping warm. Israelites, when they recall the incidents of the Exodus at their religious festivals,[66] recite Psalms 105:39: "He spread out a cloud as a covering, and a fire to give light at night." Furthermore, Isaiah 4:5-6 reflects on the cloud as being "a shelter and shade from

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[65] *Mutashābihāt* means "Intricate sentence, or expressions, the meaning of which it is impossible for man to ascertain until the day of resurrection, but which was known to the Prophet" (Hughes [1885] 1998:519). It is one of the four categories of "Hidden sentences" used for the interpretation of the Qur'an.

[66] Psalms 78, 105, 106, Joshua 24:2-13 and Nehemiah 9:7-25 recall the Exodus for different purposes. These historical accounts reflect first hand understanding of surrounding incidents of the Exodus.

the heat of the day." Therefore, the cloud of the Qur'an and the Bible can be treated as the identical cloud. However, the understanding of the presence of God in the cloud is important to the issue of the transcendence of God.

One of the most significant appearances of God in the Old Testament is the theophany of God in the pillars of cloud and fire. God goes ahead of the Israelites in a pillar of cloud (Ex 13:21). God defeats the Egyptian army from the pillar of cloud (Ex 14:24). He comes down in a pillar of cloud and stands at the tent of meeting (Nm 12:5-6; Dt 31:15-15) and speaks from the pillar (Ps 99:6-7). These accounts refer to the appearance of God as a cloud-fire theophany; he is immanent, because the people can see him, but he also is transcendent.

In the Qur'an on the other hand, the pillar of cloud is treated as a simple material cloud that provides shade to the people. The Qur'an treats clouds as a part of God's provision for the people travelling in the desert. God says, "We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna and quails, saying: Eat of the good things we have provided for you:" (S 2:57 also see S 7:160). This account shows that the understanding of theophany in the biblical account was discarded in the Qur'an.

In conclusion, the cloud in the Exodus account of the Old Testament indicates the immediate presence of God that provided for the needs of the Israelites by providing God's guidance and shade in the desert. The cloud was the external manifestation of the invisible God, thus protecting Israel from the Egyptian threat as well as the harm of natural danger. God was immanent with people through his active involvement while maintaining his transcendent state in the form of the pillar of cloud.

The application of the cloud in the Qur'an is identical to the Exodus account by way of a provision for shade. By meeting the physical need of the people, it can be said that the cloud in the Qur'an is the same as the cloud of Exodus. However, the issue of Yahweh's external manifestation is questionable in the Qur'an. The use of cloud in reference to God appears in Surah 2:210, where God's presence is indicated in the canopies of clouds with angels. However, the text indicates that the canopies of clouds appear in the context of the last day. Therefore, the canopies eliminate the presence of God. Conclusively, then, the pillar of cloud in the Bible is the expression of God's external manifestation while maintaining his transcendent state regarding the people. The same cloud in the Qur'an is a simple indication of God's provision for the people travelling in the desert. The account of the cloud in the Qur'an simply denies the immanence of God and thus maintains God's transcendence.

4.4.4 *Shekinah* and the Ark of the Covenant

"Structuralists have taught us that any sign has meaning only within a larger sign system" (Sommer 2001:41). In that sense, the *Shekinah* and the Ark of the Covenant may have undeniable connotations in the discussion of Moses and the transcendence of God in the Bible and the Qur'an. This, in the biblical account, is due to the Ark of the Covenant being the symbol of God's covenant; the *Shekinah* and the Ark of the Covenant portray God as permanently immanent with his people as a result of the covenant on the mountain.

The word *Shekinah* (שְׁכִינָה) is a Talmudic term meaning "presence of God" (Gesenius [1847] 1979:823), which is derived from *Piel* form of שָׁכַן (to dwell). Here the *Piel* indicates a causative rather than intensive nuance of the verb, as in Deuteronomy where God caused his

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name to dwell (לְשַׁכֵּן שְׁמוֹ) (Dt 12:11; 14:23; 16:6, 11; 26:2). Similarly, Waltke and O'Connor (1990:400) argue that the *Piel* root of שָׁכַן indicates the state of God's dwelling rather than God's action. The word שְׁכִינָה which expresses God's immediate dwelling among the people first appears in Aramaic translations (Targums) of the Hebrew Bible. For example, God says according to Zechariah 2:10 (BHS): "וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכֵךְ" (I will live among you). In Aramaic this verse is translated as: "וְאַשְׁרֵי שְׁכִינְתִּי בְּגַוִיךְ" (I will cause my *Shekinah* to dwell among you). As the Targums are a written Chaldaic (Western Aramaic) translation and explanation of the Hebrew texts that have been passed down from postexilic Judaism (Würthwein 1995:79), *Shekinah* reflects the understanding of God's immanence with the intention of avoiding the "semblance of materialism" (Fausset 2003:3230). The Targums replace an indication of God in the first person (I will…) and his immanent appearance with *Shekinah*, and thus God's presence is referred to as third person (*Shekinah*) in which God's transcendence in his immanent state with the people is maintained.

Unlike the Bible, the word *Shekinah* actually appears in the Qur'an. Its basic meaning is "inner peace" or "security" which Allah bestows upon the people (S 2:248; 9:26, 40; 48:4, 18, 26). Ali (1989:102) comments on this word in reference to the biblical use as: "Later Jewish writings use the same word for a symbol of God's Glory in the Tabernacle or tent in which the ark was kept, or in the Temple when it was built by Solomon." Furthermore, Ali (1989:102) explains that the ark symbolised security and peace, which is carried by the cherubim on the lid. Ali's description fits the Mercy seat of God to which the biblical *Shekinah* refers. It is evident in Ali's understanding that the *Shekinah* of the Bible and the Qur'an are the same, but the usage reflects different meanings as we discuss below.

The Hebrew word for "ark" is אֲרוֹן. This noun is used only in conjunction with the Ark of the Covenant except for the coffin of Joseph in Genesis 50:26.[67] Another Hebrew word for "ark" is תֵּבָה, which is used twenty five times for the ark of Noah and twice for infant Moses' basket which floated in the river. Unlike Hebrew which has clear distinguished usages for the word "ark," Qur'anic Arabic somewhat interchangeably uses different words for the ark. First, the word *jara* and *safinah* only translate into "ship" in English. The word which is referring to Noah's ark is *fulk*; it is used twenty-three times in the Qur'an. The Arabic word *tābūt*[68] is also used to indicate the Ark of the Covenant in Surah 2:248 and the only other use for the word *tābut* appears in Surah 20:39 where it refers to Noah's ark. The following verses reflect the major usages of the ark in both the Bible and the Qur'an.

> **Exodus 25:8-16**   [8]"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. [9]Make this tabernacle…[10]"Have them make a chest of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. [11]Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold moulding around it…[16]Then put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.

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[67] The word "ark" (אֲרוֹן) is used 181 times in reference to the Ark of the Covenant, Ark of the Testimony, Ark of the LORD, and Ark of God (Kohlenberger III 1998:182). These four terms are referring to the same ark which contains the two tables of stone which constituted the "testimony" or evidence of God's covenant with the people (Dt 31:26), the "pot of manna" (Ex 16:33), and "Aaron's rod that budded" (Nm 17:10).

[68] The Qur'anic word *tābū* attributes its origin to Jewish Aramaic due to non-normative ending *–ūt* and is a cognate word to תבה. The Bible use ארון for ark, but in post biblical Hebrew it is common to use תבה for referring the ark. Therefore, it is suggested that in the redaction work of Mohammad he borrowed the word out of a rabbinic rather than biblical Hebrew literary context (Firestone 2003:10).

Surah 2:247-248 [247]Their Prophet said to them: "Allah hath appointed Talut [Saul] as king over you." They say: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority and he is not even gifted with wealth in abundance?" He said: "Allah hath chosen him above you and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess; Allah granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth. Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things." [248]And (further) their Prophet said to them: "A sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the Covenant with (an assurance) therein of security [*sakenah*] from your Lord and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron carried by angels. In this is a Symbol for you if ye indeed have faith."

God commands Moses to make a sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ) in Exodus 25:8, so that he can dwell (שָׁכַן) among the people of Israel. The Hebrew word שָׁכַן reflects a permanent settlement of God's presence among the people (Wilson 1996:109-111). The Ark of the Covenant is to be placed behind the curtains of the holy of holies (Ex 26:33) when the people have finished the construction of the tabernacle (מִשְׁכָּן). The word for sanctuary here is מִקְדָּשׁ, a general description of the tent which is "a holy place," a place of God's dwelling מִשְׁכָּן (tabernacle). The tabernacle is later replaced by the temple in Jerusalem. Additionally, this tabernacle is called the "tent of meeting" (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד) in Exodus 27:21 where Aaron and his son attended to the service of God. This tent or sanctuary is a different tent from the tent of Moses set up outside the camp in Exodus 33:7. Haran (1978:269) explains these two tents thus:

A fundamental distinction [between the P and E tents] is already evident in the very name of the two institutions: the word *miskan,* tabernacle, indicates

the place where God *soken,* dwells, i.e., his abode; whereas *'ohel mo^{c}ed* (the later noun being derived from the root *y^{c}d*) describes the place to which he comes at an appointed time, the tent to the entrance of which he descends in response to prophetic invocation, only to leave it when the communion with him is over.[69]

According to Haran's explanation above, the tabernacle indicates a permanent presence of God while the tent of meeting implies a temporary presence of God as God left after finishing his communion with the people. God appears at appropriate occasions to reveal himself to Moses or other Israelites (Ex 33:9-11; Nm 11:16-17, 24-30; 12:5-10). In this tent, God initiates communication with the people (Wessner 2002:114). The tent outside the camp is called the Tent of Meeting which is not the official tent, the tabernacle.

Sommer (2001:45) brings a conclusive argument to the presence of God in the tabernacle: "Thus E does not portray God as permanently immanent; and even when the presence manifested itself, it did so outside the Israelite camp…E's tent contains no ark and no divine throne." From Sommer's assertion, it is understood that the tent which contains no ark implies the lack of God's presence. On the other hand, then, the tent which contains the ark represents the presence of God. In other words, the ark is an indication of the presence of God among the people.

In the Qur'an, Surah 2:247 unfolds the appointment of Saul (Talut) as king. The following verse explains that the authority of Saul is based upon the Ark of the Covenant, which brings

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[69] In the documentary theory, P stands for the Priestly source while E stands for the Elohist source.

security from God (S 2:248). Ali translates the word for ark or chest (*taabot*) as "the Ark of the Covenant." Other English translators indicate that *taabot* means "a heart" (Asad), "the chest" (Malik), and "the ark" (Pickthall). In the same way that the pillar of cloud is treated as a substantial object, the Ark of the Covenant in the Qur'an is treated as a tangible symbol of Saul's faith before the people. The Qur'an says, "A sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the Covenant with (an assurance) therein of security from your Lord [*taabut fe –hi sakenah min rabb –kum...*]" (S 2:248). Here the word "security" is *sakenah* and "the ark" is *taabut.* The Qur'an uses the word for the ark (*taabut*) twice, here and in Surah 20:39. Surah 20:39 says concerning Moses, "Throw (the child) into the chest [*taabut*], and throw (the chest) into the river." In both cases the ark is portrayed as an object used by man for man's benefit.

Even though the Qur'an and the Bible refer to the Ark of the Covenant, the semantic implication is not same. In the Qur'an the ark is to bring security (*sakinah*) for Saul's kingship. On the other hand, the Bible indicates that the ark is the dwelling place of God, as it is in the centre of the holy of holies where God says he will dwell (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי) among them (Ex 25:8; cf. 25:22). In contrast to the Qur'anic interpretation of *sakinah* as symbol of security, it represents God's glory (*Shekinah*) dwelling among the people of Israel (Kaiser 1978:119). *Shekinah* in the Bible is derived from the verb "dwell" (*shakan*), as used in God's command to "make a tabernacle that I might dwell among them" (Ex 25:8). Thus, *Shekinah* represents the immanence of the transcendent God among the people.

The Muslim use of the term (*sakina* [*sakenah*]) outside the Qur'an seems to explain a similar view point of God's presence among the people. Khodr (1981:165) attests that in a state of

sakina, there are attending angels that represent God's presence. According to Ibn Kathir (1978:51) the presence of God is represented by angelic beings. This is seen in Surah 9:40:

> If ye help not (your Leader) (it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him: when the unbelievers drove him out: he had no more than one companion: they two were in the cave and he said to his companion "have no fear for Allah is with us": then Allah sent down his peace [*sakenah*] upon him and strengthened him with forces which ye saw not and humbled to the depths the word of the unbelievers. But the word of Allah is exalted to the heights: for Allah is Exalted in might Wise.

Surah 9:40 recounts the incident where Mohammad and Abu Bakr (the second of two) were hiding in a cave for three nights from the pursuit of Quraush. They were fleeing from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD. Mohammad's expression of faith to his companion, Abu Bakr, was "have no fear for Allah is with us." His expression of faith was rewarded with God's peace (*sakenah*) which is the presence of angels who protected the two. Al Bukhari Hadith (5:430) confirms that the word *sakenah* is being used as help from God. It reads, "By Allah, without Allah we would not have been guided, neither would we have given in charity, nor would we have prayed. So (O Allah), please send Sakina (i.e. calmness) upon us, and make our feet firm if we meet the enemy as the enemy have rebelled against us, and if they intended affliction, (i.e. want to frighten us and fight against us then we would not)." *Sakenah* here is used as some kind of security or safety against hostility that comes from God.

Both the Qur'an and the Bible show the involvement of the angels in reference to the Ark of the Covenant. The Qur'an reports that the angels carry the ark (S 2:248). The Old Testament

indicates that Ark was covered by cherubim. These cherubim indicate the immanent presence of God in the Old Testament (Nm 7:89). Sommer (2001:49) further explains: "For example, the cherubim denote God's physical presence throughout the Hebrew Bible. In the priestly tabernacle and in the Solomonic temple described in 1 Kings, the cherubim serve as a divine throne." However, the Qur'an indirectly denies the presence of God by supplying the account that the ark was carried by the angel as, "…that chest will be carried by the angels" (Malik S 2:248), not the fact that angels provide a "divine throne." The background for understanding this verse is probably 1 Samuel 5—10 where the ark was captured by Philistines and returned to Israel and Saul was made king of Israel. Usmani (2002a:140)[70] provides the Islamic account of the context where the angels carried the ark back to the house of Saul (Taloot). In the account the angels were a convoy for the ark, not the representation of God. The ark is indicated as a sign of the kingship of Saul as in Surah 2:248. Therefore, there is no indication of God's presence in the Qur'anic account of the Ark of the Covenant.

In conclusion, the Ark of the Covenant in the Bible is the symbol of God's presence among the people of Israel which is positively confirmed by the LXX translation as, "And thou shalt make me a sanctuary, and I will appear [ὀφθήσομαι] among you" (Ex 25:8). However, the Qur'an uses the ark as a credential for Saul's kingship. The end of Surah 2:248 indicates that the ark is a symbol for the believers where they put their faith upon it. Surah 2:248 reads, "In

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[70] "There was a box with the Bani Israeel [Israel] which they had possessed through posterities. This box contained some holy relics of Hazrat Moosa (عاسلم) and other Prophets. The Bani Israeel put this box in the front line in times of war and God gave them victory by its auspices. When Jalot conquered them he also carried away that box. When God willed to bring it to the Bani Israeel He made it a cause of trouble and epidemic to the Unbelievers. Five cities of those Unbelievers were ruined and laid waste. At last they put that box on two bullocks and drove them away. The Angels drove those bullocks to the door of Taloot. When the Bani Israeel observed that sign they came to believe in his kingship."

this is a Symbol for you if ye indeed have faith." This verse might be another possible indication of human interpretation in the editorial work of the Qur'an. When the collection of the Qur'an took place, Muslims may have left out references to God's dwelling among the people in the Ark of the Covenant, as well as the pillars of fire and cloud, in order to pursue their concept of the transcendence of God. The biblical account shows that God's intention was his immanence among the people. The immanence of the transcendent God is shown through God's choice of his dwelling place as the ark located in the Most Holy Place. The Qur'anic account simply eliminates any possible connection of God's dwelling in the Ark of the Covenant and brings forth the purpose of the ark as a symbol of security and authority for Saul's kingship.

4.4.5 Presence of God and Mount Sinai

4.4.5.1 Introduction

In the Bible and the Qur'an there are clear statements that people will not able to see God. Exodus 33:20 presents a permanent prohibition that "you cannot [לֹא] see my [God] face, for no one may see me and live." The Hebrew negation (לֹא) indicates permanent prohibition (or unconditional negation) compared to temporal negation (or conditional negation) אַל. For example, the first of the ten commandments, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3) uses לֹא to indicate a timeless command for the people of God. An example of the prohibition אַל is seen in the context of Genesis 19:17. The command, "Don't look [אַל] back," was given to Lot and his family at the time of their escape from Sodom. The negation (אַל) is a conditional prohibition for a local situation of Lot. The command is not applied to a general or universal prohibition of looking back. Therefore, the negation (לֹא) in seeing God's face is

a permanent prohibition in the Old Testament. The Qur'an readily agrees with the biblical prohibition against seeing God's face. Surah 7:143 rejects the request of seeing God as, "by no means canst thou see Me (direct)." Tuft (1983:18) argues that in the translation "you will never (*lan*) see Me," the Arabic negation *lan* represents a permanent and universal denial. Thus, Surah 7:143 seemingly denies any indication of God's possible immanence with his creation.

Despite the negative statements of seeing God according to both Scriptures, Moses and Aaron together with seventy elders of Israel and Nadab and Ahibu went up to the mountain and saw God (Ex 24:9-11; S 7:155). But they did not die as the result of seeing God. Exodus 24:11 says, "But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank." After seeing God on the mountain Moses requests to see God's glory (Ex 33). If Moses saw God with the elders of Israel before, what then was Moses actually asking of God? The Exodus account and the Qur'an indicate Moses' presence on the mountain as well as his request of seeing God's glory as following:

> **Exodus 33:16-23** [16]How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" [17]And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." [18]Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." [19]And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. [20] But," he said, "you cannot

see my face, for no one may see me and live." ²¹Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²²When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

Surah 7:142-143 ¹⁴²We appointed for Moses thirty nights and completed (the period) with ten (more): thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord forty nights. And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up): "Act for me amongst my people: do right and follow not the way of those who do mischief." ¹⁴³When Moses came to the place appointed by Us and his Lord addressed him He said: "O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me that I may look upon thee." Allah said: "by no means canst thou see Me (direct); but look upon the mount; if it abide in its place then shalt thou see Me." When his Lord manifested his glory on the mount He made it as dust and Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said: "Glory be to Thee! to thee I turn in repentance and I am the first to believe." (Allah) said: "O Moses! I have chosen thee above (other) men by the mission I (have given thee) and the words I (have spoken to thee): take then the (revelation) which I give thee and be of those who give thanks."

After the Exodus from Egypt the Israelites crossed the Red Sea into the wilderness (Ex 12). They made a journey into Sinai and established a covenant with God (Ex 19). The covenant was confirmed when Moses and Aaron and the elders of the people went up to the mountain (Ex 24). As Moses was with God to receive the Decalogue (Ex 24:12), the people worshipped

the golden calf. Moses' mediation prevented a total disaster upon the people (Ex 32). As a result of his mediation, God initiated the renewal of the covenant (Ex 34). Just before the renewal Moses confronts God with a request to see God's glory (Ex 33:12-23).

Moses initiated the conversation in reference to God's calling that he should lead the people out of Egypt (Ex 33:12). God confirmed the calling with an assurance: "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Ex 33:14). However, Moses asked God for more than a confirmation of God's will. He asked for a credential of his status as "How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" (Ex 33:16). Here, Moses identified himself with the people who were distinguished from the rest of the people on earth. Then God offered Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name" (Ex 33:17). Moses did not hesitate to make his request; he wanted to see God's glory as he says: "Now show me your glory" (Ex 33:18).

The Qur'anic background to Moses on Mount Sinai is identical with that of the biblical account. Surah 7 alone provides a comprehensive story of the Exodus. The account began with Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh (S 7:104) followed by plagues upon the Egyptians (S7:132). After the Exodus (S 7:136, 138) Moses confronted God with a request of visible sight of God (S 7:143).

The first part of Surah 7:142 reads: "We appointed for Moses thirty nights and completed (the period) with ten (more): thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord forty nights." This verse indicates that Moses first spent forty days on the mountain, and afterward he instructed Aaron concerning the mischief of the people. Then Moses went to the

place where God appointed him. There Moses made his request to see the Lord. He says, "O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me that I may look upon thee" (S 7:143). Both the Qur'an and the Bible indicate that Moses requested an encounter with God. The interpretation of Moses' request would yield an insight into Moses' understanding God's presence among the people, which will define the transcendence of God.

4.4.5.2   Moses' request to see God

In both the biblical and the Qur'anic accounts Moses requested God to be able to see him on the Mount Sinai. The request of Moses (Ex 33:18) seems to refer to a visible manifestation of God's glory as it reads, "Now show me your glory." However, considering the fact that Moses and the elders of Israel have already seen God on the mountain as well as God's reply in Exodus 33:20 where it says, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live," the request appears to be a supplication for God's visual appearance. In a similar context, the Qur'anic Moses also asked to see his Lord, which is answered with the impossibility of visual observation of God as "by no means canst thou see Me (direct)" (S 7:143).

In Exodus 24:11 the leaders of the Israelites saw God and they ate and drank. Booij (1984:8) presents two different views of the meal: the phrase "eating and drinking" refers to taking part in a sacrificial meal, or a simple expression for "to stay alive." Then Booij concludes that both views have an element of truth. The text indicates the leaders of Israel had survived God's wrath when they deserved to die because they had seen God. What they saw may not have been the direct visual appearance of God since the verse indicates, "…saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself" (Ex 24:10). The description indicates that the leaders saw a visual manifestation (of

God) as "pavement made of sapphire" not God himself. God's statement (Ex 33:20) indicates that there is no exception--even to Moses--for someone to see God and live. In addition, God's response to Moses reflects that the request is to see a visual manifestation of God. If Moses saw God with the elders, he would not ask again to see God. Furthermore, in Deuteronomy 4:15, "You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire." This statement is evidence that the people did not observe the visual appearance of the Lord. The elders did not die because they did not see "God's face," but they saw a visual manifestation of the transcendent God, which the people comprehended as "seeing God."

Due to God's negative response to Moses' request, "Now show me your glory" (Ex 33:18) in the Old Testament and "O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me that I may look upon thee" (S 7:143) in the Qur'an, it is evident that the request was to observe a visual appearance of God. Savran (2003:130) argues that Moses' request to see God's glory appeared to be a request for a visual revelation to which Yahweh is unwilling to agree. However, Savran explains that the revelation had two aspects: visual and verbal. The deeper revelation is primarily verbal communication which once the visual disclosure is established, then, one moves on to the significance of verbal communication. Therefore, Savran's (2003:130) argument produces the nuance that Moses was not asking for a visual appearance of God, but a more intimate relationship than any other of the leaders of the Israelites who saw God before. This led to one possible view that Moses was petitioning about God's true self. Furthermore, the question is answered by God's own statement of himself (Ex 34:6-7): "And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the

children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.'" This is God's self revelation that provides Moses with the true nature of Yahweh.

The Qur'anic Moses' request can be similarly interpreted as in the biblical context. Concerning Moses' request to see God in Surah 7:143, Khodr (1981:167) presents two types of knowledge involved in the visions of God (*Ru'yaa*). These are inward and outward knowledge. Inward knowledge means the inward eye that sees the vision of God in the heart which God grants people in his mercy. Outward knowledge refers to the outward eye which sees physical things. This definition of *Ru'yaa* implies that God's answer to Moses, through the earthquake manifestation of God's appearance in Surah 7:143, is visible with the physical or outward eye which sees a natural phenomenon. On the other hand, there is no indication of Moses who experienced God's presence with an inward eye since the text eliminates any sort of appearance by God before him. Thus, the account reflects the transcendence of God. This would contradict biblical accounts of God's visual appearance before Moses, which indicates ontological immanence of the transcendent God.

4.4.5.3   God's response to Moses' request

In the Old Testament, God gave Moses a positive answer to his request, not necessarily to show himself with direct physical manifestation but with a more intimate vision of God. Britt (2002:58) brought the term "Revelation entails concealments" in his discussion of a scene of a type of theophany. In applying the term ("Revelation entails concealments") to the case of Moses on the mountain, he reckons, the immanence of God (revelation) must be accompanied by the transcendence of God (concealments). God, in this context, wants to answer the request of Moses, which he presumably understood as the spatial immanent

presence of God (Ex 33:20).[71] In order to grant Moses' wish, God must present himself ontologically before Moses, yet the direct revelation of God is impossible, since God declares that no one can see his face (Ex 33:20). This problem is solved by his transcendent withdrawal from Moses' direct sighting, as God grants, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you…you will see my back" (Ex 33:19). The phrase "all my goodness" hints that the physical observation is blocked for Moses, while God's back indicates a direct ontological manifestation of God.

God prohibits Moses from seeing him directly (Ex 33:20), but he allows Moses to see his back as he passes in front of Moses (Ex 33:21; 34:5-7; cf. Gn 16:13 where Hagar saw the back of God). Jacob (1992:975) asserts that seeing God's face refers to an inner experience that enables one to see the reflected splendour of God. Thus, he interprets seeing God as seeing God's glory. Durham (1987:452) says, "The human family cannot look upon Yahweh and survive: the gap between the finite and the infinite is too great; it is an experience of which man is incapable. Yahweh thus makes provision for the experience Moses is to have by designating a place on Sinai in the fissure of a rocky cliff. There Moses can stand as Yahweh's glory (= Presence) comes near and passes by." These interpretations indicate that the incident is a convincing example of the transcendence of God accompanying the immanence of God. Moses cannot see the face of God, yet he definitely experiences the presence of God. This implies, at least to Moses, that while people truly can know God by

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[71] However, Durham (1987:452) presents opposite view of the Moses' request as, "כבוד 'glory' in this context is very close to a synonym for פנים 'face, presence,' as the ensuing narrative shows. Neither term is intended to suggest 'human features.'" It is clear from the response of God that Moses actually requested to see God's physical face which God answered negatively.

experiencing his presence, they can never know him exhaustively because of his transcendent state.

Wessner (2002:114) approaches God's response with Waltke's linguistic lens. He observes the verbs involved in the passage: "You are not able to see (Qal) my face…you will see (Qal) my back, but my face will not seen by you (Niphal)." Here, Moses is clearly viewed as passive (*niphal*) in receiving God's revelation. Moses wants to be an active agent (*qal*) in seeing the God's *face*, but he could only be the active agent (*qal*) in seeing the God's *back*. Yahweh would not let his face be seen passively, but he actively reveals himself. Both verbally and physically God initiates the revelation experience. As in the other Old Testament uses of פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים (Gn 32:30; Ex 33:11; Nm 12:8; 14:14; Dt 34:10; Jdg 6:22), man can not *actively* initiate face-to-face interaction with Yahweh. Instead, Yahweh is the active initiator, and people are the passive receptors of the intimate presentation of him.

Contrary to the limited experience of the immanence of God in the biblical context, the Qur'an indicates total transcendence in Moses' request to see God. Moses says, "O my Lord! Show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon Thee" (S 7:143). God answered Moses through an angel that, if the mountain stands when he manifests his glory, then Moses will be able to see him. The mountain becomes like dust on the ground (S 7:143) and therefore God's answer is that Moses is not able to see him. The negative answer of God denies the presence of God in the context as well as any possibility of his immanent presence in the events on Mount Sinai.

However, in the Qur'anic response of God, one can perceive both a feasible and infeasible possibility of seeing God. Initially, there is a strong denial of the vision of God. Tuft

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(1983:18) says, "The emphatic reply 'you will never see Me,' which the Qāḍī interprets as a permanent and categorical denial of *ru'yā,* the terrifying destruction of the mountain and the frightened repentance of Moses all fall into narrative place as a dramatic rebuke to a sceptical people who have pushed their prophet into a terrible ordeal." He further adds that "the negative force of the *lan* particle in God's refusal is restricted to Moses and that the refusal is not categorical, since God says 'You will not see Me', not 'I am not seen'" (Tuft 1983:19). God's emphatic rejection to Moses' request denied Moses being an active agent of seeing God, yet opens up the possibility of God being an active agent of a revelation. The possibility of seeing God is confirmed in Surah 7:143 where it provides the conditional aspect of seeing God: "if it abides in its place then shalt thou see Me."

Another difficulty is the interpretation of Moses' request based on Surah 42:51 which states the fact that God speaks to man only indirectly. However, in the dialogue recorded in Surah 7:143 it is possible that the verse indicates an exception to the general rule. The verse rejects a direct confrontation between Moses and God. For that reason, "…while the nature of divine speech was a controversial problem of early Islamic theology, little or no reference to verse VII:143 was made in the discussions of the problem" (Tuft 1983:3). Tuft continually presents the interpretation of *Ru'yaa* (the vision of God).

From the earliest days of Islam *Ru'yaa* is impossible in the present. However Tuft (1983:4) argues the presumable way of *Ru'yaa* is: "The widespread belief that God would be visible in the next life, whether presiding over the Last Judgment or as the ultimate reward of paradise." The teaching of *hadith* found, with slight variations in wording in various collections, that the concept of *ru'yaa* is an ultimate reward in paradise. For example: "He raises the people of the chambers to their chambers. These are whitened with pearls, verdant

with emeralds, ruddy with rubies on their doors and within. It is everlasting morning inside; there are wives, slaves and pendant fruit. Yet of all these things none did they need more, none was greater joy to them than the sight of their Lord" (Tuft 1983:5). Sahih Al-Bukhar Hadith (1:529, 547, 770; 6:374; 9:529-536) has an extensive word of promising "You will see your Lord as clearly as the full moon" which is confirmed in the Qur'an 75:22-23: "Some faces that Day will beam (in brightness and beauty) Looking towards their Lord." Furthermore, Sahih Muslim Hadith (1:77) reads:

> The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: When those deserving of Paradise would enter Paradise, the Blessed and the Exalted would ask: Do you wish Me to give you anything more? They would say: Hast Thou not brightened our faces? Hast Thou not made us enter Paradise and saved us from Fire? He (the narrator) said: He (God) would lift the veil, and of things given to them nothing would be dearer to them than the sight of their Lord, the Mighty and the Glorious.

Again, the difficulty of interpreting Moses' request of "seeing God" may be interpreted in the non-literal sense. The non-literal interpretation is based on the Islamic belief that "the mantle of prophethood guaranteed him a certain doctrinal impeccability (*'isma*)" that Moses is assumed to enjoy a full, accurate and complete knowledge of God and His attributes, "for if Moses was pleading for optical sight of God in verse VII:143, he was ignorant of God's attributes; if he was seeking immediate knowledge of God, Moses was ignorant of epistemology as outlined by 'Abd al-Jabbar. In either case, the request threatens Moses' reliability as prophet, at least from a Mu'tazilite point of view" (Tuft 1983:13, 17). Therefore, the request of Moses must be interpreted in a non-literal sense in Islam.

God transcended all descriptions, in conclusion, that might impute corporeality to him. Incorporeally, God cannot be said to have colour, spatial location, or any other bodily qualities. On the other hand, humankind perceives corporeal qualities or bodies in a particular spatial position with respect to itself. Humankind cannot perceive the incorporeal. Direct vision of God is therefore impossible.

4.4.5.4   Spatial revelation of God

In reference to the divine-human relationship, the spatial distance between God and his people is observed on Mount Sinai. Before God revealed himself, he set the boundary around the mountain to set it apart as a holy place (Ex 19:12, 23). Then the people themselves made a distance from the presence of God as they feared the Lord's manifestation (Ex 20:18-21). Jeremiah 23:23-24 also describes Yahweh as a God of distance and nearness: "Am I only a God nearby,' declares the LORD, 'and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?' declares the LORD. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth?' declares the LORD." Lemke (1981:547-551), in his discussion of Jeremiah 23:23-24 made observations on how the distance is developed. He presents a consequence of sin as one of the significant reasons for the distance of God: "Most commonly the distance of God was something which was experienced in the life of an individual or a group of people when the relationship with God was broken because of sin" (Lemke 1981:547-548). The distance here acts as a safeguard against the undesirable experience of the holy God (Lemke 1981:547). This explains the spatial distance at the mountain as God reveals himself before Israel. When God sets a boundary to make spatial distance, he provides the reason for the consecration of the people before they cross over the boundary. Exodus 19:21-22 shows that the people must be holy before they face God's presence as it is written, "and the LORD said to him, 'Go down

and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them.'"

In spite of maintaining his transcendence, on the contrary, God removed the spatial distance by permitting Moses to stand at his appointed place. God said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock" (Ex 33:21). The phrase "a place near me" (מָקוֹם אִתִּי) literally means "a place with me." The Hebrew phrase reflects a definite spatial nearness to God as it can not apply to temporal nearness when referring to Moses' physical standing. Durham (1987:452) confirms that God's presence came near Moses in spatial terms, and hints that God provided protection over Moses for the purpose of preventing the accidental sight of God. God's provision of covering Moses in order to provide safety from seeing God directly is an indication of God's spatial revelation on the mountain. If there is no immediate spatial revelation of God on the mountain, it is not necessary for God to provide protection for Moses.

Contrary to the biblical account of God's declaration and his self-revelation, the Qur'anic account demonstrates the general manifestation of God in the form of an earthquake. Surah 7:143 pictures the earthquake phenomenon, "When his Lord manifested his glory on the mount He made it as dust and Moses fell down in a swoon" (S 7:143). Moses went up to Mount Sinai seeking a direct vision (*nazar*) of God. But God gives him the sign of the crashing mountain, thus clearly indicating the impossibility of such a vision (Khodr 1981:174).

When God answered Moses' request, Moses first saw the fearful earthquake phenomenon and he fell down in a "swoon." Concerning the state of Moses, Tuft (1983:16) concludes that the proper reading for the sentence *wa-kharra Musa sa'iqan* is that Moses fell unconscious. Accordingly, Moses experienced the presence of God (*Ru'ya*) while he was in a state of unconsciousness. Thus, God maintains his transcendence by avoiding direct revelation (*Nazar*) of his manifestation before Moses.

Khodr (1981:166) explains the difficulty of the exposition of Moses' request to see God as "There is a sense then, both in the Christian and Muslim tradition, in which we can 'see' or witness God's presence. But that which we are granted to see are God's manifestations, not His Nature." His statement, in conclusion to the context of Moses, may apply to the Qur'anic account, while in the biblical account, it brings a need for further definition of God's nature since biblical Moses experienced the presence of God in a state of spatial revelation and in his consciousness.

After witnessing the glory of God passing before him and sighting the back of God, "Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped" (Ex 34:8). The phrase "at once" (וַיְמַהֵר) carries the intensive verb (*piel*) meaning of "quickly" to indicate Moses' recognition of God's self-revelation in the biblical account. After seeing and hearing God's self declaration (Ex 34:6-7), Moses fell to the ground to worship God without hesitation. God, in response, made a covenant with him and gave further instruction to the people of Israel.

In the same way as the biblical account the Qur'anic Moses responded with worship. He also confesses his lack of faith: "Glory be to Thee! to thee I turn in repentance and I am the first to believe" (S 7:143). Then, as in the Bible, God confirmed his relationship with Moses and

gave him the revelation which is said to be the Ten Commandments (S 7:144-145). Receiving the Ten Commandments indicates that Moses, whether he saw God or not, recognised God's presence on the mountain as reflected in his worshipping of God. The biblical account convincingly indicates that the visual manifestation God was observed by Moses, while the Qur'anic account indicates that the manifestation of God is revealed as a natural phenomenon of an earthquake. The Qur'anic revelation can be said to be transcendent revelation while the biblical revelation is immanent revelation.

4.4.5.5   Leadership credibility

In the discussion of Moses' encounter with God on the mountain, the issue of the credibility of a leader in the Qur'anic text seems to play a major role in understanding the theophany on Mount Sinai. The Qur'an indicates that Moses' encounter with God on the mountain was a test of Moses (S 7:155). Furthermore, it seems that the appearance of God's glory on the mountain is interpreted in the literal sense, with physical thunder and lightning. Surah 3:183 says, "Allah took our promise not to believe in a messenger unless he showed us a sacrifice consumed by fire (from heaven)." This test of a prophet (Moses) is further elaborated on when the people "asked Moses for an even greater (Miracle), for they said: 'Show us Allah in public.'" Moreover, the people say to Moses, "We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly" (S 2:55). In addition to the people's request for leadership credentials, Husain (1959:37) sees the miracles performed by Moses in Egypt as credentials of leadership. He says:

> It may well be that the miracles of Moses were not for the purpose of convincing Pharaoh of his being a prophet and of the majesty of his God.

Rather they were to assure the Jews themselves that Moses had behind him a power greater than that of the Egyptians. Miracles frighten tyrants and strengthen the victims of oppression to hold on. The Jews were in need of many miracles before any of them were fully persuaded.

The leadership issue is further seen in Joshua 4:14 where the Lord honoured Joshua: "That day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses." The leadership choice of Joshua shows that God elected a leader with an established leadership status over the people. Therefore, in the case of Moses, the self-revelation and his request for a direct vision of God can be interpreted as improving his leadership status.

The leadership issue can be seen through several categories of God's self-revelation. First, there is a universal or general revelation of God, which can be defined thus: "General revelation, which is preliminary to salvation, reveals aspects about God and His nature to all mankind so that all humanity has an awareness of God's existence" (Enns 1997:186). In the Exodus account of Mount Sinai the people of Israel saw the thunder and lightning with a thick cloud and heard a very loud trumpet (Ex 19:16). Everyone who observed the revelation could perceive God's presence. The understanding of God's appearance on the mountain by the people is well described in Deuteronomy 18:16: "For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, 'Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.'" Whether the people understood God's appearance as a direct visual manifestation or not, the people acknowledged their hearing of God's voice and perceived God's manifestation in fire.

After God's general revelation before the general population of Israel, God reveals himself before Moses, Aaron, and seventy two leaders of Israel. Here, they saw God (Ex 24:10). In the case of Moses on the mountain (Ex 33), God reveals himself on a personal and intimate level. These two incidents can be described as special revelation which can be defined as follows: "Special revelation is narrower than general revelation. While all mankind is the recipient of general revelation, not all are the recipients of special revelation" (Enns 1989:187). It can be said that the self-revelation of God is a special revelation that indicates the immanent state of God (as in the biblical account of Moses) during the creation while general revelation tends to reflect the transcendent state of God (as in the Qur'anic account of Moses) by displaying the power of God over the creation.

"Seeing God" is Moses' request which should have enabled him to be distinguished from the other leaders and the people as a chosen leader of God. Moses may have felt this was needed since the people of Israel continuously rebelled against him. When Moses asked for God's name to be told to the elders of Israel in Egypt, he was looking for an indication of his distinguished status over them. Furthermore, the way Moses commanded Aaron to perform wondrous signs before Pharaoh and overcome the sorcerers of Egypt had established his leadership over Aaron and the Egyptians. Aaron and Miriam as well as the 250 leaders with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram challenged Moses' leadership. This challenge was an indication of unstable leadership (Nm 12:2; 16:2). Therefore, having seen God with other leaders (Ex 24:10), Moses is asking for something more than the people and the leaders saw. He wants to see a direct visual manifestation of God. For Moses, exposing himself before the visual manifestation of God will confirm and establish his strong leadership status over the people of Israel.

4.4.5.6 Synthesis

We find a scene with the people of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai and a visual appearance of God in the biblical account. On the contrary, there is a non-visual manifestation of God in the Qur'anic account. As Tuft (1983:40) defines "that visual objects require a spatial location with respect to the eye," Moses requests a visual recognition of God which was positively answered by God. On the other hand, the Qur'anic Moses' request should be understood as *Ru'yaa* (vision of God). The request was answered with a natural earthquake manifestation of God. It is a central fact in Islam that God revealed himself to man in language intelligible to both (Tuft 1983:10-11), but it is not in the same manner of a visual revelation because the God of Islam is a transcendent God.

4.4.6 Conclusion

The biblical account of Moses shows the continuation of God's immanent-transcendent presence with the people. God's continued presence is first indicated from his announcement from the burning bush. Both the fire and the voice indicate the spatial presence of God with Moses. This presence of God is confirmed through his appearance in the pillar of cloud and fire. Furthermore, the Ark of the Covenant made it possible for God's presence to continue among the people. The apex of God's immanent-transcendent presence comes from the revelation God on Mount Sinai. Moses was asking for God's spatial-ontological presence. God denied the physical, which can be called ontologically immanent revelation to Moses. However, God allows Moses to see his "back" (the immanence of transcendent revelation).

Then, God, in the account of the biblical Moses appeared before him and the people as the transcendent-immanent God.

On the other hand, in the Qur'anic accounts Moses confirms the absolute transcendence of God. Ironically, the confirmations of the absolute transcendence of God come from the same accounts that proved the immanence of God in the Bible. The mystic fire was treated as physical fire which gave light and heat instead of the continued presence of God, as in the Bible. Both the pillar of cloud and fire were used as provisions for those travelling in the desert. Furthermore, the Ark of the Covenant was used as the symbol of Saul's kingship. Finally, the manifestation of God on Mount Sinai was treated as a natural phenomenon which answered Moses' request of a vision of God (*ru'yaa*). God, in the Qur'anic account of Moses, denied his presence with the people and maintained an absolute transcendent status before man.

4.5   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

4.5.1   Introduction

Under the three major headings, "Transcendent God and Adam," "Transcendent God and Abraham," and "Transcendent God and Moses," we have looked into the transcendence and immanence of God in the Qur'an and the Bible. The passages examined were limited to the Old Testament and the Qur'an portions which are parallel to each other concerning the relationship of God with Adam, Abraham, and Moses. The three figures of the Bible and the Qur'an were chosen for the discussion of comparative understanding of the transcendence of

God, for they are foundational figures of both faiths. Additionally, the textual similarities are more comparable than with any other prophets that appear in the Scriptures.

4.5.2   Transcendent God and Adam

Three major discussions were presented under the heading of "Transcendent God and Adam." Concerning Adam's role in the creation, the biblical Adam shows a very close relationship with God, to the degree of being God's co-worker in the creation process by giving names to every animal and bird. The naming of the animals reflects Adam's rightful place as owner and ruler of those he named. However, the Qur'anic Adam clearly reflects God's purpose of man's creation as *khalefah,* who is the rightful ruler of the earth on behalf of his master, Allah. This self-domination within the limits of God's approval is identical with the biblical account. On the other hand, the Qur'anic Adam did not participate in the creation process. He was given the names of all things and simply recited them before the angels to prove man's superiority over the creation, including angels. Thus, as the creation took place solemnly upon God's will, the biblical Adam's ability to participate in the creation process indicates that there is less of a transcendental gap between man and God. In the Qur'anic account, God maintains his absolute transcendent state in the creation process as well as afterwards, when Adam is a *khalefah* (caliph) under God's pre-approved plan.

The location of the Garden and its purpose also reflects God's transcendent relationship with his creation. In Islam, the Garden of Eden and Heaven seem to be identical, as shown in its usage in the Qur'an. The purpose of the Garden was to test Adam and Eve's obedience before Allah sent them to earth as *khalefah.* The sending may reflect a punishment for their

disobedience. Afterward, heaven, which is identical to the Garden of Eden, became a place of reward for faithful believers of Islam. As a reward, heaven became an extension of earthly life without hardship or evil but with only joyous activities. On the other hand, God created the biblical garden on earth at the end of the creation as a place of rest and worship and fellowship with man. Heaven is another place of rest, worship, and fellowship with God after life on earth. In a sense, heaven is a second Garden of Eden after the first Garden became inaccessible because of man's sin. As a place of fellowship and worshipping God, there is no spatial transcendence between God and man in the Garden as Genesis 2:15 and 3:8 reflects. On the other hand, the Qur'anic garden shows the absolute transcendence of God. Since the Garden is located in heaven, the presence of God with man is observed in the heaven before the Fall only. There is no spatial immanence of God in the Qur'anic garden.

The Qur'anic and biblical accounts of the Fall of man are essentially identical. However, the result produces somewhat different implications. The creational and spatial immanence of God reflected in the biblical garden is removed by the Fall of man. And for the penalty of sin, man was to bear the curse of God as shown in Genesis 3. Being unholy with the mantle of sin, man is to be separated from the holy God, ceasing close fellowship with God in the Garden. On the other hand, in the Qur'an, man's sin was forgiven and he was sent to earth as *khalifah* to fulfil the purpose of his creation. While the Old Testament maintains the original sin because the man did not ask for forgiveness nor did God forgive them, the Qur'anic man does not carry original sin because of their repentance and forgiveness given by God. This implies that the account of the Fall does not change the status of God's transcendence in the Qur'an. On the other hand, the Old Testament indicates that the immanence of God is

diminished because of man's unrepentance and expelling from the Garden, while the transcendence of God is further imposed upon man.

4.5.3   Transcendent God and Abraham

In the discussion of the transcendent God and Abraham, both the Qur'an and the Bible talk about Abraham being the "friend of God." The Qur'an uses the word friend (*khalil*) to refer to Abraham. The Arabic word *khalil* basically indicates a friendship in reference against enmity between man and man. However, the Bible uses a more intimate word for friend, אָהֵב. This Hebrew word is used by God to refer to Abraham as his friend, which indicates God's love towards Abraham. However, when man uses a word for friend (for God or his neighbour) the word רֵעַ is used. It refers to human relationships compared to אָהֵב, which indicates an intimate relationship between God and man. The friendship recounted in the Qur'an implies a legalistic relationship where there is no enmity between God and Abraham, while the biblical Abraham was corroborated by God as being in an intimate unconditional loving relationship. Furthermore, God initiated the friendship in the biblical account, thus bringing the possibility of an immanent God. The Qur'an maintains the transcendence of God through citing the submission of Abraham that qualifies Abraham to be called "friend of God."

God's intimate friendship with Abraham in the biblical account is well reflected in "God at the entrance of the tent," with the physical manifestation of God before Abraham. However, the Qur'an maintains absolute transcendence of God for there is no account of God's appearance before Abraham. In the biblical account, close friendship is reflected through Abraham's hosting of the guests, including God, with a fellowship meal. This is followed by

God's recognition of Abraham's ascendancy over Sodom and Abraham's petition for deliverance of Sodom and its inhabitants. God's willingness to grant Abraham's request is another indication of God's close relationship with Abraham. On the other hand, the Qur'anic account further maintains God's absolute transcendence by removing the account of the third guest, who is identified as God in the Bible. There is no possibility of God's immanence in the Qur'anic account of God at the entrance of Abraham's tent.

The intimate biblical friendship of Abraham is confirmed when God tests him with the command to offer his son as a sacrifice. God tested man to know what is in his heart. Abraham passed the test with credit as a righteous man. Furthermore, he was able to perceive the presence of God as well as to receive God's provision for the offering. Similarly, the Qur'anic account of the test of offering involves Abraham's unidentified son. However, there is no account of God's appearance but only an account of rewarding Isaac as one of the Righteous. If the rewarding of Isaac confirms what he has done in obedience to God and his father, the unidentified son could relate to Isaac, as Abraham requested a righteous (son) in Surah 37:100. However, it is normal to interpret the unidentified son as Ishmael in the circle of Qur'anic scholars. In the Qur'anic account, the transcendence of God is continuously maintained without a hint of God's immanence in the scene. Yet the biblical account shows both the transcendence and immanence of God. God maintains his transcendent state by identifying himself as the angel of God and speaking from the unreachable dwelling place of God, heaven. However, Abraham perceives and sees God, therefore naming the place as, "Jehovah Jireh," which means either "The Lord will see" or "The Lord will provide." This is the understanding of Abraham concerning God's appearance on the mountain, which seems to be the prefigurative model of God's appearance before Moses.

4.5.4 Transcendent God and Moses

The major issue of God's presence in the burning bush has been the origin of the voice. In the Genesis account, God actively speaks from within the burning bush. Moses hears God's voice and reacts with proper reverence before God. However, the Qur'anic account uses a passive verb that translates as "He is called." Together with Moses' understanding of the fire as actual fire, the account of the origin of the voice indicates there is no presence of God in the burning bush narrative. However, the biblical Moses understood the fire as a fiery manifestation of God. With God's voice coming from within the bush, the biblical account shows the spatial immanence of God. However, God maintains his transcendent state from Moses by the unapproachable fire as well as by limiting Moses' advance within the boundary of holy ground.

Both the Qur'an and the Bible use the cloud to provide shade and rain. It is God's provision to his people in the desert providing comfort and blessing. However, the Exodus account in the Old Testament indicates something more than a simple natural cloud for the people; there is God's presence within the pillar of cloud. The presence of God in the pillar of cloud guides the people throughout the wilderness and protects them as well from the hands of the Egyptian army. Within the camp of Israel, the presence of God is manifested in the pillar of cloud during his discourse with the people. If the burning bush is God's manifestation to Moses on a personal level, this is a general manifestation of God before the people of Israel. Hereby they perceive God's presence by seeing and hearing the voice of God. Yet, the Qur'an does not account for God's presence in the cloud within the account of the wilderness.

Concerning the Ark of the Covenant, Exodus 25:8 reads, "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them." The sanctuary (sacred place) is later identified as the Ark of the Covenant, the place of God's dwelling [*shakinah*] and manifestation as LXX translates, "I will appear among you." However, the Ark of the Covenant is somehow unapproachable and untouchable by the people. It reflects the spatial transcendence of God while at the same time reflecting his spatial immanence among the people. In the Qur'anic account, once again, the account of God's immanence is omitted but the ark is used as the tangible sign of the authority [*shakinah*] of Saul.

The focal argument of the transcendence of God on the mountain has been the biblical Moses' request to see God's glory and the interpretation of the vision of God (*ru'yaa*) in the Qur'an. The Qur'anic Moses' request of *ru'yaa* was answered with the natural or general manifestation of God in the form of the earthquake phenomenon, which results in Islam's ontological understanding of the absolute transcendent God. On the other hand, the biblical Moses experiences the intimate outward appearance of God with the limitation of not being able to see God directly. God himself agreed to appear before Moses and showed himself as much he can allow showing himself without violating his transcendent state from man. It was God's personal self-manifestation before Moses in granting his request. While maintaining his transcendence from Moses, God appeared before Moses in order set him apart as a leader of the people to be able to guide them on behalf of God.

4.5.5   Conclusion

So far we have noted that there are minor textual differences between the Qur'anic and biblical accounts of God's relationships with Adam, Abraham, and Moses, with major

differences in understanding God's relationship with man. This is seen through exegesis of the texts, which produces both similarities and complete differences in the understanding of God's relations. Without deciding the redactor's role concerning an absence of the biblical account in the Qur'an, it is sufficient to say that on several points between the two Scriptures, they are distinctively different in expression of God's relationship with his creation.

In the Qur'an, the relationship of the examined texts is revealed as absolute transcendence of God from man. There is no indication of the possibility of God's ontological immanence with man, as those accounts are simply absent from the narratives. Conversely, the biblical accounts constantly show the immanence of God while God maintains his transcendent state from man in the form of theophany.

In the Qur'an the transcendence of God is expressed as a total spatial separation from humans and nature, so that there is no way for man to know or experience him. Furthermore, the Qur'an appears to be written to make polemic arguments against the polytheism which was common among Arabs at that time, and against the Christian concept of the Trinity. The Qur'an argues against any spatial association of humans and nature with God. This, in turn, influences its overall message about the absolute transcendence of God.

Furthermore, unlike the people of Israel who experienced both the transcendence and immanence of God, Muslim believers' lack of experience of God in their lives may also contribute to the concept of the absolute transcendence of God. This is evident because when the Qur'an retells the biblical stories of the transcendence and immanence of God, it eliminates the presence of God within the stories: for example removing the third visitor from the story of the three men who visit Abraham on the way to Sodom.

Due to these aspects of the polemic arguments and the lack of experience of God among Muslims, for "knowledge depends upon the known" (Özcan 1997:63), the message of the Qur'an may reflect that God is totally separated from his creation. On the other hand, in light of the Islamic view of transcendence, Muslims may argue that there is no transcendence of God in the Bible, since God voluntarily dwelt among the people. However, the transcendence of God does exist in the Old Testament in the way the Qur'an expresses it. Yet, the transcendence of God in the Old Testament co-exists with the immanence of God.

It seems that transcendence of God, which accompanies his immanence in the Old Testament, is due to the unholy nature of man which prevents man from coming fully into the presence of the Holy God, as is evident in the response of Isaiah before the Holy God (Is 6:5) and in the theophany at Mount Sinai (Ex 19). Furthermore, God constantly commands Israel to be holy in order for God to dwell among them (Lv 11:44-45; 15:31; 19:2; Dt 23:14). Thus, it may be concluded that the Qur'an expresses an absolute transcendence of God which denies the knowledge of God while the Old Testament paradoxically presents the transcendent-immanent God, affirming the knowledge of God but in a limited scope due to man's unholy nature.

Werner Lemke (1981:547-551) confirms that God maintains a distance from humans. He says the distance between God and man is created as a consequence of sin, resulting in the broken relationship.[72] Lemke sees a distance from the sapiential nature of God that God is all knowing and all-powerful. He calls this divine transcendence. Lemke's argument of the distance of God can be categorised into two perspectives: negative and positive. Negatively, a

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[72] Samuel Balentine (1999:20) supports that God's absence or God's withdrawals from the world is due to human transgression.

distance between God and man is created due to a break in the divine-human relationship brought about either by human sin, or through the apparent triumph of evil. Positively, a distance between God and man is created in the connotatively divine power, wisdom, providential foreknowledge, and inscrutability (Lemke 1981:551). In the sense of Lemke's argument, the Qur'anic transcendence of God is due to the divine power of God that transcends men's power, wisdom, and knowledge as seen in the argument of the transcendent God with Adam, Abraham, and Moses. On the one hand, the biblical God made his transcendent state due to the sin of man. However God wanted to be an immanent God in relation to man and thus he constantly appears before men while maintaining his transcendent state in a form of theophany. In a way, God uses a transcendent state as a method for his desire for an immanent state with man.

The transcendent-immanent God of the Old Testament and the absolute transcendent God of the Qur'an affect the relationship between God and his people, as we have already seen through God's relationship with Adam, Abraham, and Moses. Not only is the relationship shown in the Scriptures but also people's thoughts and behaviour differ from one another, which is reflected in the definitions and arguments of systematic theology and the practical life of both Christianity and Islam. These differences in the arguments of systematic theology will be investigated in the next chapter (5) based on the implication of the transcendence of God.

CHAPTER 5

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF

THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The exegesis of God's relationships with Adam, Abraham, and Moses in chapter 4 reveals that Yahweh appears before his subjects as the "immanent-transcendent God" while Allah reveals himself as the "absolute transcendent God" before man. In this consequent discussion of the transcendence of God, special attention is placed upon the implications of God's relationships through the analysis of systematic theology. The following is in no way meant to be an exhaustive analysis of Christian and Islamic doctrine. It makes no pretence as to the completeness of systematic doctrine. *This chapter is merely seeking to discover a possible cause for the differences of theology in a realm that has always been at the centre of the Christian-Muslim conflict.*

When limited to God's relationship with the religious patriarchs of Christianity and Islam— Adam, Abraham, and Moses—there are common aspects of revelation as well as significant differences observed from the previous chapter. Due to the undeniable similarities and contradictions between the two Scriptures, there have been heated arguments concerning the authenticity of the Scriptures. Three choices of interpretation may arise from chapter 2. First, with respect to the other Scripture, treating both the biblical and Qur'anic accounts as true and credible seems to be the easiest and most compromising solution for the differences of

the Scriptures. However, it will produce unchallenged questions of the differences in the accounts of God's appearances, creating conflicts in the applications of the texts. The second choice inclines towards the practical level of propagandism rather than a scholastic solution. Both Christians and Muslims will say that the differences between the Scriptures are due to the fact that the other's Scripture has been corrupted or stands as unauthenticated Scripture. This view is irrelevant and will not bring any further arguments or solutions for the contradictions. However, it is the most common opinion of the Scripture held by both Christians and Muslims. The third option is to see the Qur'an as the work of a redactor.

Due to the fact that the Bible originated before the Qur'an, with relatively strong and accurate textual studies to prove its originality along with the fact that the majority of Qur'anic stories depend upon biblical stories as its foundational resource, the Bible qualifies to be a basis to the redactor's material for the Qur'an. Furthermore, as the nature of the Qur'an leans more towards the sermonic and apologetic, it has used the biblical account to support the context of the Qur'an freely. In due time, the redactor may have adopted the biblical story to fit Islamic teaching and its context. In this process, the theology of the redactor may have influenced the adaptation of the biblical accounts of God's relationships with Adam, Abraham, and Moses as we have seen in the previous chapter. In this chapter, however, we are not focusing on the influence of the preconceptions of God, which may change biblical accounts, but on the influence of the results of the redactor's theology of God in shaping Islamic systematic theology and its implications when compared to Christianity.

In practical situations, when Muslims try to propagandize Christians, or Christians do the same to Muslims, conflict usually arises. For example, Christians regard Jesus as the savoir and Lord of all Christians; they also believe Jesus is God. For Muslims, Jesus is no more than

a prophet among the 124,000 prophets of Islam (S 4:171). He is simply a man because he was born of a woman. Furthermore, Muslims do not believe they need a savoir since the original sin (Adam's sin) was forgiven by God, for "Allah forgives all sins" (S 39:53). These differences culminate in the Christian belief of Jesus as God in the Trinity. It is the most offensive sin Muslims can commit as written in Surah 5:73: "They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy) verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them."

What is the fundamental cause of the differences? From the previous arguments of the transcendence of God, it seems that the cause is based on the different understandings of God. This chapter will analyse the influence of the transcendence of God in the areas of Christian and Muslim theology such as man, salvation, the Holy Spirit, and Scripture to clarify the differences between them. Chapter 5 concludes preliminarily that the influence of the understanding of the transcendence of God plays a major role in the dissimilarities between the theology and practices of Muslims and Christians. In the following discussion of theology, there is no special connotation for the order of the discussion or the choice of categories except for the aim of a broad discussion in the area of theology.

5.2   IMPLICATIONS FOR ANTHROPOLOGY

Every one of God's creation has its own purpose within the intention of the Creator. A singular purpose in matter reflects its relationship with a superior or connected matter; the purpose of man will reveal God's original intention of his designed relationship with man. In chapter 4, when we discussed God's relationship with Adam, the focus was to ascertain the

kind of relationship reflected between God and Adam. Here and in the remainder of the chapter, discussion will focus on how the relationship, reflected in chapter 4, shapes the overall theologies of Christians and Muslims and their practices of religious faith.

Out of the several purposes of man, both the Qur'an and the Bible agree on the purpose of man's creation as ruler over the earth in Surah 2:30 and Genesis 1:26. Surah 2:30 indicates the purpose of man as well as angels:

> **Surah 2:30** Behold thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said "Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not."

From the meaning of the word "vicegerent" (*khalefah*) in Surah 2:30, God's purpose in creating man is to appoint him deputy-ruler over the earth on behalf of Allah. The purpose of angels is indicated from their own statement of duty as: "we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)." Surah 2:30 describes that the purpose of angels is to serve and worship Allah, while man is to rule over the earth.

The biblical purpose of man is first reflected in Genesis 1:26:

> **Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

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The purpose reflected in Genesis 1:26 can be said to correspond to the Qur'anic purpose as a ruler over the earth. The purpose of man as ruler is also shown in Genesis 2:15 as "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." The traditional English translation clearly indicates man's role in the Garden as a servant or caretaker.

However, according to the exegesis of chapter 4 (4.2.3.2), Genesis 2:15 can be interpreted from different perspectives. With the cumulative power of arguments from the cognitive meaning and grammatical issue of the verse, we can translate Genesis 2:15 as "The LORD God took the man and caused him to rest in the Garden of Eden to worship *God* and obey the *commandment.*" This is also supported by Isaiah 43:7 where it clearly expresses the purpose of Israel as "everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." Here the word "everyone" first refers to the people of Israel whom God created and formed (Is 43:1) and then to mankind in general—especially to God's people "to the ends of the earth" (Is 43:6). This purpose of man, to worship and praise God, corresponds with the purpose of the angel in Surah 2:30. The biblical man is to be the ruler of the earth while at the same time he is to worship God, which the Qur'anic angel is supposed to do.

In the Bible, man is created in the image of God to look after God's creation on earth (Gn 1:26, 28). Man is to have fellowship with God through praise and worship (Is 43:21). Man takes part in the creation process by naming the animals and the birds (Gn 2:19). Furthermore, man is called a "friend" of God, indicating a personal fellowship (Job 29:4; 2 Chr 20:7; Is 41:8). Enoch's "walk with God" (וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ חֲנוֹךְ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים) may further support the idea of personal fellowship of man with God. As the LXX (Gn 5:24) translates εὐηρέστησεν δὲ Ενωχ τῷ θεῷ (And Enoch was well-pleasing to God), walking with God

implies a personal relationship that pleases God. Hebrews 11:5 also describes Enoch "as one who pleased God." In the Old Testament, such a personal relationship demonstrates that the transcendence of God accompanies his immanent appearance to man. The immanent relationship becomes epic when God appears to his people and refers to them as "sons" to establish the father-son relationship in the Old Testament (Ex 4:22; 2 Sm 7:14; Jr 3:19; Hs 11:1) as well as in the New Testament. John 1:12 indicates that through Jesus, believers have a right to call God, "Father."

On the other hand, the Qur'anic man's account from chapter 4 indicates that man is not to have fellowship with Allah. Even though man (Abraham) is called "friend of God," the implication of the relationship is not the same as the biblical relationship. It merely indicates a lack of enmity between Allah and man. There is no indication of immanent fellowship of Allah with man in the Qur'an.

Therefore, even though both the Qur'an and the Bible agree on the fundamental nature of man, such as the creation of man and his ruling of the earth, the relationship shown between God and man is different. The difference in the relationships is that of God's presence among man. In other words, the difference is whether God shows a transcendent relationship or immanent relationship, as displayed in the Bible or in the Qur'an.

The critical issue for God's relationship with man may come from the argument of the creation of man as being in the "image of God." Both Christians and Muslims confirm that man is created in the image of God. In the Bible, the creation of man in the image of God is clearly indicated.

Genesis 1:26-27 [26]Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." [27]So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Here, in Genesis 1, both God's intentions and the result of man's creation depict man as in the "image of God." Notice that both man and woman (זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, male and female) are created in the image of God (v 27). However, the Qur'anic creation indicates that woman is created as the companion of man: "And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); verily in that are Signs for those who reflect" (Surah 30:21). Ali (1980:1012) interprets the "mates from among yourselves" as woman being a sexual partner to man and the "love and mercy" as the result of sex that produces offspring. Maududi (1988:204) also says the "love" indicates sexual love while "mercy" implies the spiritual relationship between man and woman that maintains the relationship between the two when "in old age sexual love falls into background." These interpretations indicate that woman in the Qur'an was created for the purpose of man's sexual fulfilment, not as a being in the image of God created as an equal partner to man as in Genesis 2:18.

The biblical account seems to present woman as a companion to man in Genesis 2:18, "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" Woman being a "helper" here is not connoting that she is inferior to man, for God is also called "a helper" (עֵזֶר) in Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:29, Psalms 27:9, 118:7, and Hosea 13:9 (cf. Heb 13:6). Furthermore, the word "suitable" (נֶגֶד) as an adjective means "in

front of " or "counterpart" (Holladay 1988:226). The meaning of the root (נגד) is "to place a matter high, conspicuous before a person" and the fullest expression of the root is from a derivative of the idea of prominence from the word נָגִיד, meaning "ruler," "leader," and "captain" (Coppes 1980:549-550). Therefore, the implication of the word "suitable" (כְּנֶגְדֹו, "as his counterpart") is in no way that woman is a helper to man, but that she is an equal partner to man, not inferior to man. This is an indication of the equality between male and female as it is reflected in Genesis 2:24 where it shows that man and woman are in unity. Both male and female are "man" whom God created in Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." There is no difference in status between them but both are created in the image of God.

In Islam, the image of God is not discussed among the orthodox believers due to the lack of Qur'anic support of man's creation in the image of God. The Qur'an has no expression of man's being created in God's image (Baljon 1988:119). It merely states that God created him in the nicest design as: "We have indeed created man in the best of moulds" (S 95:4). However, Surah 15:29 indicates something similar to the biblical account of man's creation in Genesis 2:7.

> **Surah 15:29** "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit fall ye down in obeisance unto him."

> **Genesis 2:7** the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Beside the direct reference of man's creation in the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27, God's breathing into man in Genesis 2:7 refers to man's creation in the image of God. Similarly, Qur'anic scholars interpret God's breathing in Surah 15:29 as an indication of the image of God.

Haq (1972:282) asserts that man is the synthetic totality of the material world. His argument is that man is created from primary material, dust, into a figure by the moulding of clay, and completed with God's breathing his Spirit into him. God finished the creation of man with the completion of the human soul with the knowledge and wisdom of all things. In Haq's argument, the knowledge and wisdom of all things refer to God's breathing of his spirit into man. At first, Haq's statement seems to indicate the biblical creation of man in the image of God (Gn 2:26). However, his statement is based on the direct reference from the Qur'an which refers to the creation of man as vicegerent on earth (S 2:30). Similarly, Kenneth Nolin (1964:8-9) argues that man is created with God's attributes while the angel is created with nature's attributives. Here, Nolin also refers to God's breathing of his spirit as God's attributes of human knowledge and ability superior to that of nature. Therefore, the Qur'anic account of man's creation in the image of God stands in contrast to the biblical account.

Siddiqi (1993:44) comments on God's spirit: "Human beings are composed of two elements: the material elements and the divine Spirit (*rūh*) that God blows into a human being before his/her birth (15:29; 28:72; 32:9). This divine spark exists only in human beings and it is for this reason that they are called the noblest of the divine creation—as—*hraf al-makhlūqāt* (17:70; 95:4)." Here, Siddiqi refers to the divine spark or God's spirit as the ability to make "the freedom of choice (*ikhtiyār*)," to choose between right and wrong, between good and evil. The important contribution Siddiqi makes is not the issue of "the freedom of choice" but

man's ability to make the choice. Man, as a higher creation of Allah ("the noblest of the divine creation"), has that ability which distinguishes him from the rest of the divine creation.

Finally, Nūsair (1985:153) says "Man is composed, then, of two contradictory elements, clay (evil) and the spirit of God (good)." Therefore "man is superior to the angels and the whole of creation because of his ability to learn and acquire knowledge" (Nūsair 1985:155). Once again, Nusair's argument concludes that the spirit of God is man's ability in ontological superiority over the rest of God's creation.

The biblical definition of man's creation in the image of God has some similarities to that of the Qur'anic scholars' arguments. Man is not created in the physical image of God, but God has given man abilities greater than the rest of creation. God has distinguished man by giving him some of his (God's) characteristic attributes such as authority, responsibility, the ability to communicate, the ability to distinguish between good and evil, and life after death. Enns (1989:184) confirms: "The image of God is spiritual, not physical….Man is not simply a physical being, but also a moral being with a conscience, intellect, emotion, and will." Chafer (1947:157) adds "There are philosophical and moral features in man's constitution which may be traced back to find their origin in God." This is essentially identical with Qur'anic arguments of man's qualification as vicegerent on earth. However, there are other aspects to man's creation in the image of God.

Wayne Grudem (1994:445-449) discusses the image of God under five categories: the moral, spiritual, mental, relational, and physical aspects. Besides the relational aspects of the image of God, we have already confirmed and discussed the agreement between the Islamic and Christian concepts of the image of God. In discussing the relational aspect, Grudem

compares the aspects between man and animal. The difference is that believers are able to walk in fellowship with God, while animals cannot (Grudem 1994:447). This analogical explanation of fellowship with God is confirmed in the Old Testament as Enoch (Gn 5:22, 24) and Noah (Gn 6:9) walk with God. Furthermore, Abraham is called "friend of God," one who is able to have fellowship with God (2 Chr 20:7; Is 41:8; Ja 2:23). When we come to the New Testament, the fellowship between God and man in the relational aspect of the image of God is seen through Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15, Jesus is described as "the image of God." Colossians 1:15 indicates that "He is the image of the invisible God." Thus, because Jesus represented God on earth among man, man did have ontological and spatial fellowship with God.

Therefore, the implication of the image of God allows man to possibly be in a relationship with God as shown in the Bible. The Old Testament indicates God's physical presence among man as "Immanuel" (עִמָּנוּאֵל, "with us is God"). The background of this phrase is Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." This reading in the Old Testament is fulfilled by Jesus in Matthew 1:21-23 where the prophecy of Isaiah is repeated with the birth of Jesus as:

> **Matthew 1:21-23** [21]She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." [22]All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: [23]"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."

The same "Immanuel" concept of God allows the presence of "the Angel of the Lord" (Gn 16:7-11; 22:11-15; Ex 3:2) and "the Captain of the Lord" (Jos 5:14) to be the appearance of God in the Old Testament. Furthermore, in the New Testament, Jesus as God incarnate, as well as the Holy Spirit's indwelling among the believers, is possible without any conflict with God's attribute of his transcendence.

However, in Islam, God cannot associate with man because of the absolute transcendence of God. Islam first denies man's creation in the biblical image of God, for there is nothing like God in the world (S 42:11). On the other hand, the image of God is interpreted with man's functional attribute. Yahya (1959:20) presents the concept of human values as very closely tied with the purpose of man: "For man is made in the image of God. He is God's representative on earth [S 2:30]." The image of God, then, is the ability to rule God's creation on his behalf. The functional attributive interpretation of the "image of God" in Islam limits the purpose of man's creation as to viceroy or vicegerent (*kahlifa,* S 2:30). The function of viceroy indicates man is a slave (*abd,* servant) to an unknown master. Both Hebrew and Arabic call for the root word *abd* as "slave" or "servant." In the implication of the root *abd*, a servant should know his master and take responsibility of his duty. The master does not have to make his will known to his slave as in the Islamic concept of man. Then, the slave (believer) lacks a personal relationship with his master (Allah), but requires total submission. However, this slave is the highest creation of God, as the angels must bow down to man in respect of his ability to memorize all the names of the creation that were given by God (S 7:11). On the other hand, as a servant of God in the Bible, man is still lower than angels. For example, the clause in Hebrews 2:7, "You made him a little lower than the angels," refers to the humanity of Jesus as well as the entire race of man.

Man, created in the image of God, is the greatest evidence of the existence of God in biblical theology. In Islam "God has poured the largest number of his bounties upon man" (Haq 1972:289). The bounties mainly refer to the ability of the soul to gain knowledge through judgment and analysis, an ontological superiority over any other creature including the angel. However, Christianity teaches that man can know God in a limited way by partaking in a covenantal relationship with him. Thus the image of God reflects a more highly attributed quality over all creatures. In Islam, on the other hand, man is a part of the creation with which God has no relationship; man lives in total submission to God.

The fact that in Islamic doctrine man is a viceroy enforces the notion of the transcendence of God. Being a ruler of the earth on behalf of God—man was appointed as viceroy in the beginning and there was no further communication regarding his ruling—means total separation and autonomy from God. This implies that God is being total transcendent from man as well as from his creation. On the other hand the biblical man, as a servant of God and in the image of God, has to depend upon God for his existence on earth. This man's dependence upon God brings God's active involvement into the history of humanity. By being involved in the affairs of man, God became an immanent God. On the other hand, by emphasizing the autonomy of man, Islam express non-dependence upon God, and thus God becomes the absolute transcendent God.

In conclusion, in Islam, God cannot be with man and his creation. Apart from the reflection of Allah's general immanence displayed as a result of his creation, he cannot be with the creation for Allah is the absolute transcendent God. For this reason, Allah created man to be a deputy-ruler over his creation. In order for man to rule God's creation, Allah bestowed superior ability unto man when he breathed his spirit (ability) into him. As a result, man on

earth rules the creation on behalf of his creator. On the other hand, in the biblical creation of man, there are indications of the immanence of the transcendent God. When God created man, he clearly stated a purpose similar to Islam's purpose for man as a ruler over the earth. However, the implication of the man in God's image means the ability to have fellowship with God. Thus, the Christian doctrine of incarnation or "Immanuel" (God is with us) is not a violation of God's transcendent state from the creation since man is created in God's image. This allows for the interpretation of God's presence with humans throughout the Bible—in the Old Testament, God appears in the form of an angel as well as the Angel of the Lord and Captain of the army of the Lord before man (Gn 16:7-13; 22:11-16; Ex 3:2-5; Jos 5:14-6:2). The New Testament indicates Jesus as incarnated God and the Holy Spirit as the indwelling Spirit of God among people (Jn 1:1-18; Col 1:15-20; 2:9; Phlp 2:5-11; Jn 14:16; 1 Cor 6:19; Rm 8:9).

5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR SOTERIOLOGY

In reference to the discussion of salvation between the Qur'an and the Bible, one of the most intriguing verses of the Qur'an is from the account of Joseph. Surah 12:53 reads: "Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human soul) is certainly prone to evil unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely certainly my Lord is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful." Kenneth Cragg (2004:15) says the clause "the (human soul) is certainly prone to evil" is the closest Qur'anic concept to that of the Christian view of sin. In the account of Joseph's suspected unfaithfulness (S 12), the Prince's wife confesses that it was she who sought to seduce Joseph and that he remained chaste and faithful. Joseph attributes the vindication to the will of God and says it was through the mercy of God that he was able to keep away from sin. Joseph gives thanks to God for his salvation as he acknowledges that every man is sinful.

When Joseph recognises that every man is sinful, what was Joseph's understanding of man as sinful; did he mean the biblical understanding of original sin?[73]

The discussion of the similarity and dissimilarity in Soteriology between Islam and Christianity may first begin with a definition of sin. Both Christians and Muslims consider the concept of sin in a similar way as we have seen from the confession of Joseph. Briefly, sin in Islam may be defined as a "mistake" while Christianity defines sin as a "transgression of the law of God." However, the differences in the results of sin may come from a further definition of sin as well as the concept of original sin and forgiveness of sin.

Siddiqi (1993:45) presents a proper summary of the Islamic understanding of sin and salvation:

> In order to understand the nature of salvation one has to know what is sin according to Islam. Not to follow the laws of God is sin. Sin is violation of divinely established rules given by His prophets. There are sins of omission and sins of commission. Not to do what God has commanded to do is omission and to do what God has forbidden is commission…The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (2:30-39 et al) is mentioned in the Qur'ān as a paradigm of human weakness and vulnerability to be misled by Devil. Islam, however, does not accept any original sin. Every child is born innocent and Islam has no concept of inherited sin. A person is not a sinner

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[73] Louis Berkhof (1938a:244) defines the original sin as "the sinful state and condition in which men are born." It is referring to the inherent nature of sin that entered the world as the result of Adam and Eve's sin (Gn 3; Rm 5:12).

unless he/she commits a sin…To overcome sin one must have repentance

(*tawbah*). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "One who repents from sin

is like one without sin." Repentance, however, must be sincere and true.

To be more specific, Siddiqi (1993:48) categorises sin in Islam into six different categories: (1) evil actions, *sayy'āt* (S 7:153), (2) offences to the laws of God, *Dhunūb* (S 3:31), (3) mistakes, or actions in which one misses the mark by not doing the right thing, *khati'āt* (S 2:286), (4) an action that brings rebuke and blame, *junah* (S 33:5), (5) misdeeds and serious crimes, *Ithm* (S 4:112; 5:29), and (6) lapse and an error, *zallah* (S 2:209). All six classes of Islamic sin are essentially human mistakes against the law of Allah. Thus, keeping away from these classes of mistake, man can achieve the state of being without sin, for one who cleanses himself from sin is without sin. The Islamic concept of sin denies the Christian notion of original sin for every person is responsible for one's own actions (Braswell 1996:57).

The forgiveness of sin in Islam somewhat contradicts the Christian concept. Surah 39:53 indicates that Allah forgives all sins as "Say: my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful." Furthermore, Allah is not bound to punish the sins of the believers in Surah 4:147: "What can Allah gain by your punishment if ye are grateful and ye believe? Nay it is Allah that recogniseth (all good) and knoweth all things." These two facts, namely that every sin is forgivable and that God does not necessarily punish the sinner, bring fundamental differences in implications in comparison with the Christian view. For example, Muslims will deny the need for Christ's substitutionary death, for every sin is forgivable. Thus there is no fear of the consequence of sin, for God will not punish the sins of believers.

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There is no need for a Saviour. Corduan (1998:46) confirms the differences in the concept of sin between Islam and Christianity:

> But one of the most fundamental incongruities between God as depicted in Islam and in biblical theism lies in Allah's capacity to overlook sin. In contrast to the biblical teaching, epitomised by 1 John 1:5, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," Allah is free to pardon sin at his discretion without any provision, such as an atonement. His holiness is not violated by human sin.

Muslims are convinced that salvation is largely about material blessings of prosperity and welfare (*fahah*). The material blessing and security of salvation is expressed with the formation of *Umma*, an Islamic community. "The Umma is the community of Allah" (Shenk and Kateregga 1980:48). It is not centred on tribe, nationality, race, or linguistic grouping. It is "a religio-political (or theocratic) community, founded and governed according to the Shari'a (Islamic law). Religious affiliation in the Muslim's mind is therefore essentially equivalent to nationality, and to political and cultural affiliation" (Schorff 1980:360). For Muslims, the identification of themselves with the *Umma* is their life and salvation. Within the *Umma* Muslims find security and protection from the non-Muslim community. To be a Muslim means to be a member of the *Umma* and therefore a brother to fellow Muslims, the definition of salvation on this earth. For as long as one is part of the *Umma*, the protection and welfare of the believer is guaranteed. Stern (1980:90) infers that Al-Ghazzali, one of the most influential personalities of classical Islam, considers the source of salvation not from God, but purely based on individual effort as, "Each man stands for judgment as an individual. Also, each person's struggle for salvation must be based on his own strengths and

weakness as an individual." The zeal of individual salvation consummates in the implications of *Umma* for self protection as well as the propagandism of Islam that forms the *Umma*. Further discussion of the *Umma* is elevated in this chapter (5.6).

Eternal salvation can be elucidated from the activities in the heavens. The most detailed description of activities in heaven is found in Surah 56:1-40. In the Garden of Bliss, believers will recline on couches made of expensive gemstones. They will be served by youths (young men) of perpetual freshness, drinking from a river of wine without becoming intoxicated. They will eat fruits and meats as they wish, and enjoy companionship—"the highest pleasure of bodily form, sex," (Ali 1989:1410)—of perpetual virgins with beautiful, big, lustrous pearl-like eyes. This sensual activity in heaven is a result of the Islamic concept of the absolute transcendence of God; even in heaven, man is separated from the presence of God, which allows for the continuation of the physical, sensual activities of earthly life. Due to the Muslim's concept of heaven as an eternal extension of the physical existence of this life, the concept of eternal salvation becomes the same as that of being a member of *Umma*.

When considering who has the right to enter heaven, the answer differs in Christianity and Islam. In Islam, man does not need salvation from sin's guilt or power, since he is not a sinner by nature (Schorff 1980:347). For a Muslim, sin is only erring from the religious law. Therefore, in Islam a man has no need of salvation (of Christian salvation). Man already has the capability to obey God, and needs only to be guided and strengthened in order to fulfil his responsibility towards his Creator (Nehls 1991:186). Apart from martyrs for the faith, the promise of Paradise is made only to those who repent of their sin, believe in Islam, and are righteous in act (Hamilton 1949:54). On the other hand, no Muslim is sure about his/her

status. During the Judgment, God will measure the good and bad deeds of Muslims and will make a decision as to who qualifies to enter heaven. Muslims believe angels sit on both sides of a man's shoulder to record the good (right side angel) and bad (left side angel) deeds in the book of deeds, which will open at the time of judgment (S 39:69; 54:52). According to the record, if the good deeds are heavier than the bad deeds, such Muslims will cross over a sword-like bridge to heaven. Otherwise, Muslims fall from the bridge to hell. However, Muslims generally believe that those who are condemned to hell eventually end up in heaven after their bad deeds are washed away during their suffering in hell (Nehls 1991:45; Kripalani 2004:113). Then, in the end, all Muslims will eventually go to heaven, but the length of time they must first spend in hell depends on their deeds on earth; the length is dependent upon Allah's decision (S 6:128; 11:107). Furthermore, the Hadith (Muslim 1371; Al-Bukhari 4:567) says "from every one thousand, take out nine-hundred-and ninety-nine"; these will go to hell. This popular belief contradicts the Islamic doctrine of predestination, which says that some are destined to go to paradise and some to hell (S 7:43; 9:51; 16:93; 43:76), and all black people are destined for hell (Al-Tirmidhi Hadith 38).

Siddiqi (1993:41) demonstrates the root cause of the above problems of the Islamic view of salvation when he says that modern Muslim writers have completely denied that Islam has any concept of salvation. His reason for this assertion is that in order to have a concept of "salvation" there must be a "Fall." In Islam there is no concept of the "Fall." For this reason, Al-Faruqi (1979:9) says "salvation" is an improper term and humans can save themselves by deeds and works. Consequently, in Islam, God has no involvement in the process of salvation, which means the transcendence of God is maintained rather than the immanent action of God being involved, as in the Christian concept of salvation.

Concerning original sin, different interpretations of original sin in Islam and Christianity would result in fundamental differences in the concept of salvation. As Jesus took the place of atonement for the original sin, which opened the way to restore man's relationship with God, Christianity supports the concept of salvation through the substitutionary death of Christ. Berkhof (1938b:106) comments that the Old Testament sacrifices prefigured the atoning work of Christ (Lv 1:4; 4:20, 30, 35; 5:10, 16; 6:7; 17:11). However, in Islam, as Adam was forgiven his sin through the sacrifice of an animal (S 2:37), Islam denies the original sin of Adam as well as the vicarious death. Furthermore, "Islam is firmly of the opinion that the human soul is essentially good and that the transgressor is one who wrongs his own soul" (Cragg 2004:7-8). Eternal salvation, therefore, is entering heaven through the final judgment when God will measure both the good and bad deeds to decide a person's salvation. Islamic salvation is expressed by entering a paradise that is the physical extension of earthly pleasures. On the other hand, a Christian faces salvation before entering the eternal fellowship of heaven by restoring the original-personal relationship with God through the acceptance of the fact that Jesus took the sins of the person; Jesus is the means of reconciliation. The final outcome of Christian salvation is restoration of the immanent relationship with God while Islamic salvation does not refer to God's involvement but individual welfare is expressed in the implication of the *Umma* on this earth.

Unlike the Islamic concept of sin based on people's weakness, forgetfulness, or ignorance, which can be made up for by good deeds before the Judgment, the Christian view of sin is based on the relationship between man and God. When man breaks the law of God, man is separated from God. This is first seen in the Garden when Adam and Eve disobey God; as a result, they were separated from the presence of God in the Garden. The people of the Old Testament are saved by the re-establishment of a relationship with God through a legal

covenant in Genesis 12, where Abraham and his seed (progeny) enter the relationship of the covenant. In the New Testament, the covenantal relationship is continued with the Church. Muslims seem to replace this covenantal relationship with the imagery of the *Umma*, which shows the relationships between humans.

The Arabic phrase, "*Istaghfir Allah*" (Seek forgiveness of God), is one of the common words of Muslim prayer. In its implications for the transcendence of God, the interpretation of Surah 3:177 ("Those who purchase unbelief at the price of faith not the least harm will they do to Allah but they will have a grievous punishment") may contribute to the understanding of salvation. The phrase "not the least harm will they do to Allah" shows that God is neither directly nor indirectly involved with man. It brings forth no indication of God's involvement in the Fall of man. However, in the Bible, God shows his emotion when men sin. In Genesis 6:5-6, when the condition of men became so wicked "The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain." God's reaction to man's sinful state indicates God's involvement in the salvation of man and reflects the immanence of God in the relationship.

So far the discussion of the differences in salvation between Islam and Christianity focused on the implication of God's immanence in the areas of the definition of sin, original sin, and substitutional death. The different implications of salvation in Islam and Christianity are based on the understanding of God's relationship with man. To Muslims, God is unreachable and unknowable, and cannot have any kind of relationship with humankind. Thus, salvation has nothing to do with the restoration of a peaceful relationship with God. Instead, Islam institutes a peaceful relationship among people, one that ensures material and sensual comfort on earth and in heaven. This is formulated as the community of Islam, the *Umma*.

On the other hand, the people of Israel experience the transcendence of God as a result of sin, and the immanence of God from their salvation. The restoration of the relationship began immediately after Adam's sin of disobeying God, the initiating point of the original sin. It is God who approaches man for their salvation, first to Israel then to the Church in the New Testament. Salvation as restoration of the relationship is possible because of the concept that God is not absolutely transcendent. The God of Christians is a transcendent and an immanent God who can be with man (Immanuel). Thus, for the salvation of man, Jesus, as God on earth, is able to fulfil the requirement for salvation (Rm 6:10; Heb 7:27; 10:2, 10; 1 Pe 3:18).

5.4   IMPLICATIONS FOR PNEUMATOLOGY

Concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Qur'an and other Islamic scholarly works provide no evidence that Muslims have any knowledge of the (biblical) Holy Spirit. However, in the Qur'an, there are several direct references to the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-qudus*). First in Surah 16:102, it is mentioned as the inspiring agent of the revelation of the Qur'an; the Holy Spirit is treated as a title for the Angel Gabriel (Ali 1989:664). The Holy Spirit is also mentioned twice in Surah 2:87 and 2:253 as the divine power which aided Jesus. Surah 5:110 shows that Jesus is strengthened by the Holy Spirit or Holy Inspiration (*ruh al-qudus*) in the English translations (Asad, Malik, Pickthall, Yusuf Ali etc.) In addition, Surah 70:4, 38; 97:4; 15:29; 17:85-86, and 58:22 describe the believers with the Spirit of God. These verses use the word "spirit," not the "Holy Spirit," and thus Muslims do not view them as relevant evidence for discussions of the Holy Spirit. However, in reality, Islamic commentators simply refuse to comment on these verses, partly due to a lack of knowledge and personal experience of the Spirit. They simply state that the Holy Spirit is the Angel Gabriel (Ali 1989:664; Ataur-Rahin 1980:209, 217). The Jalalain, al-Baidawi, and Muslim commentators

in general maintain that this Holy Spirit is the Angel Gabriel, who sanctified Jesus and constantly aided him (Adelowo 1980:125). Consequently, this interpretation leads to the conclusion that the father of Jesus was Gabriel, which conflicts with the Christian belief of the Holy Spirit as One of the Trinity (Mt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14).

Unlike the negative attitudes of orthodox Islam on the subject of the Holy Spirit, the Sufis attempt to see the work of the Spirit of God upon man. The Sufis treat all spirits, including the spirit of man as created. But the Spirit of God, which is the Holy Spirit, is not created. "The Holy Spirit is holy, pure and free from any defects (*naqa'is*)" (Al-Din 1980:102). They see the presence of God in Surah 2:115 as the prevailing Spirit of God. Surah 2:115 says: "To Allah belong the East and the West; whithersoever ye turn there is the presence of Allah. For Allah is All-Pervading All-Knowing." Here, "the presence" is literally "face" (*wajh*) which is also translated as "countenance." The Sufis treat the countenance of God as his Spirit.

Al-Din (1980:102) comments on the Holy Spirit in man: "Everything in the sensible world (*álam al-mahsusat*) has a created spirit (*ruh makhluq*) and that spirit has a divine spirit (*ruh ilahi*) which is the Holy Spirit. For this reason people will find that the Holy Spirit in man is created because of the incompatibility of having two eternal beings, since God alone is eternal." According to Al-Din's argument, the Holy Spirit is not able to stay with man because of the conflict between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God in man at the same time. Therefore, even though they argue the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Sufis deny the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in man.

As we have observed, the Qur'an presents the Holy Spirit in many occasions, yet its interpretation is opposite to that of the Bible. The Qur'an speaks of the Holy Spirit as "the

Spirit" (*ruh,* S 15:29), "Holy Spirit" (*ruh al-qudus,* S 2:87), and "Faithful Spirit" (*al-ruh al-amiin,* S 26:193). Accounts of the Spirit are very similar to biblical accounts, such as God's breathing of life into Adam in the creation (S 15:29), Jesus' prophecy of the coming of the Holy Spirit (S 61:6), and a Spirit proceeding from Jesus (S 4:171). Islamic scholars interpret this Spirit as the Angel Gabriel (Ali 1989:664). Others say it is the spirit of holiness. Mawdudi (2006:205-206) comments on Surah 4:171 where Jesus was bestowed with the Holy Spirit: "The import of both verses is that God endowed Jesus with a pure, impeccable soul. He was, therefore, an embodiment of truth, veracity, righteousness, and excellence." Mawdudi treats the Holy Spirit as the spirit of man but with a higher degree in excellency. This is the result of the Islamic theology of the absolute transcendence of God; that there will be no other deity besides God and Allah cannot be associated with anything else.

In the Bible the Spirit of God is evidence of the immanence of God or his presence in the life of believers. The first instance of God's immanence is in Genesis 1:2, where "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." The verb "hovering" (מְרַחֶפֶת) refers to God's "Glory-Presence." It occurs again in Deuteronomy 32:11, which uses the metaphor of God as an eagle that hovers over its young, the people of Israel, as they travel out of Egypt (Kline 1980:14).

Furthermore, the Spirit of God within believers of the Old Testament gives them the power or strength to defeat the enemy of Israel. Examples include Gideon (Jdg 6:34), Japheth (Jdg 11:29), Samson (Jdg 13:25; 14:6), Othniel (Jdg 3:10), and Saul (1 Sm 11:6). Furthermore, the Spirit provides Bezalel, son of Uri, with the skill to finish building the tabernacle (Ex 31:3). These accounts indicate that God's transcendence in the Old Testament is accompanied by the immanence of his power through the presence of God's Spirit among the people. The

relationship between God and man is expressed here as horizontal; God is inter alia among man in the form of the Spirit.

In the New Testament, the coming of the Holy Spirit is pronounced by Jesus (Lk 24:49). This is fulfilled in Acts 2:4 when the disciples are gathered together to wait upon the promise at the day of Pentecost. The Spirit of God is here shown to dwell among the believers permanently (Jn 14:16). The indwelling act of the Holy Spirit is evidence of God's immanence among believers. As Yahweh is expressed as "immanence of the transcendent God," he is able to present himself to man through the Holy Sprit. On the other hand, in Islam, Allah being the "absolute transcendent God" does not associate with man by any means. He must maintain distance from man on earth as well as in heaven. Thus, any indication of God's immanence through the Holy Spirit is interpreted as the immanent appearance of the Angel Gabriel. Therefore, the theology of the Holy Sprit in Islam and Christianity is shaped by the concept of God's closeness to man.

5.5   IMPLICATIONS FOR BIBLIOLOGY

One well-known Muslim leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi (Bogere 2008:20), made the following statement on the Scriptures at the anniversary of the birth of Mohammad:

> The Bible we have now is not the one that was revealed to Issa and the Old Testament is not the one that was revealed to Musa. Mohammed is mentioned in both (original versions), but the Torah and Bible we have now, there is no mention of him (Mohammad). It means that it (Bible) has been forged. Prophet Mohammed (SAW) was sent to mankind. Allah wanted

mankind to have one religion. The Koran that we have is the only book that
was sent by Allah. We believe in the Bible as well as the Torah [original
versions].

Gaddafi's statement on the Scriptures represents a belief of Muslims regarding the Bible and
the Qur'an, which may close the door of inter-dialogue regarding the Scriptures. Negative
attitudes toward other Scriptures are not limited to Muslims only but extended to Christians
as well. For example, Poston (2000:181) views the revelation of the Qur'an as the work of
Satan: "Mohammad may indeed have been a sincere seeker after God and in many respects
led an exemplary life, the tragic truth is that he was deceived by a satanic angel." Here, it is
sufficient to present the problem concerning the Scriptures from the other's point of view. On
the other hand, implications of the transcendence of God to bibliology should first deal with
believers' attitudes toward the Scriptures.

Aasi (1986:65) presents the Muslim's view of their Scripture: "To the Muslim, the Qur'ān is
the Word of God. It is the Speech of Allāh (Kalām Allāh), verbatim, as the Muslim believes it
and receives it. The Qur'ān as the Revelation from Allāh embodies the Will of Allāh for a
Muslim. For a believer, it is the Guidance par excellence. It contains norms, and teaches the
basic principles relating to each and every aspect of life." As Aasi says, to the orthodox
Muslim, the Qur'an is the unchanged Word of God; they have a concept similar to a Christian
view of the "inerrancy" and "verbal inspiration" of the Scripture. In short, both Muslims and
some Christians believe their Scriptures are true and contain no errancy. Lester (2004:222)
comments on the issue: "the closest analogue in Christian belief to the role of the Kur'an in
Muslim belief is not the Bible, but Christ." He further explains that "if Christ is the Word of
God made flesh, the Koran is the Word of God made text, and questioning its sanctity or

authority is thus considered an outright attack on Islam." Here, we are not discussing the authority or attacking the Scripture, as we depart from the discussion of the problem of the Scriptures. On the other hand, Lester's analogue of the Scripture lends a significant starting point of our discussion. According to the analogue, the Scriptures reflect God's relationship with his people.

First, in Christian theology, Christ is the Word of God. In the Bible, there are many indications that Jesus is not only human but also divine.[74] The implication of the incarnation of God connotes the immanence of God in this world. Even the actual revelation of the Bible is through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16), who is part of the divine, indicating that Yahweh is an immanent God.

On the other hand, Islamic beliefs about the Qur'an and the transmission of the Scripture confirm the absolute transcendence of Allah. Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an is the Word of God transcribed into text. The process of writing the Qur'an was through the medium of the angel of Allah and Mohammad, which indicates there is no sign of the immanent God. Once the revelation of the Qur'anic text was over, the interpretation of the Qur'an was left to Mohammad and learned man (scribes) of Islam. Thus, there is difficulty in the interpretation of the Scripture.

Muzaffar Iqbal (2004:281) presents the problem as: "Everyone who has attempted to translate the Qur'an has arrived at the same conclusion: the text they try to translate is, in

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[74] Jesus being God: Mark 2:7, 10; John 20:28; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9; 1 John 5:20; Philippians 2:5-11; Romans 9:4-5; Hebrews 1:8; 3:4; Revelation 21:6-7 and Jesus being Man: Matthew 1:16; Luke 2:52: John 4:9; John 12:27; 13:21; 19:30.

essence, untranslatable." Elder (1978:27) concludes that the Qur'an is really untranslatable, since Arabic words may have as many as seventy different meanings. Furthermore, Barth (2002:400) says, "Exegesis of the Koran is not possible without an accompanying criticism of the transmission.…For such work, help from the Arabic commentators is naturally not forthcoming. For them the canonical text of the Koran is sanctified and not to be touched." Finally, "Reading the Koran on its own terms, trying to interpret it without resorting to commentaries is a difficult and questionable exercise because of the nature of the text—its allusive and referential style and its grammatical and logical discontinuities, as well as our lack of sure information about its origins and the circumstances of its composition. Often such a reading seems arbitrary and necessarily inconclusive" (Ibn Warraq 2002:38). Unlike the Bible, without the help of God, interpretation of the Scripture of Islam is difficult. For this reason, in Qur'anic exegesis, there are different classifications of the text, some of which are impossible to be understood by the human (*mutashābih*).[75] This *mutashābih* is expressed in Surah 3:7 as "…searching for its [the Quran's] hidden meanings but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah." On the other hand, the Bible clearly indicates that the Scripture is written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pe 1:21), and that help will be given in understanding the text (Jn 6:45; 14:26; Is 54:13). The understanding of the Scripture is possible through the author of the text; God is immanent with the interpreter.

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[75] There are two major interpretations of the Qur'anic sentences, *zāhir* (obvious) and *khafi* (hidden). The *khafi* interpretation is sub-divided into four categories: (1) *Khajī*-Sentences in which other persons or things are hidden beneath the plain meaning of a word or expression, (2) *Mushkil*-Sentences which are ambiguous, (3) *Mujmal*-Sentences which may have variety of interpretations, and (4) *Mutashābih*-Intricate sentences or expressions which the exact meaning of it is impossible to ascertain until the day of resurrection, but which was known to Mohammad (Hughes [1885] 1998:518-519).

In Islam, the process of revelation is called *Tanzil* (sending down). It is accomplished by the Angel Gabriel, who takes the revelation from the Mother of the Book and whispers or suggests it to Mohammad. This is the so-called "Transcendental Revelation"[76] where God, in the process of revelation, maintains his transcendence from man and even from the angels. The Angel Gabriel receives the revelation from the Mother of the Book, not directly from Allah. This indirect revelation reflects the Islamic notion that God is "absolutely transcendent and non-personal; the only kind of revelation possible is the vertical movement 'from above' of transcendent information, 'down' to the level of man" (Schorff 1980:356).

The "Transcendent Revelation" of Islamic Scripture is distinctly different from the Christian view that the Bible is the written history of God's personal involvement within the history of man. Therefore, the revelation of the Bible may be called "*Historical-Inspirational Revelation*," which shows the activities of God within the history of man's activities. For Christians, Scripture is the inspired record of God's history among man, a written self-revelation of God, while Muslims believe that their Scripture is the exact copy of God's revelation recorded in the heavenly book, "the Mother of the Book" (*umm al-kitaab,* S 3:7; 43:4; 85:22).

Both Christian and Muslim Scriptures share a progressive type of revelation. The Bible is progressive by having the Word revealed to the people over centuries, through the prophets and others in the Old Testament to the New Testament, where Jesus as God becomes the incarnated word and direct revelation from God. The Qur'an is progressively revealed Scripture from the former revelation (the Bible) to the final Scripture of Allah. Mohammad

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[76] The terms "Transcendental Revelation" and "Historical Inspirational Revelation" are used by Schorff (1980:357).

himself repeatedly said in the Qur'an that the Qur'an is the correct or progressive revelation of the Bible (S 10:37; 35:31; 37:37; 39:33; 46:12). The fact that the Bible is a progressive revelation through prophets and other people to the immanent revelation of Jesus shows that Yahweh is an immanent God in Christianity. On the other hand, compared to biblical accounts, the Qur'an corrects or omits any immanent aspects of God in the revelation, thus maintaining the total transcendent state of God in the process of writing the final revelation.

The teaching of the Scriptures may reveal the implication of God's relationship with the people. First, Qur'anic teaching is oriented entirely towards the practical aspects of faith. It provides guidance for man. Rahman (1967:1) explains:

> The interest of the Qur'an in pure, speculative theology is, therefore, negative. Doubtless, the Qur'an contains some theology, a certain amount of cosmology and psychology, etc., but these are all action-oriented and are meant to keep the attitude of man on correct lines, turned up to the proper moral pitch and geared to a certain purpose. The Qur'an concept of God is, therefore, primary—indeed, purely—*functional*.

Man is created as viceroy on earth, and so it is understood that the Qur'an instructs man on the guidelines to fulfilling that purpose. Therefore, the nature of Scripture becomes more oriented towards the practical aspects of faith. As the Scripture of Islam reflects attributes of practical faith, the God of the Scripture becomes the functional God, as Rahman said. The action-oriented Scripture exhibits the will and attributes of Allah as a functional God.

Meanwhile, the Bible is oriented toward the relational aspect of faith. First, the Old Testament was written for the purpose of outlining guidelines for Israel to follow to be God's chosen people. In order to maintain their status as the people of God, Israel had to follow the code of conduct written throughout the Old Testament. The Scripture establishes and maintains the relationship between God and Israel as King and his subject (Nm 23:21; Dt 33:5; Ps 89:18), Father and his sons (Hs 11:1), and Husband and bride (Jr 2:2; Hs 3:1). In the New Testament, the salvation of Christ is the main focus of the message. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, believers become children of God (Jn 1:12). Both the Old and New Testaments show that the focus of the message is on establishing and maintaining the familial relationship. Therefore, the Bible is oriented towards relational aspects rather than task-oriented ones, although the latter is not excluded.

In conclusion, we have seen that the different concepts of God have influenced the formation of the Scriptures. The Qur'an, being a guideline to man on earth, contains practical aspects of life. In the revelation of the Scripture there is no indication of God's direct involvement with man. The primary source of the revelation process of the Qur'an was not God himself, but the Mother of the Tablet which itself indicates the transcendence of God from the beginning. As Allah cannot be with man in any stage of the revelation of Scripture, the Qur'an reflects and contains no suggestion of the immanence of God. It maintains the absolute transcendence of the transcendent God.

On the other hand, the Bible records the immanence of the transcendent God with man. From the beginning of human history, God was with man as shown in the Old Testament. Jesus, as *theo-anthros* (God-man), displays the true God directly to man in the New Testament. Furthermore, the immanent presence of the Holy Spirit is presented in the Bible to show the

continuance of the immanence of God. The revelation of the Scripture shows that the author is the Holy Spirit working through the hands of the different human writers of the Bible. The basic and fundamental concept of the biblical God is that he is immanent with man. This allows Christian theology of the Scripture to contrast with the absolute transcendent revelation of the Qur'an. Allah is absolutely transcendent from man and was not involved with man in the process of the revelation of Scripture, for the content of the Qur'an must reflect the absolutely transcendent God.

5.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR ECCLESIOLOGY

In religious terminology, a group of Christian believers can be called a "church."[77] Hasan (1992:255) comments on this general term for the group: "Since church comes into existence as a binding force in a religious community, its principal function is to create unity by its direction in different ages in doctrine and practice." In this definition, borrowed from the Christian believer's definition, the church and the *Umma* can be discussed together in reference to God's relationship with man. The equivalent terminology for the church in Islam is the *Umma* as it refers only to the community of believers within Islam. Frederick Denny (2004:21-22) explains the community of Islam:

> *Umma* is derived from the root "*Umm*" (the mother);…More recent
> scholarship derives *ummah* from the Hebrew *ummā* or the Aramaic *umetha,*
> or ultimately from Akkadian *ummatu,* whence Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac

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[77] The Septuagint translates the Old Testament word for "gather" (קהל) with the Greek term ἐκκλησιάζω, "to summon an assembly," the verb that is cognate to the New Testament noun ἐκκλησία, "church" (Grudem 1994:853).

also derived it…The term *ummah* does exist in pre-Islamic Arab usage in the sense of a religious community, as in the following passage from the Christian poet Nābigha: wa hal ya'thaman dhū 'ummatin wahwa tā i'u [Can a man belonging to a religion (or religious community) err if he is pious?]

Elkholy (1987:89) describes the implications of the term: "The Arabic Islamic term for community is UMMA, derived directly from UMM, meaning mother, UMMA in Islam means more than the motherland in this geographical-territorial limitation. It means FAITH and CREED. UMMA AL-ISLAM encloses the entire collectivity of the Muslims living anywhere regardless of their geographical boundaries." Ahmed (1975:27) lists three kinds of *Umma* in Islam: *umma wasta* (midmost community), *umma muslima* (submissive community), and *umma wāhīda* (a single faith). Of these, *umma wāhīda* indicates a non-territorial, ideological unity of mankind. This is a general term for Islamic community, and in this final sense of the *Umma*, it and the church can be discussed together.

In a society hostile and non-receptive to Islam, it was necessary for the nascent religious group to establish the *Umma*. Mohammad started receiving revelations around 610 A.D. and in 613 A.D. he began public preaching in Mecca. The message was to challenge the religious beliefs of the local people as well as to institute a major change in their way of life. Thus, opposition and persecution of the newly formed group of believers were inevitable. In this environment the *Umma* was formed out of the need for protection of the believers. It was at Medina where Mohammad laid the foundations of the *Umma* following the incident of the allegiance of Medinese tribes (*bay's*) with Mohammad. Ahmed (1975:31) supports:

The emphasis was on defensive alliance, and for this reason, this was called *bay'at al-harb*. This was in fact a kind of defensive alliance based on the old Arabian customary law of *hilf* (alliance). In such manner, ideological unity and defensive alliance system were integrated together and the way was paved for the creation of *umma* at Madīna.

The defensive alliances of the *Umma* as well as *Umma* in the specific sense of a group of believers were the foundational purposes of Mohammad. At the death of Mohammad, the foundational *Umma* of Medina extended over the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. The *Umma* had gradually developed into an Arab union, expanding towards a universal *Umma*, which was challenged by a later uprising of nationalism. These facts of the *Umma*, the beginning and development, show that God had no involvement, but rather, a need for man's welfare prevailed. Even though the focus of the *Umma*'s belief is on God, it is man who founded and developed the *Umma* for the expressed needs of man. The 1980 *Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights* indicates the current humanistic character of *Umma*: "It [*Umma*] is called upon to organize itself in the form of a movement for social change and reconstruction and to come forward to help the oppressed and the persecuted of the world" (Köylü 2003:112).

Hasan (1972:270) explains that Christianity started as reformed Judaism where the foundation of the church was laid by Jesus Christ. He further argues that Christianity could not escape the influence of the Jewish discipline even after its complete break with Judaism.

Judaism was anchored in racial pride, "the chosen people of God". Therein prevailed the idea of collective sin, for which the whole Jewish nation

suffered tribulation. Christianity substituted Church for "chosen people": it differed from Judaism in respect to sin. The Jewish nation sinned and it suffered collectively, but the church being grounded in spiritualism could not sin. Those who commit sin in Christianity lose their communion with the church. This gave rise to the idea of individualism in Christianity most probably through the teaching of the Roman Stoics.

Hasan's argument of individualism in the church is evidence of the Holy Spirit's working among believers on an individual level in Christianity. The church indicates a strongly collective trait that included all kinds of people (Gl 3:28). As there is one God, there should be one universal Church. Jesus prayed, "they [believers] may be one as we are one" (Jn 17:22). Furthermore, the Church becomes the Body of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Pe 2:9). The indwelling of the Holy Sprit is both on an individual (1 Cor 6:19) and collective level (1 Cor 3:16) as the church reflects individual and collective traits.

Compared to the strong brotherhood and relationships with the state in the *Umma* of Islam, Christianity places more importance on the relationship of man to God. In Islam, the *Umma* is a group of believers under the example of Mohammad and its ultimate purpose for spiritual life is to be as good as Mohammad. Thus the *Umma* creates a transcendent life for Muslims that is secluded from unbelievers. On the other hand, the church was founded by Jesus and the Holy Spirit (Mt 16:18; Ac 2) and governed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; Ac 2; 1 Cor 12:13). The presence of God is among the believers and the believers' aim is to live in the image of God. They follow the example of Jesus, who represents the immanent form of God. Similar to the *Umma*, the church represents the same transcendent

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relationship with unbelievers but reproduces the immanent aspect of God among all people by making God known.

All the above implications of the *Umma* and the church stem from the different concepts of God held by Muslims and Christians. If God is someone who is unreachable, as in Islam, the believers focus their example of faith and practice on someone they can perceive ontologically. For Muslims, their example of faith is Mohammad, as he was the founder and the first leader of the *Umma*. The absolute transcendence of God in Islam has influenced the community of believers to focus on Mohammad instead on Allah.

In Christianity, the emphasis on the immanence of the transcendent God has been the key factor of the formation of the church and its development. God maintains his immanent state among the people through the incarnation of Jesus as well as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the era of the church. Christian believers look unto the life and example of Jesus and strive to be like him. They communicate with God through the form of prayer taught by Jesus; with the help of the Holy Spirit, they acquire the knowledge of God. Compared to the Islamic concept of community, the church intends to focus more on God rather than on the state or men. Thus, the church displays more individualistic traits. However, it is people's relationship with God that governs each community of believers, not merely relationships with other humans or groups. In Christianity, the immanence of the transcendent God is reflected in the traits of the church as they focus more on fellowship with God than on man alone. On the other hand, because of the absolutely transcendent God of Islam, the *Umma* tends to focus on the relationship of believers who unite themselves against the non-believers

for the sake of self-protection. It is, furthermore, a method and a vessel for the ultimate fulfilment of humankind as the vicegerent on earth.

5.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTOLOGY

5.7.1 Introduction

In Islam, "Abraham appears as a model believer, whereas Moses is the model prophet, Mohammad's personal model" (Causse 2004:325). Jesus is also interpreted as the second Moses in the Bible (Kaiser 1995:57-61). Both the Bible and the Qur'an treat Moses as a prefigure of Jesus or Mohammad. Furthermore, both Scriptures present Jesus as one of the most important figures. As the heart of Christianity treats Jesus as Christ while Mohammad is the seal of the prophets in Islam, *the discussion in this section will not fully extend to the overall theology of Christ and Mohammad but is limited to the advent of a prophet like Moses in both the Bible and the Qur'an, as well as Jesus in the Qur'an with regard to the transcendence of God.*

5.7.2 Advent of a prophet like Moses

As a result of his unfaithfulness, Moses faced death on Mount Nebo (Dt 32:48-51). Before his death, Moses encourages the Israelites with God's promise to raise another prophet like him to lead the people. In Deuteronomy 18:18, God promises Moses, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him." Moses then conveys the word to the Israelites, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own

brothers. You must listen to him" (Dt 18:15). This promise of a successor to Moses comforts the people as they know the time for Moses' departure is near. The implication of having another prophet like Moses is to continue the immanent relationship with God, as Moses was the speaker of God who directly conversed with God. Furthermore, a prophet like Moses will ensure that the people of Israel remain the chosen people of God.

Both Christian and Muslim scholars interpret the announcement of a post figure of Moses in a parallel manner but with different applications; Muslims see Moses as a prefigure of Mohammad while Christians interpret the promise to be fulfilled in Jesus. Even though the Qur'an did not make any direct claims to the prophecy of the coming of Mohammad, Muslims treat Moses as the prefigure of Mohammad. The Qur'an alludes to the promise of a prophet like Moses from Deuteronomy.

> **Surah 46:10**   Say: "See ye? If (this teaching) be from Allah and ye reject it and a witness from among the Children of Israel testifies to its similarity (with earlier scriptures) and has believed while ye are arrogant (how unjust ye are!) truly Allah guides not a people unjust."

Yusuf Ali (1989:1305) interprets Surah 46:10 as a reflection of the Jewish and Christian hiding of the true prophecy of Mohammad: "There were learned Jews (and Christians) who saw in the holy Prophet the Messenger of Allah foreshadowed in previous Revelations, and accepted Islam." The more interpretive translation version by Asad (*Alim* 46:10) shows its content:

Surah 46:10   Say: "Have you given thought [to how you will fare] if this be truly [a revelation] from God and yet you deny its truth? – even though a witness from among the children of Israel has already borne witness to [the advent of] one like himself, and has believed [in him], the while you glory in your arrogance [and reject his message]? Verily, God does not grace [such] evildoing folk with His guidance!"

Here, what Asad translates as, "witness," is evidently referring to Moses, who is the prefigure of Mohammad. Surah 2:42 supports Asad's translation: "And cover not Truth with falsehood nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is)." Asad (*Alim* 2:42) interprets the meaning of "And cover not Truth with falsehood" (overlaying the truth with falsehood--Asad's translation) to mean that the Bible has been corrupted by the Jews while the "conceal the Truth (suppression of the truth--Asad's translation)" means to disregard or deliberately falsely interpret the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18. Asad (*Alim* 2:44) further says, "the 'brethren' of the children of Israel are obviously the Arabs, and particularly the musta'ribah ('Arabianised') group among them, which traces its descent to Ishmael and Abraham: and since it is to this group that the Arabian Prophet's own tribe, the Quraysh, belonged, the above biblical passages must be taken as referring to his advent."

In respect to leading people into the new nation, Moses may have been a role model of a prophet to Mohammad. Ali ([1946] 1996:41) says "The importance attached to Moses' life-story is due to the fact of his likeness with the Holy Prophet Mohammad." However, in biblical context, a prophet like Moses has different connotations. In Deuteronomy 5:23-27, the people request that Moses represent them before God. The reason behind the people's request is that they fear death as a result of seeing God if God appears before them again.

Moses was the representative of the people to God, as well as a representation of God before the people. Thus, God raises a prophet after Moses who can take over Moses' role as the reflection of the immanent God through direct speech and conversation. The prophet-to-come must speak to God in his presence as in Deuteronomy 34:10 "Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." In this manner of representing God and his people, if Mohammad is a post figure of Moses he must then be able to communicate with God directly for the behalf of his people. Yet, in the Qur'an, there is no indication of Mohammad being close to God. In the sense of Moses being a leader of the nascent nation, Mohammad was the post figure of the biblical Moses. However, in no way can Mohammad be a post-figure of Moses for Allah cannot associate with man.

Furthermore, in order to be confirmed as the prophet to follow Moses, three tests can be used to determine whether a person is the prophet. First, the person must fulfil the line of prophets from the Israelites. Deuteronomy 18:18 indicates this requirement, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers." As Moses is an Israelite, the prophet must be from his own people. Secondly, the prophet must speak the words of Yahweh in his name, which should be in accordance with God and his word. Otherwise, he must be put to death (Dt 18:19-20). Finally, the message of the prophet must come true (Dt 18:22).

These three tests of the prophet further eliminate Mohammad as the prophet since he is not one of the Israelites but of Arab origin. Furthermore, he has not spoken a message in the name of God (יהוה). He spoke in the name of Allah but not of the LORD (יהוה), God's personal name. However, Jesus fulfils the requirements, as Deere (1985:296-297) comments:

The ultimate **prophet like** Moses (18:15, 18) is Jesus Christ—the One who

spoke God's words and who provides deliverance for His people. Not even

Joshua could be compared to Moses, for since Moses "no prophet has risen

in Israel like" him (34:10) with such power before men and intimacy with

God. However distinguished a future prophet's role might be in Israel, none

would be like Moses until the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ,

came. Moses set the standard for every future prophet. Each prophet was to

do his best to live up to the example of Moses until the One came who

would introduce the New Covenant. During the first century A.D. the official

leaders of Judaism were still looking for the fulfilment of Moses' prediction

(cf. John 1:21). Peter said their search should have stopped with the Lord

Jesus (Acts 3:22-23).

There are New Testament arguments of Jesus and Mohammad being the prophet like Moses.

In Greek, the word "prophet" is written as προφήτης. In the English translation (NIV, NAU,

NKJ)[78] of the word where it refers to the prophet likes Moses, προφήτης is translated with a

capital letter "P." For Muslims, the verses where the people referred to Jesus as the "Prophet"

with the capital letter "P" are interpreted as references to Mohammad. Since the practice of

referring to Mohammad as a proper noun, the "Prophet," Muslims will argue that it refers to

Mohammad, not to Jesus (Poston 2000:4). However, this argument is not based on any

scholarly argument but argued for the sake of propagandism. For, as a naïve argument of

Greek, it is written as προφήτης (prophet) not Προφήτης, thus there is no basis for

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[78] NIV (New International Version, 1984), NAU (New American Standard Bible, 1995), NKJ (New King
James Version, 1982).

disagreement. The discussion of the capital letter "P" in the prophet is an arbitrary argument as there is no capital letter (Π) used in the Greek word (Nestle-Aland 27th edition, 1993).

The word "Prophet" can refer to the second Moses, who first appears in the context of John the Baptist. In John 1:19-21, John first denies being Christ (Jn 1:20) when the priests and Levites ask him: "They asked him, 'Then who are you? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No'" (Jn 1:21). Here, "the Prophet" (ὁ προφήτης) is the prophet to follow Moses, who they expected to come. The expectation of the leaders of Israel shows that they are holding onto the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18. However, it is not only the leaders of Israel but the common people who also expect the prophet.

A very large crowd in Jerusalem acknowledged that Jesus is "the Prophet" (Mt 21:3-11). When Jesus entered Jerusalem, those with Jesus shouted with joy and the people in the city asked the identity of Jesus. The crowd answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" (v 11). In addition to the large crowd in Jerusalem, "a great crowd" in the mountainside of the shore of the Sea of Galilee was convinced that Jesus is "the prophet" (ὁ προφήτης) as "After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world'" (Jn 6:14). Also in John 7:40, after hearing the words of Jesus some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." Observing Jesus' appearance and miraculous signs as well as hearing his words, the people interpreted that Jesus was the prophet in the prophecies which is to come after Moses. Finally, it is in Jesus' own statement that he identifies himself as the prophet in Luke 13:33: "In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" It may seem that Jesus is not referring to himself as "the Prophet," but at

least he identifies himself as a prophet. In the context of testimony from others, he refers to himself as the Prophet. Again Jesus says about himself, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me" (Jn 5:46). Jesus refers to what Moses says about "the Prophet," which is immediately confirmed by the people (Jn 6:14).

5.7.3   Jesus in Qur'an

In addition to Jesus being the prophet like Moses, the Bible clearly states that Jesus is God (Jn 1:18; 20:28; 1 Jn 5:20; Tt 2:13, Rm 9:5; Heb 1:1-3, 8; Phlp 2:5-11). In Christian Christology, Jesus is fully man and God at the same time (Grudem 1994:552), and it is sufficient here to state that. However, based on the doctrine of the "Oneness of God," Islam rejects the Christian concept of God as a Trinity. The concept of the Islamic Trinity consists of God, Jesus, and Mary implied from Surah 5:75-76, 116, 119 and 4:171. Thus, Islam denies Jesus as God for God cannot enter into matrimony with Mary and have a son, Jesus. Therefore, Muslims' major approach to the Trinity is an anthropomorphic interpretation of Jesus that he is no more than a prophet, a human being (S 4:171). Ali (1989:142) argues against the divinity of Jesus:

> If it is said that he was born without a human father, Adam was also so born. Indeed Adam was born without either a human father or mother. As far as our physical bodies are concerned they are mere dust. In Allah's sight Jesus was as dust just as Adam was or humanity is. The greatness of Jesus arose from the Divine command "Be": for after that he was--more than dust--a great spiritual leader and teacher.

Muslims deny the divinity of Jesus based on the humanity of Jesus, yet they respect him as "a great spiritual leader and teacher" as Ali states above. Staley (2004:98) confirms: "The Muslims do respect Jesus as a great prophet, but based on their view of Allah they cannot accept His deity or crucifixion, the former being a matter of impossibility due to the essence of Allah, the latter being unacceptable due to the mercy of Allah towards his prophets." Essentially, these statements claim that Jesus is a human being who was created by God's will in the same way Adam was created, yet he is inferior to Adam.[79]

Conversely, by examining the acts of Jesus in the Qur'an one can perceive that his works do not belong in the class of human work but fall into the category of divine work.[80] For example, miracles are attributed to Jesus in the Qur'an, such as his birth and holiness, the creation of life, the healing of those born blind, and the raising of the dead (S 19:19; 3:49; 5:113). However, Muslims do not perceive the miracles as evidence of Jesus' divinity. Rather, Muslims explain that Jesus was created by the will of God to prepare the way for Mohammad (S 3:59; 19:35).

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[79] There is a popular argument that the King James Version of John 3:16 translates the word μονογεη as "begotten" causing a misunderstanding of Jesus being begotten by the result of maternity activity while the word should be translated "only." Historically, however, the Qur'an is dated earlier than the King James Version and already rejects the idea of "begotten" by the understanding that the nature of Jesus' birth as a physical act depends on the needs of men's animal nature. Thus, this argument is only valid for the Christian setting of witness.

[80] Charles Torrey (1933:79) lists the mission of Quranic Jesus: Jesus was sent to confirm the Israelites in the true doctrine, in the teachings of the Torah, to insist on the worship of only one God, and to warn against straying from the faith of Abraham and Moses and forming new sects.

Beyond the miracles of Jesus performed in the Qur'an, Jesus is called "a Mercy from Us [Allah]" in Surah 19:21.[81] Thomas O'Shaughnessy (2004:70) explains that this is not God's mercy but rather offspring as a result of sexual intercourse between man and woman, which is a blessing to man based on Surah 30:21: "And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." Here "love" is understood as sexual intercourse and "mercy" is the child resulting from "love." Therefore, unlike the biblical account of the birth of Jesus, there is no indication of incarnation or God's involvement in the birth. It is purely a human birth. Therefore, as a son of a woman, Jesus in the Qur'an is no more than a prophet among the 124,000 prophets of Islam (Braswell 1996:49). Therefore, the immanent act of God through Jesus in Christianity is denied in Islam. This denial of the divinity of Jesus is another sign that the Qur'an maintains the absolute transcendence of God.

5.7.4 Conclusion

It is clear that both Muslim and Christian scholars interpret the post figure of Moses as their Prophet (Mohammad) or the Lord (Jesus). There seems to be no compromising point of the interpretation of the coming of the prophet like Moses. However, in reference to the

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[81] There are many more references to Jesus in the Qur'an. For a comparison of the references to Jesus in the Qur'an and the Bible see *Jesus and Mohammad: Profound differences and surprising similarities* by Mark Gabriel (2004:236-238) and *Islam: Its prophets, peoples, and power* by George Braswell (1996:280-281). Parrinder (1977:30-54) provides discussion of a few examples of Jesus' titles given here: The messiah (*al-masīh*), servant (*'abd*), prophet (*nabī*), messenger (*rasūl*), word (*kalima*), spirit (*rūh*), sign (*āya*), a parable or example (*mathal*), a witness (*shahīd*), a mercy (*rahma*), eminent (*wajīh*), one brought near (*min al-muqarrabīn*), one of the upright (*min al-saalihīn*), blessed (*mubarak*).

discussion of the transcendence of God, there is a distinctive application towards the understanding of God's relationship with man.

If we confirm that Jesus is the post figure of Moses, God's immanence as well as his transcendence exists. For Christians, the presence of Jesus on earth as the second person of the Trinity is a firm indication of an immanent God. This is further confirmed in the New Testament's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 where it says "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel [עִמָּנוּ אֵל, "God with us"]." The New Testament confirms the prophecy of Isaiah in Matthew 1:23, "'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'--which means, 'God with us.'" The text indicates that Jesus is God (אֵל) and that he is physically with the people (עִמָּנוּ). When the Hebrew word עם (with) is used with the pronominal suffix, it carries the meaning of closeness of possession. For example, Brown ([1906] 1999:767) defines the word as "of fellowship and companionship," indicating the immanent fellowship of God and his presence with humankind.

In maintaining God's immanence with people, the presence of Jesus with man implies the transcendence of God. Just as Moses took the direct words of God and conveyed the message to his people, Jesus represents God (the Father) and speaks on his behalf (Jn 8:28). It is in his own statement that God is ontologically transcendent from the people as "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (Jn 1:18 see also Jn 8:19; 14:7, 9). Furthermore, Jesus says, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). Nevertheless, as he says, Jesus represents God so that people may know God. Without God's direct visual manifestation, Jesus as a second person of the Trinity

appears to people to make God known and at the same time to maintain God's transcendence among the people.

In Islam, by asserting that Mohammad is the post-figure of Moses, God maintains his absolute transcendence from the people. In terms of revelation, the biblical Moses receives a direct revelation from God, which is *tanzil* in Islam. This direct revelation is supposed to be carried by the angel before God's will is revealed to Mohammad. However, when God communicates to Mohammad it is through inspiration, as in Surah 26:52, where Allah speaks to the Qur'anic Moses through inspiration (*awhaynaa*, also in S 26:63 and 7:160). This is an indication of God's absolute transcendence. Even before Moses, as well as with Mohammad who had a close calling from God, God maintained his transcendence.

Furthermore, the role of Jesus in the Qur'an indicates the absolute transcendence of God. Even though the Qur'an indicates that Jesus is more than a prophet through the God-given miracles as well as the spirit (Holy Spirit) upon him, the Qur'anic interpretation limits Jesus to a mere prophet. Thus, the God-given abilities displayed in Jesus in the Qur'an are understood as the will of Allah carried out. Jesus was a simple vessel of Allah's performing acts upon his people. Therefore, Jesus in the Qur'an is simply a prophet.

5.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGY PROPER

5.8.1 Introduction

While Muslims and Christians use the same terminology such as prayer, heavens, and sin, their understanding of these terms is not necessarily identical. The understanding of God is

no exception. Different concepts of God are the main cause of theological differences as we have seen so far. Both the Qur'an and the Bible declare that God is one God. Jesus of the Qur'an (Issa) says, "O children of Israel. Worship Allah my Lord and your Lord" (S 5:72). As Jesus of the Qur'an declares that the God of the Qur'an and the Bible are the same, Islam views biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 6:4 ("Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one") as true statements corresponding to Qur'anic passages (S 5:72; 29:46; 112:1-4). As Islam claims, are the God of the Qur'an and the Bible one and the same? Zwemer (1905:7), in his Christian understanding of God, comments on the issue of the one God:

Jews, Christians and Mohammedans believe in one God and yet differ widely in their interpretation of this idea. Unless we know the Moslem's idea of God we cannot understand his creed nor judge his philosophy, nor intelligently communicate our idea of God to him. The strength of Islam is not in its ritual nor in its ethics, but in its tremendous and fanatical grasp on the one great truth--Monotheism.

Muslims conclude that the God of the Bible and the Qur'an are the same. Likewise, some Christians believe that the God of Islam and Christianity are the same, while other Christians say they are different. For example, in the dialogue between Christianity and Islam, David Shenk and Badru Kateregga (1980:8, 88) say Christians and Muslims worship the same God. Hans Küng (1987:83) supports this view: "Whoever reads the Bible—at least the Old Testament—and the Qur'ān parallel will be led to ponder whether the religions of revelation of Semitic origin—Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and especially the Old Testament and the Qur'ān—could have the same foundation. Is it not one and the same God who speaks so clearly in both?" In continuing to explore the implications of the transcendence of God in the

theologies of Islam and Christianity, this section focuses on the comparative evaluation of how God is understood in Islam and in Christianity. Furthermore, the question of the same God as seen in the Bible and the Qur'an will be dealt with attentively.

5.8.2   One God

Islam holds a Unitarian theology in insisting on the absolute Oneness of God. This is called *Tauhid*,[82] and is evident in their opening prayer repeated every day: "Say: He is Allah, The One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none Like unto Him" (S 112:1-4, cf. 29:46). Adelowo (1980:117) explains:

> *Tauhid* is an Arabic word which, in the literal sense, means "The making one". In the context of Islamic theology, it is used to express the Unity or Oneness of the Godhead. It is the concept of *monotheism* in Islam. In this context, it is absolute monotheism and not otherwise. With regard to this aspect of theology, Muslims generally cannot afford to sacrifice dignity for depravity. They maintain the doctrine even to the point of death. They are very rigid concerning this issue since it is regarded as the fundamental basis of Islam.

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[82] It is also spelled as *Tawhid.* Ansari (1983:93) explains it in the Sufi context: "*Tawhid,* as it is used in the sufi literature, means four different things. It refers, first, to a man's belief about God's unity, and consists essentially of some propositions about the nature of God and his relation with man and the world…secondly, to disciplining one's life, external and internal in the light of one's beliefs…thirdly, to the mystical experience of unity or union…fourthly, to a view of reality that arises from the mystical experience of unity."

Because of the "Oneness of God" (*Tauhid*) being the fundamental basis of Islam, the association of other gods with Allah is the greatest sin (*shirk*) possible to a Muslim (Madany 1994:3). Based on the doctrine of the "Oneness of God," Islam, therefore, rejects the Christian concept of God as a Trinity (Pratt 1996:271; Sirry 2005:368).

The Muslims' major approach to the Trinity is an anthropomorphic interpretation of God. For example, Jesus is no more than a prophet, a human because he is born of a woman (S 4:171). Therefore, the Qur'an commands Christians, "O people of the Book! commit no excesses in your religion…so believe in Allah and His Apostles. Say not "Trinity": desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is One Allah:"(S 4:171).

Adelowo (1980:121-126) comprehensively lists the Muslim reaction to the Triune God. A few of his major analyses are discussed in the following points: the Islamic absence of the doctrine of co-eternity, the theory of adoptionism, the concept of incarnation, the Muslim concept of sin, over-emphasis of the ontological aspect of God, forgiveness and salvation or redemption, and finally the undefined concept of the Holy Spirit and the Angel Gabriel in the Qur'an. We have covered most of the list in this chapter already. This list of Adelowo's analysis of the Trinity concept in Islam refers to a fundamental governing principle of the theology of God, namely God's ontological immanence and transcendence. The concept of the Trinity is readily accepted when Jesus and Holy Spirit, understood as God, are present among the people. However, in Islam, the absolute unity of God, *Tauwid*, does not allow for God's presence among mankind nor the notion of the Trinity, for God is an absolute one.

The Bible does not use the word "Trinity," yet it has many indications of the doctrine. Enns (1989:202) states the teaching of the Trinity concisely: "The *Father* is called God (1 Cor

8:6); the *Son* is called God (Heb. 1:8-10); the *Holy Spirit* is called God (Acts 5:3-4); God is *one God* (Deut. 6:4)." All these three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are mentioned together in Matthew 28:19, Luke 3:21-22, and 2 Corinthians 13:14. In the Trinity, Jesus represents the immanence of the transcendent God while the Holy Spirit enables the continuing fellowship between God and man. Adelowo (1980:121) brings together the implication of the Trinity concept: "God in Trinity is fullness of life, living in eternal relationships and in never ceasing fellowship. This again makes intelligible the revelation and self-communication of God." Unlike the Islamic concept of the Holy Spirit, the Christian concept of an immanent God allows God's fellowship with man. This also allows for the Holy Spirit's and Jesus' divinity when they interact with man. Without the Trinitarian concept of God, Christians would have the absolute transcendence of God due to the lack of God's immanent presence (in Jesus and the Holy Spirit) among man.

Muslims seem to have no objection to the Father God, or perhaps they treat the Father God as Allah. Muslims even use the Bible to prove that the God in the Bible and the Qur'an are the same (Dt 6:4 compared to S 5:72; 29:46; 112:1-4). The Qur'an commands Muslims, "But say, 'We believe in the Revelation which has Come down to us and in that Which [the Bible] came down to you [Christians]; Our God and your God is One; and it is to Him We bow (in Islam)" (S 29:46). Even some Christians, based on the Quran's indication that Muslims believe in the former Revelations, the Bible (cf. S 2:136; 4:136) and the "Oneness of God" (S 29:46, Dt 6:4), believe that the God of the Qur'an and the Bible are the same (Shenk & Kateregga 1980:8). Rahman (1967:2) hints that the God of Islam and Christianity are the same by bringing an argument of the immanent God to Islam:

It has been generally held that the God of Islam is uncompromisingly transcendent and that this is shown by the tremendous emphasis Islam puts on the unity of God, His majesty, awesomeness, etc. This picture, however, does not emerge from the Qur'an, but from later theological development in Islam. A careful perusal of the Qur'an would reveal that it attributes all natural processes and events to God: from rains to the processes of the rise and fall of nations, from winning and losing in war and peace to the orderly revelation of cosmic bodies, all is referred to God. This clearly shows that God is not just the most transcendent but also the most immanent.

Rahman correctly explains that Allah is immanent through the result of his creation. Yet, it is the theological development of the ontologically transcendent God in Islam which resulted in the theology of *Tauwid* in Islam. The theology of *Tauwid* may have influenced Mohammad and his immediate successors in the time of the compilation of the Qur'an. Thus, as we have seen in chapter 4, there is lack of an ontological immanence of Allah while the Bible shows the immanence of Yahweh in the same accounts of Adam, Abraham, and Moses. It had been the preconception of the thought of God as absolutely transcendent and independent from humankind and creation that influenced the theology of Allah as the absolute one God.

On the other hand, in Christianity, God is revealed as the Trinity in the Bible with his immanent fellowship with man. The same immanence of God, as Rahman argues above, is seen by means of the general revelation present in the Bible. However, the personal ontological appearance of God before man shapes the theology of God as "Immanuel." This immanence of God through individual and group experience throughout the Bible shape the

theology of God as the Trinity. As a result, the immanence of the transcendent God is manifested in Jesus as well as through the indwelling acts of the Holy Spirit.

5.8.3 Attributes of God

The purpose of man shows the kind of relationship the creator intended with man. Furthermore, the attributes of God indicate God's relationship with his subjects. Basic attributes or functions of God in Islam and Christianity are very similar. In Islam, "although God is not known in His essence and in His nature, He is known to us through His qualities or attributes, through the Most Beautiful Names (*asma'u Allah al-husna*) in Islam" (Khodr 1981:170). The Most Beautiful Names of Allah, or the Ninety-Nine Names of God, are derived from the Qur'an, which will be discussed in the next section. The majority of the names not only indicate Allah's attributes but also his functions. Some of the functional names are: The King, The Protector (and guardian), The Creator, The Maker (originator of all creation), The Fashioner, The Provider, The Destroyer, The Restrainer (who takes hold and draws together), The Watcher of All, The Pardoner, The Giver, The Director, etc. (Abd-Al-Masih 1970:84-87). As the name indicates the nature and essence as well as the name giver's understanding of the subject (see 4.2.2), one can perceive the nature of God through his name. Rahman (1967:1) concludes that "The Qur'anic concept of God is, therefore, primarily–indeed, purely—functional." Thus, most of the functional attributes of Allah's names in the Ninety-Nine Names of God, if not all, are similar to Christian belief.

On the other hand, Islam lacks the concept of the Covenant-making and Covenant-keeping God (Schlorff 1980:342). The argument of the Covenant-making God is considerably

significant in understanding the God of Christianity, revealing the true attributes of God through the relationship reflected in the covenant. The covenantal relationship is evident in the Mosaic covenants (Ex 19-24). The relationships are expressed as: God of Israel (Lv 26:9-12), King of Israel (Nm 23:21; Dt 33:5; Ps 89:18), Father of Israel (Hs 11:1), Husband of Israel (Jr 1:32; Hs 3:1), and Owner of Treasure (Ex 19:5). These relational attributes of God contradict the Islamic functional attributes of God that are shown in the Ninety-Nine Names of God. In the literal and anthropomorphic approach to the study of God in Islam, the relationships of Husband and wife, Father and son, and man as the Treasure of God are unthinkable due to the absolute transcendence of God.

5.8.4 Names of God

The Ninety-Nine Names of God[83] in Islam is a collection of the names or attributes which originated from Surah 7:180: "The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on Him by them; but shun such men as use profanity in His names: for what they do they will soon be requited." Malik (*Alim* 7:180) translates it as: "Allah has the most excellent names (over ninety-nine attributes); call on Him by them; and shun those people who use profanity in His Names, such people shall be requited for their misdeeds." Zwemer (1905:34) explains the importance of the names further:

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[83] Zwemer (1905:48) categorises the names into five groups: Allah's unity and Absolute being (7 names), Creator or Originator of all nature (5 names), merciful and gracious (24 names), Mohammad's idea of Allah's power and pride and absolute sovereignty (36 names), and Allah as hurting and avenging (5 names). See "Appendix: Names of God in Islam" for a full list of names of God in Islam.

The attributes of God are called by Muslims *Isma-ul-Sifat* and also called in the Koran *Isma-ul-Husna,* the excellent names. The number of these names or attributes of Allah is given by Tradition as ninety-nine. Abu Huraira relates that Mohammed said, "Verily, there are ninety-nine names of God and whoever recites them shall enter Paradise."

Concerning the nature of Allah, Staley (2004:70) says that even though Muslims place great value upon the names of Allah, the names themselves tell us nothing about the nature of Allah. The reason behind his argument is that "they are simply characteristics of Allah's will and not of his nature" (Staley 2004:70). Staley's argument holds truth because the absolute transcendent Allah cannot ontologically be involved in human history. Consequently, Muslims do not experience the expressed traits of the names, but it is the explanation of the wish of Allah upon his faithful. For the same reason, Zwemer (1905:30) says, "Mohammed, outside of the Koran, was silent regarding the nature of God's being….The great Imams are agreed regarding the danger and impiety of studying or discussing the nature of the being of God. They therefore, when speaking of Allah's being, fall back on negations." This avoiding of the discussion of God's nature is due to the Mohammad's lack of understanding of God. He may have seen and had a correct idea of the functional attributes of God. But he had no conception of God's moral attributes (Zwemer 1905:49).

In considering the Islamic names of God, Christians should appreciate Islam's Ninety-Nine Names of God that show the attributes, characters, and functions of God. Most of the Ninety-Nine Names of God can be identified with Christian concepts. Staley (2004:80) puts it as "the Christian can affirm many non-moral attributes of God which are similar to those affirmed by the Muslim regarding Allah." The non-moral character of God would refer to

functional attributes of the God of Christianity. However, the moral attributes of God differentiate between Yahweh and Allah. For example, the Islamic names of God do not indicate the loving father God, which is at the heart of the moral aspect of God as seen in the Bible (Dt 32:6; Jr 31:3; Hs 11:1; Jn 1:12; 3:16, 10:14-15. 15:12). Zwemer (1905:100) confirms: "The attribute of love is absent from Allah…*in no case is there any reference to an inner personal relation*…when the Koran even hints at earthquake, and in the fire, but not in the still small voice of love." The concept of the loving God which is based on the parenthood of God is missing in Islam as the Qur'an does not allow for God's presence among man. The filial relationship of the loving father God only exists in the Bible.

The closest Islamic concepts to that of the loving God of Christianity are *Al-Rahman* and *Al-Waduud.* Haleem (2004:111) explains that the name "*Al-Rahman* is an adjective from the root *r-h-m*, the noun of which is *rahma*. Lexically, when we say *rahimahu* it could mean 'he was, or is tender-hearted towards him and inclined to favour or benefit him.'" The root of the word *Al-Rahman* is derived from the Arabic and Hebrew root *rhm* denoting two main emotions: love and compassion. They seem to be strongly related to the name *rhm* in both languages, which denotes, according to Hamilton (1996:1096), "womb," but originally it meant "a female," or a "mother." Ben-Shemesh (2002:239) comments: "The ancient man, observing the natural love and compassion in the behaviour of a mother toward the offspring of her womb, called these motions by the name the mother was known to him, that is, *rhm*." Therefore, from the root meaning of *rhm*, the translation of *Al-Rahman* could indicate that God is love or compassionate.

In the Bible, the root word *rhm* is used to indicate the love of God (Ps 103:13) towards man as well as man's love toward God (Ps 18:1). Yet, in the Qur'an, it indicates a simple favour

to Allah's servant or to his viceroy to do the given task by Allah. The usages of the root word in the Bible reflect the personal fellowship between God and man similar to that of a mother to her children. This is the closest and most intimate expression of personal relationship shown in the Old Testament. However, due to Allah's absolute otherness, even though the Qur'an most likely has used the word in similar situations as the Bible, the interpretation of the word will not be the same. For this reason, the root word *rhm* as well as its derived forms are interpreted as a material blessing upon man and not as the relational blessing of the closeness to Allah. The word is used metaphorically to express Allah's favour extending to his followers in the Qur'an.

Another of Allah's names that may indicate "love" is *Al-Waduud*, which seems to correspond to the Christian concept of the loving God. It is translated as "The Loving [One]." However, a better translation is "The Objectively Loving One" or "The One Who Shows Sympathy" (Al-Ghazali 1970:91 and Abd-Al-Masih [s a]:86). These translations are supported by the usage of *Al-Waduud* in the Qur'an (S 11:90; 85:14). The verses indicate that Allah would show sympathy to faithful Muslims only. Thus, the implication of the name *Al-Waduud* contradicts God's sacrificial and unconditional love toward all of his creation, which implies "God is love" in Christianity (1 Jn 4:7-8). Jomier (1964:76) argues accordingly: "But the Qur'an refers rather often to God's love in connection with moral life. God loves those who do good, who are righteous, and so forth. He does not love the wicked, those who break the law, and so forth. This brings out the aspect of the kind, merciful Lord, who loves His faithful servants." Jomier's assessment of the loving God concept confirms the conditional love of God that Allah will love "those who do good." Loving the wicked will qualify one to practice unconditional love.

The argument behind Muslims' interpretation of the name *Al-Waduud* is the approach to the idea of "love." A Muslim would argue that "love is to sense a need of the beloved, and since Allah cannot be said to have a need or an experience of a need, it is therefore impossible that Allah should love" (Nehls [s a]:7).[84] Ansari (1983:89) explains: "Love is much more than self-negating submission and sincere devotion. 'It is,' Junayd says, 'a feeling of profound attachment.'" Thus, in Muslim theology, God cannot be love and God cannot be associated with man in any possible way. Therefore, the name *Al-Waduud* implies that God gives mercy not to all sinners, but only to those who are faithful to Islam.

Baljon (1988:121) confirms the conditional love concept of *Al-Waduud* as: "with God as the subject, nowhere do we find the idea that God loves mankind. God's love is conditional. He loves those who do good, those who turn repentant to Him, and so on. Unqualified Divine love for mankind is an idea completely alien to the Qur'an." This is seen in Surah 19:96 where it says: "On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness will (Allah) Most Gracious bestow Love." [*'inna 'alladhena 'aamano wa- camilo as.- s.aalih.aat sa- yajcal la- - hum ar- rah.maan wudd(an)*] The word "love" here is the same word that we are discussing, namely *Al-Waduud.* Shafi (2005c:71) applies the concept of *Al-Waduud* to relationships among the believers: "It means that for those who are steadfast in their faith in Him, Allah creates an environment of friendship and love for each other, which consequently promotes mutual amity and goodwill among the true Muslims." The implication of *Al-Waduud* is not centred on Allah in spite of its nature as his name, but among the believers. Therefore, there are no indications of God's love to the believers in this meaning of the name.

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[84] On the side of Christian's perspective on "love," the Apostle Paul explains it very well in the context of the believers in 1 Corinthians 13. However, the love of God is expressed as sacrificial and unconditional love as evidenced in many occasions in the Bible (Jn 3:16; Phlp 2:6-8, etc.).

In conclusion, the filial love with which Christians call God "Father" and its revelation are expressed in many different forms of God's name in the Bible. However, the same love is not found in the Qur'an or in the Islamic concept of God. Allah is indeed called the "Loving One" (*Al-Wadud*) in the Qur'an but only on two occasions (S 11:90; 85:14). The phrase's interpretation does not indicate a moral attribute of God. It is functional love toward believers; the love is a conditional, objective love. On the other hand, the Bible shows the loving God as Father and Mother who provide relational love towards believers. The "loving God" concept is possible since the God displayed in the Bible is an immanent God who allows personal relationships with man. This concept can be contrasted to the God absolutely separated from man in the Qur'an that results in no personal relationships.

5.8.5   Similarity between God of Islam and Christianity

The common ground of belief between Islam and Christianity is substantial. For example, Christians and Muslims agree that God created the world and all that is in it, as well as heaven and hell; God is all-powerful, knows everything and is everywhere at all times; God revealed his will to mankind through certain prophets; he gave to the people laws which should govern their lives and prevent them from doing wrong; God will judge all people; some will be permitted to go to heaven, while all others are doomed to hell (Nehls & Eric 1994:1). If only the similarities are considered between Islam and Christianity, one may conclude that the two religions are essentially the same. Thus, some would not hesitate to say that Islam is a heresy of Christianity. Even one Muslim scholar (Maqsood 1994:1) says something of a similar view:

Islam is one of the three great faiths that sprang from the harsh land and deep silence of the Middle Eastern deserts. The other two are Judaism and Christianity and all three are interlinked because they are, in reality, worshipping the same One God. In historical terms, Islam is the youngest of the three, although Muslims argue that it is the earliest and forms the basis of all three.

Maqsood's explanation of Islam is based on the assumption of One God among the three religions. Then, are we worshipping the same One God? Are Yahweh and Allah the same God? If so, there would be less conflict between Christianity and Islam. Furthermore, Christian evangelists' task should not be so difficult, as there would be no need to share the Gospel with Muslims. In the same way, Muslims would make peace with Christians with little hesitation. There should be no extreme groups of Christians and Muslims against each other.

From the ongoing arguments, one can be assured of the fact that the God of Islam and Christianity are different. Differences result from the separate ways of understanding God: the anthropomorphic and literal understanding of Muslims, and the representational (or analogous) and relational understanding of Christians. For example, Christians understand Jesus as the Son of God, who submitted to the will of God, the Father. In the Muslim mindset, Jesus cannot be the Son of God, for He was born of a human mother and God cannot be his corporeal father; Jesus is a human.

Furthermore, Muslims believe that God cannot be known since he is the "absolutely Other." He is a totally different being, set apart from all creation including man, and holds himself absolutely aloof from the realm of history. This is the so-called Islamic doctrine of *Tanzih* (transcendence), and it implies that language used to describe God has no positive connotation whatsoever, because Allah is *bila kayf* (without how) and *bila tashbih* (beyond comparison). "Thus Islam has a negative theology; it cannot say what God *is*, but only what He *is not*" (Schlorff 180:339). Consequently, the negative approach to the doctrine of God results in the tendency of human behaviour to explain everything literally within the human perspective.

Christians are convinced that human beings have a limited knowledge of God. Only within the revelation that is given to us can we perceive God (Dt 29:29; Heb 11:1). Furthermore, Jesus says that by knowing him we can know God, for he is the image of the invisible God (Mt 11:27; Jn 14:6-7; Col 1:15). Therefore, those who believe in Christ, who are called Christians in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Jn 4:7), can be sure of who God is, even though human languages have a limited scope of explanation.

In conclusion, Islam and Christianity may seem to be one religion on a surface level because Islam originated from the Bible and Jewish religious practices. However, the God of Islam and the God of Christianity are distinct. In Christianity, God is Love, and the Father who has a personal relationship with believers. In Islam, God is power, and unknowable to humans, for he is neither personal nor spiritual. Christians can say who God is, but Muslims can only describe what he is not.

5.9   SYNTHESIS

Based on the previous argument of the transcendence of God in chapter 4, we have so far examined the implications of the transcendence of God in several areas of the systematic theologies of Islam and Christianity. In the anthropological argument, the purposes of man's creation as well as the creation of man in the image of God are the key factors of argument for whether God is immanent or transcendent. In Christianity, the immanent-transcendent God allows for the argument of the image of God and man's purpose to be concluded toward God's immanent fellowship with man. On the other hand, the absolute transcendent notion of God in Islam maintains the transcendent gap between God and man. Consequently, Islam must interpret the Qur'anic texts which indicate man's relationship with God towards a non-relationship oriented context.

Due to the denial of the original sin and immanent fellowship of God and man, Islam does not identify with the concept of Christian salvation. In Christian theology, salvation can be said to be a restoration of the broken relationship between God and man. However, for Muslims, salvation means the well-being of believers, which is expressly manifested in the form of the *Umma* as well as the continuation of the *Umma* in heaven. On the other hand, salvation of Christianity points to the restoration of the fellowship with God on earth through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as well as through immanent fellowship in heaven.

Both the Qur'an and the Bible account for the Holy Spirit. Due to the denial of the Trinity as well as the immanent acts of God, Islam denies the Holy Spirit and interprets it as the Angel Gabriel. The Holy Spirit in the Bible signifies the immanent God on earth. In Christianity, because of the concept of God as a immanent-transcendent God, the interpretation of the

Trinity as well as the Holy Spirit as God is possible when it is compared to the Islamic notion of the Holy Spirit.

The revelation of the Scriptures similarly reflects the transcendence of God. The Qur'an is the result of "Transcendent Revelation," where the Angel Gabriel repeatedly took a portion of the Qur'an to Mohammad from the Mother of Tablet, not from God. On the other hand the Bible is "Historical-Inspirational Revelation," the written historical account of God's involvement with man. Furthermore, Jesus as God-man became the visual representation of the manifestation of the "word." This concept further enforces the notion of the immanent-transcendent God in Christianity.

In the discussion of ecclesiology, the governing principles of the *Umma* and the Church are keys to understanding the transcendence of God. In the *Umma*, the foundation was laid by Mohammad and governed by the principles which Mohammad taught his followers. However, the Church was founded by Jesus. It started with the coming of the Holy Spirit and was guided by the indwelling acts of the Holy Sprit. Therefore, the notion of God being with man determines the characteristics of the *Umma* and the Church. For example, when God is immanent with man, the foundation of the Church is God himself. On the other hand, since God cannot be with man in Islam, the *Umma* has to look to its foundational element in a man, in this case, Mohammad.

Jesus in the Qur'an is no more than a prophet. He was a man in Islam, while in Christianity he is God-man. The prophecy of the prophet to follow Moses (Dt 18) is fulfilled in both Islam and Christianity but with different applications. In the Bible, Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophecy of the prophet like Moses. The implication of the discussion of the transcendence of God is that Jesus enables the progression of the immanent relationship

between God and his people by being a mediator between God and the people. However, in Islam, Mohammad was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18 in the sense that he led his people into a new religion. He formed the *Umma* as Moses did with Israel. However, he is not the same figure as the biblical concept of the prophet like Moses, for his role is not that of a mediator since Allah is absolutely transcendent from man.

The argument of the transcendence of God in theology proper depends on the "Oneness of God," the "Attributes of God," and the "Names of God." The concept of the "Oneness of God" in Islam denies the Trinity, based on their anthropomorphic interpretation of Trinity, while Christians base it on the ontological appearance of God, which is "Immanuel." The discussion of the "attributes of God" and the "names of God" concentrates on the issue of God's love. Based on the functional interpretation of God in Islam, the attribute of God that reflects "love" is interpreted as the conditional favour to the believers in Islam. On the other hand, the "love" concept of Yahweh concludes that he is a relationship-oriented God, which allows man to call him "Father." This section concludes that the God of Islam and Christianity are similar in the functional aspect, while they are different in the attributive aspect.

From the foregoing argument, one can conclude that a proper understanding of the transcendence of God is the key to understanding the differences between Islam and Christianity through defining the different relationships between God and man. The different relationships with God, in turn, result in a fundamental difference between the two faiths' belief, including the nature of God as well as theology in general.

Furthermore, for Christian relations with Muslims, it is necessary to understand that the markedly different doctrine of the transcendence of God is the root cause of the differences

and conflict between Islam and Christianity. Despite formal similarities between the Bible and the Qur'an (chapter 4), the relationship between God and man revealed in the two Scriptures is essentially different. In Islam, it is a vertical relationship; God is absolutely transcendent. The Bible indicates that both vertical (transcendent) and horizontal (immanent) relationships exist between God and man. Thus, transcendence in the Bible can be expressed as the immanence of the transcendent God which allows believers to know and experience God, yet without full understanding, since man is a finite being while God is an infinite divinity. The immanence of the transcendent God results in the Christian understanding of God as closely immanent with man, which develops a different understanding of theology from Islam. Islam's absolute transcendence of God prohibits the knowledge of God, and views the different areas of theology accordingly, resulting in the understanding of Allah as a functionally-oriented God.

CHAPTER 6

SYNTHESIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I have put together entire components of the study of the transcendence of God in Islam and Christianity. In addition to revisiting the chapters, there are implications of the study and recommendations. The implications of the study on the Christian-Muslim relations are limited to the discussion within the scope of this study. The presentation of problem setting, aims and objectives, methodology, and hypothesis are simplified from chapter 1 for the effective presentation of how the study has accomplished its design. Other chapters are presented as part of the summary.

6.2 PROBLEM SETTING

Jeremiah 23:23 poses the question: "Am I only a God nearby…and not a God far away?" This question has been a guiding principle throughout this thesis. I have tried my best to answer the question of transcendence and immanence of God in Islam and Christianity. This transcendence-immanence of God is an antinomy that has to be understood within its own religious context. The understanding of God's relationship with mankind in this thesis has been focused upon that relationship in the lives of Adam, Abraham, and Moses of the Bible and the Qur'an. Both the Qur'an and the Bible present the account of the three foundational figures of Islam and Christianity in a similar manner. However, Islam maintains the absolute

transcendence of God while Christianity reflects both a transcendent and immanent God. Why is there a difference in the understanding of God? Is there a possibility that this different understanding might cause the differences in the theology and practice of Islam and Christianity? For the answer to those inquiries, I have focused the study upon the comparative understanding and implications of the transcendence of God reflected in Adam, Abraham, and Moses.

6.3   AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate the transcendence of God in the Bible and the Qur'an. This was done through the study of corresponding relationship accounts of God with Adam, Abraham, and Moses and its implications upon the different aspects of the theologies and practices of Christianity and Islam.

The objectives of research are expressed through the following major research areas. These objectives are:

- to present an overview of the research as well as the various aspects of research methodology (chapter 1).

- to describe the similarities and differences in the Qur'an and the Bible and to present an appropriate approach to the exegesis of the elective passages (chapter 2).

- to establish the preliminary preparation of the study as well as to orient the readers to the theological issues of the transcendence of God (chapter 3).

- to investigate how God reveals his will in respect to the Qur'an and the Bible, particularly the Old Testament (chapter 4).

- to describe and analyse the transcendence of God revealed in the Old Testament and the Qur'an, within the limits of the parallel passages dealing with Adam, Abraham, and Moses (chapter 4).

- to find the cause of the differences between the corresponding episodes of the Old Testament and the Qur'an with regard to the transcendence of God (chapter 5).

- to analyse the implications of the transcendence of God with regard to the differences in Christian and Islamic theology (chapter 5).

- to conclude the study as well as to discuss any solutions for the Christian-Muslim conflicts and the necessity for further studies (chapter 6).

6.4   METHODOLOGY

I have employed a comparative exegetical and literature study (chapter 4) as well as a comparative theological analysis (chapter 5) of both the Qur'an and the Bible to answer the questions of the transcendence of God. The major approach is to examine the transcendence of God as a theological theme in the light of the grammatico-historical approach. In the process of exegesis, I applied the inductive approach to the Scriptures and analyses of the theme, the transcendence of God. I treated three elements of the inductive study as the major outline of the study: First, I have **observed** the relative texts of the Qur'an and the Bible to see the difference and similarity. Secondarily, the **interpretations** of the selected texts are presented with the above-mentioned different exegetical methods. Then, finally, I have

applied the result of the textual study to the comparative theological analysis of Islam and Christianity with additional applications to Christian-Muslim relations.

6.5   HYPOTHESIS

The following hypothesis for this study has been confirmed through the investigation of the transcendence of God in the Old Testament and the Qur'an with regard to the eclectic passages:

The exegesis of the parallel passages dealing with Adam, Abraham, and Moses in the Old Testament and the Qur'an shows that the (ontological) transcendence of God in the Old Testament is due to the sinful nature of man. Due to the unholy nature of man, the Holy God cannot be with man, yet God uses his transcendent nature as a medium to approach man. On the other hand, due to the pre-understanding of the absolute transcendence of God, the Qur'an is redactionally written to propagandise against God's immanence in the Old Testament and thus maintains God's absolute transcendence from his creation.

The different concepts of the relationship of God with mankind shown in the exegesis of Adam, Abraham, and Moses may have been true to the entire Islamic and Christian faiths. Furthermore, they may have caused some of the major differences between Christian and Muslim theologies, with one allowing God's presence with man in Christianity while the other denying God's presence with man in Islam. In turn, the different concepts may also have constituted a root cause of Christian and Muslim conflicts. On the other hand,

delineating the different concepts of God's transcendence and its effect on the theology of Christianity and Islam may result in better Christian-Muslim relations by promoting understanding of the root cause of the differences.

6.6 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Significant differences as well as similarities between Islam and Christianity in the areas of the transcendence and immanence of God have been discussed in this thesis. In addition, there is a comparative study of systematic theology within the extent of the implications of the transcendence of God that influence Muslim and Christian theology.

The first chapter presents the rationale and overviews of the discussion of the transcendence of God in the Qur'an and the Bible. This is followed by a foundational discussion of the subject of the thesis in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 presents the revelations of the Qur'an and the Bible, focusing on the issue of the continuity and discontinuity between the two Scriptures. It concludes that there is both continuity and discontinuity between the Bible and the Qur'an with suggestions for mutual respect of the Scriptures. Chapter 3 depicts a comprehensive understanding of the transcendence of God in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity based on scholars like Graham, Zuesse and Crotty. The impact of the transcendence of the God in Judaism upon Islam results in belief in the absolute transcendence of God. On the other hand, the transcendence of God in Christianity has been influenced by both the "Wholly Other" and "Wholly the Same" of Judaism. It thus maintains the idea of the transcendence-immanence of God.

The main discussion of the transcendence of God unfolds in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 presents the exegetical-comparative studies of God's relationships with Adam, Abraham, and Moses in the Qur'an and the Bible within the scope of identical situations. In God's relationship with Adam, the discussion is focused on Adam's role in the God's creation, the spacio-relationship of God in the Garden, Adam's activities in the Garden, and the Fall of man. The discussion of the Qur'anic account of Adam reveals the transcendence of God from the beginning of the creation. The genesis of the transcendence of God is identified in the biblical account through the result of the Fall of man. However, there is the undeniable immanence of God along with the transcendence of God in the biblical account of God and Adam. The arguments of God's relationship with Abraham are based on Abraham's close friendship with God, God visiting the tent of Abraham, and the test of Abraham. Throughout the arguments, God's presence appears in the biblical account while the Qur'anic accounts indicate no presence of God with Abraham. The arguments for God's relationship with Moses also focus on his spacio-presence with Moses. Throughout the discussion of Moses and the mystic fire, the pillar of cloud, the Ark of the Covenant, and God at Mount Sinai, God is present in the biblical account while the Qur'anic account maintains the absolute transcendence of God.

Chapter 5 deals with the results of the discussion of the transcendence of God from chapter 4 to the theology of Muslims and Christians. In the argument of the theology of man, the main argument was based on man's fellowship with God. The absolute transcendence of God in Islam denies man's fellowship with God, while the image of God in man allows man to have fellowship with God in Christianity. In the Christian theology of salvation, the immanent-

transcendent God restores the relationship between God and man. In Islam, due to God's non-involvement in the salvation process as well as the denial of original sin, salvation is expressed in the welfare of the believers. The Holy Spirit in Christianity is one of the manifestations of God's immanence with man. In Islam, the Holy Spirit is interpreted as the Angel Gabriel, which is a result of treating God as absolutely transcendent.

In the discussion of the Scriptures, "transcendent revelation" in Islam and "historical-inspirational revelation" in Christianity summarize the discussion of bibliology. In ecclesiology, the *Umma* represents the transcendent relationship of God while the Church is proof of God's indwelling act among men. Because God cannot be with humans in Islam, Jesus in the Qur'an is simply man. In the Bible, Jesus is depicted as the theanthropic person (the God-man), who reflects the transcendence of an immanent God. The argument of the transcendence of God in theology proper concludes with the fact that the God of Islam and Christianity are identical in functional attributes but they are distinct with regard to the relational attributes of God.

6.7   IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

6.7.1   Implications for Christian and Muslim relations

In this thesis, I have attempted to examine the echoes of the transcendence of God that can be detected in identical verses between the Qur'an and the Bible. I have found that the paradoxical transcendence-immanence of the God of the Bible conflicts with the absolute transcendence of the God in Islam. Consequently, there are conflicts in the practice of

Muslim and Christian theology and belief. Corduan (1998:46) confirms, "Still, despite the common origin, there are also some crucial differences between Muhammed's understanding of God and the biblical one." Furthermore, Singh (2001:316) says: "The conflict between Christians and Muslims is historic in that it goes back to the times of Mohammad with the Christians of his time. The nature of the conflict, unlike in the case of the Jew-Muslim conflict, was not political but dogmatic. It concerned the nature of God." According to what Singh says, the understanding of God in Islam and Christianity and its implications are the basic cause of the religious conflict and hindrance to Christian and Muslim relations. Therefore, both Muslims and Christians must consider the different concepts of God in their relations to each other. They should consider the difference between the transcendent-immanent God of Christianity and the absolutely transcendent God of Islam. Otherwise, there will be continued conflict between Christians and Muslims.

The word "Islamophobia" represents the problem of the diverse understandings of God and its implications among Christians. Islamophobia is the fear of Islam developed from mixed concepts of racism and discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, gender, or skin colour (Larsson 2005:35). Tidiane (2008:20) uses the word "Islamophobia" to describe the raised hostility between the Islamic world and the West, while referring to the cartoons depicting Mohammad as a terrorist. Should Mohammad be considered as a terrorist or a prophet? No matter what the answer is, the fear of Islam has recently been greatly prevalent in the Western world.

McKechnie (1979:1884) defines "terrorist" as a person who practices or favours the "use of terror and violence to, intimidate, subjugate, etc." However, Muslims understand it with honour in reference to Jihad (Holy War): "We are happy that the US put us on its list of

terrorists, a name given to pure Muslims who are strong and clear in their religious position" (*Daily Nation* 21 Mar 2008). The article, which makes the term terrorist and Jihad equal, is referring to Somalia's Islamic Court Union's youths who are celebrating their addition to the list of terrorists by the United States government. This understanding of terrorists is a reflection of the general population's view of Islamic Jihad. However, Christians also generally treat Jihad as an act of terrorists.[85] The misunderstanding of the term is an unavoidable consequence of the conflict between the two religions because of different perceptions of God and the purpose of man.

In Christian-Muslim relations one should consider both the similarities and dissimilarities between these religions. As the concept of God differs from each other, conflict between the two religions is inevitable. Yet, by moving closer to the similarities of the transcendence of God, one can create harmony and agreement in Christian-Muslim relations. By focusing on the similarities of the transcendence of God, it will force both Christians and Muslims to remain within the range of agreement that results in lesser conflict. On the other hand, it is obvious that the more we, Christians and Muslims, deal with the dissimilarities, the more conflict will arise. However, the differences abide in the core beliefs of Christians and Muslims. Hence, it is important to know the differences in order to avoid conflict. One must carefully balance the subject of God when dealing with Christian-Muslim relations. Both Christians and Muslims should maintain that they agree with each other that God is transcendent from creation while Christians should not insist upon the immanent aspect of God before Muslims. Both religions should focus on what is agreeable from the fundamental basic root of theology and practice. The believers should not focus on the outcome of

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[85] Mvumbi (2008b:32) hints that not all Muslims are terrorists, but it seems that all terrorists are Muslims. See further discussion on terrorists in 6.7.2 and footnote 86.

theological thought that has already widened the gap between Islam and Christianity. By focusing on the similarities in the transcendence of God in Christianity and Islam, it will create a closer gap in the relationships between Christians and Muslims.

6.7.2 Suggestions to improve Christian and Muslim relations

6.7.2.1 Introduction

The subject of Christian-Muslim relations is a rather large subject and has many facets. The relations could be approached from various angles. The major trend has focused upon the historical and political relationship between Christianity and Islam (Bethmann 1961:259). However, I am looking forward to a new approach in line with the discussion of the transcendence of God.

When two fundamentally different religions come together, there will be conflict unless one side compromises some of its religious values or mandates. Any religion that can compromise its belief is not a true religion, and both Christians and Muslims will claim the authenticity of their religion. Then, conflict between the two religions is inevitable. Watt (1967:201) says "no matter what we try it would be premature to think of a union of religions, but in the foreseeable future Muslims and Christians might well come to accept one another as fellow-servants of God." However, in this current trend of the relations, Muslims and Christians can never be brothers of one another. These suggestions to ameliorate Christian-Muslim relations are not the solutions for the problem but rather a contribution to improve the relations. The following discussion may improve the Christian-Muslim relationships.

6.7.2.2 Promote inter-religious studies

Bethmann (1961:259) describes the relationship between Christians and Muslims in one bold statement: "They do not know each other." It is his explanation that Christians and Muslims know only that they are different. They hardly know how they differ and where they differ. Whether the reason for not knowing each other is negligence or religiocentrism, many suggest inter-religious studies in one way or another. For example Ida Glaser (1997:17) says "Reading the Old Testament alongside the Islamic material can lead us to recognize our fundamental assumptions, challenge us in our own thinking, and help us to understand and communicate with the various Muslim people amongst whom we live." In a similar way, some Muslim commentators use the Bible for supporting Qur'anic exegesis such as Yusuf Ali (Glaser 1997:5). Poston (2000:9), based on his Christian mission perspective, states:

> I agree that learning the beliefs of a Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or some other religious person is essential for Christians to deepen their understanding of the biblical view of God. Without such a comparative approach, most remain 'greenhouse Christians,' people who have grown up in a controlled environment and who have difficulty functioning in the world of a multiplicity of religious alternatives. It is our hope that the challenge of Islam will strengthen the commitment of Christians toward their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, as well as their appreciation for the plan of salvation set forth in the Bible.

Furthermore, Lawrence of Arabia, who made significant contributions to the understanding of Islamic culture, literature, and diplomacy, adheres to the process of knowing the other

through cultural adaptation: "If you can wear Arab kit when with tribes you will acquire their trust and intimacy to a degree impossible in uniform" (Belt 1999:40). Lawrence promotes the process of familiarisation which we can apply to Muslim and Christian theology by promoting the understanding of God. This can be done through inter-religious studies of the Scriptures.

Many have said that Islam is the third religion born out of the Old Testament and concluded that "Christianity and Islam are basically very closely related, that Muslims and Christians are indeed brothers" (Bethmann 1961:263). Bethmann continuously asks a question, "But why then, you will ask, have Muslims and Christians never come together and have often opposed each other?" The lack of peaceful Christian-Muslim relations is one of the signs that there is lack of inter-scriptural thinking, which promotes the studies that bring forth understanding and harmony.

Of course, we cannot expect to reach a balanced comparative understanding of the Scriptures from studies, but we can reach a certain level of knowledge and understanding of the other's religious behaviour through the studies. As religions are interrelated to people's customs and world views, the narrower gap (of understanding) between Islam and Christianity will be the better for Christian-Muslim relations. The promotion of inter-religious studies may bring better relations between Christians and Muslims.

6.7.2.3 Understanding Christian mission and Muslim *da'wah*

One of the major conflicts between Christians and Muslims is the pressure of missionary zeal. Syed Abedin (1992:5) says both Christianity and Islam are religions of outreach. Christians

take the Gospel to the ends of the world, believing it to be the Great Commission. Muslims hold *da'wah* (or call to Islam) as their duty to all believers. Both Christians and Muslims try to convert people to their religion based on their duty or call from God. When these two great calls meet, there will obviously be conflict.

Abedin (1992:5) considers possible peaceful relations without undermining the purposes of *da'wah* or mission: "This could be possible if each side concedes that although *da'wah* and mission are legitimate exercises in their own right, under the exigencies of certain situations (other than religious or spiritual) believers are constrained to come together in understanding and accord. The alternative would be common doom." According to Abedin's argument, it may be possible to have peaceful relations between Christians and Muslims. However, both regard the mission of their religion as a fundamental governing principle of religious life. Furthermore, for devoted believers, their belief of mission and life cannot be separated. Thus, conflict will not be avoided completely; it is further discussed in the next section in connection with peace and war.

Nevertheless, knowing the perception of other's mission or *da'wah* (or Jihad) may restrain the conflict.[86] In the past, both Christians and Muslims have violated each other in the name of mission or Jihad. Even today, this pattern continues. Muslims persist in the Jihad while

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[86] In Surah 8:38-39, there are implications of *da'wah* from the definition of Jihad: "[38]Say to the unbelievers if (now) they desist (from unbelief) their past would be forgiven them; but if they persist the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning for them). [39]And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere; but if they cease verily Allah doth see all that they do." This is the verse which permits Muslims to use violence (Jihad) on unbelievers in order to convert them to the religion of Allah (*da'wah*). Indeed the violence has been a means for conversion, right from the beginning of Islam (Mvumbi 2008b:33). This pattern of *da'wah* and Jihad continue today, both the peaceful approach of *da'wah* and violent approach of *da'wah* (Jihad) which the West calls terrorism.

Christians continue to send their missionaries among Muslims. It should be recalled that Christians generally think of Jihad as terrorists' action, while Muslims think of Christian mission as making "rice Christians." Furthermore, Islamophobia among Christians represents the misunderstanding of the Jihad of Islam. For Muslims, Shafiq (1992:68) presents the misunderstanding of the Christian mission: "Western Christian mission to the Muslim world has never been a mission of Jesus, but a mission of the Western figurisation of Christianity arrogantly asserted in words, hardly ever exemplified in deeds." Sarwar ([1938] 1960:69) agrees: "So far the record of Christian missionaries' efforts is very disappointing. Instead to follow Jesus' teaching, the missionaries go to the poor in the third world countries with their pockets full of gold and rice to seduce or coax them into Christianity." He called the result of such Christian mission activities as "the rice Christian," a real "offence against God." These two extreme misunderstandings of the Christian-Muslim mission will never bring peace among Christians and Muslims; nevertheless they are fulfilling their religious duties. Through the understanding of the religious call of the other's religion, the relationship between Christians and Muslims may improve from today's situation. Understanding of the other's religious world views will further clarify the issue.

6.7.2.4   Understanding religious world views

A world view can be defined as "A set of assumptions, held consciously or unconsciously, about the basic make-up of the world and how the world works" (Miller 1999:287). In other words it can be defined as the controlling principle of culture and way of life. For Christians and Muslims, the value or principle of religion is at the foundation of their world views. However, it is difficult to distinguish between religion and world view, for they intermingle to form the religious world view. It may be called syncretism from the philosophical

approach, yet it must be distinguished that, in this thesis, the focus is more upon God than upon man. Paul Hiebert (1983:371) compares world-view and religion: "A world view provides people with their basic assumptions about reality. Religion provides them with the specific content of this reality." In the reality of life, Hiebert's distinctions between the two are vague. Therefore, we can call the principle behavioural life of Christians and Muslims as religious world views. It is the biblical or Qur'anic principle of behaviour that controls the world view of believers and becomes part of a way of life.

The definition of peace and war, for example, has been selected here to offer a clear understanding of the two religious world views. Islam, being a religion of peace as its name is derived from *salam* (peace), looks forward achieving peace on earth by means of bringing the world into submission to God. When one submits to God, he achieves the peace (of God) for God is "Peace" (*al-salam*, S 59:23). On the other hand those who have not yet submitted to God are still in a state of war, for there is no peace without God. Therefore, when Muslims strive for peace in relation to the world, there is no peace in the process but only war, unless the target group submits to Islam without resistance. Chittick (1990:150) illustrates the Islamic concept of peace:

> In other words, "Peace" or freedom from conflict lies at the centre of a circle; the centre is God Himself, while the circumference is as near to chaos as can be imagined. All creatures are situated on the radii. If they move centripetally, they travel closer to Peace, Unity, Bounty, Forgiveness, and Mercy; if they move centrifugally, they journey toward war, dispersion, harm, vengeance, and wrath.

This is the Islamic concept of peace and war in their religious world views. Because Allah is perfect in everything, there will be peace with God and war without God. Therefore, in Islamic Jihad, Muslims must make Allah known by all means to achieve the perfect state of peace on earth, including war against Christians. The war, including terrorist actions initiated by Muslims as defined by the modern Western world lately, is a means of consummating peace on earth.[87] As long as Allah remains the absolutely transcendent God to Muslims, there will never be peace on earth in relation to Muslims for Muslims must approach Allah in order to experience the peace of God.[88]

On the other hand, Christians can maintain peace with God as well as peace with fellow mankind for Yahweh is an immanent-transcendent God who allows himself to be known to man and establishes peace. For this reason, the ultimate achievement of peace on earth for Christians is the prevalence of the Gospel to restore the peaceful relationship with God. In the sense of achieving peace with God, the Christian concept of peace may agree with that of the Muslim concept. On the other hand, Christians can know God and make peace here on earth,

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[87] In Islamic theory, the ultimate objective of Islam is not war, but the establishment of peace and justice. For this reason Jihad is not instituted as sixth pillar of Islam for it was merely a temporary instrument to establish ultimate peace, rather than a permanent article of faith (pillar of Islam) (Köylü 2003:24-25). However, some Muslims include holy efforts in the cause of God (Jihad) as the sixth pillar of Islam (Braswell 1996:71).

[88] The implication of the Muslim's religious world views on peace and war may be seen in the lecture of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman from Al-Azhar University, the highest authority in the Islamic world: "There is a whole surah [chapter] called 'Spoils of War.' There is no surah called 'Peace.' Jihad and killing are the head of Islam. If you take them out, you cut off the head of Islam" (Gabriel 2004:8). Furthermore, Islam divides the world into two categories: the territory of Islam (*dar al-islam*) and the territory of war (*dar al-harb*). "In classical Sunni Islamic scholarship, the territory of Islam is viewed as the territory of justice and peace" (Braswell 1996:143). Therefore, engaging in Jihad is consummating the ultimate goal of Islam on earth, converting the world into *dar al-islam*. All acts of war are permitted in the *dar al-harb* (Ibn Warraq 1995:218).

for God is immanent. Furthermore, Christians endure suffering for peace while struggling for the Great Commission. Spiritual warfare is present in some Christian groups, but the Islamic concept of "war for peace" does not exist in the Christian religious world views. With proper understanding of the religious world views of Christians and Muslims, there will be less conflict, for conflict comes from misunderstanding and wrong expectations.

6.7.2.5   Improving context of dialogue

After the September 11, 2001 Islamic attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, publications on Islam and the talk of dialogue between Christians and Muslims have prevailed. However, much of these publications and dialogue seem to be informative materials for Christians (Gabriel 2004:214). For Christian-Muslim relations, there is a need of inter-religious dialogue much deeper than the informative level of publication to address the root cause of the Christian-Muslim conflicts. "Christian-Muslim dialogue, though extremely needed, is not an easy enterprise to undertake. It is pleasant and painful, tedious and risky, yet desirable and promising. One must face problems" (Danish 1990:58). Danish expresses that there are two faces of the process of inter-religious dialogue, "easy" and "difficult." I assume that most of the "difficult" is due to the lack of understanding of other's religious beliefs and practices. By promoting a higher level of information available to both Christians and Muslims better Christian-Muslim relations will result.[89]

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[89] See 6.8.2, "Recommendations for practical Christian-Muslim relations," for different level of Christian-Muslim dialogue.

In Christian-Muslim dialogue, one must make every effort to avoid debate instead of dialogue. Dialogue brings positive results while debate results in devastating doom. Shafiq (1992:59) supports this: "Dialogue rather than debate should be encouraged between the followers of different religions to create common understanding and bring about normality in their relations." Shafiq is correct. The understanding of the other's religion will bring peaceful relations.

Furthermore, both Christians and Muslims must avoid involvement in the dialogue without understanding the other's religious world views and Scripture. Ida Glaser (1997:16) presents the problem: "All too often, inter-faith dialogue can be carried out on the basis of each partner's isolated reading of their own texts, and therefore with little mutual understanding. In the particular case of Christian-Muslim dialogue, it often seems that we do not even realize that we are misunderstanding each other." Dialogue without understanding the other's point of view is not dialogue but rather debate, which one should avoid. "As the first dialogue between God and mankind resulted in a covenant, likewise a dialogue between two faiths should reach some agreements and conclusions, ingenious and practical" (Danish 1990:56). It is true that a dialogue results in some sort of agreement, as Danish points out that the result of the first dialogue is a covenant. Likewise, searching for a peaceful covenant between Christians and Muslims will definitely improve the Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Aasi (1986:88-89) suggests a few principles to dialogue with adherents of other religious traditions:

1. to search after truth, and when it is evident, to submit to it and establish it;

2. to use and accept the self-evident truths established by reason, common sense—perception, intuition and the universal religious experience of man (e.g., man's consciousness of one God and reality);

3. to be wise, and clear in arguments, goodly in exhortation and kind in the manner of presentation;

4. to avoid reviling anyone's belief, no matter how abhorrent to reason it might be, and;

5. to use no coercion in matters of faith.

Aasi's guidelines can be summarised with one word, namely "openness," especially, openness to the other's Scripture as the authority of dialogue comes from the Scriptures. However, does respect for the other's Scripture result in compromising truth for peace? The answer to this question can be another section of the exegetical argument, but it is necessary to say "No" for the purpose of opening the door of discussion of the truth without violence between the two religions. For without respecting the different Scriptures, any disagreement in the dialogue will come to the conclusion that the other's Scripture is not the work of God, and that moment will become a turning moment of dialogue into debate. As a conclusive remark, Warren (1969:111) opens up a key aspect of the dialogue: "In 'dialogue' I am primarily concerned to listen to what the other has to tell me about himself and what he believes and why. I want to discover the secret by which he lives. Should he then show some curiosity about me I will try to satisfy him….But 'dialogue' itself is not either a persuasive or a dissuasive. It is 'meeting' of two men who wish to be brethren." Meeting of two great religions of the world with the heart of being brothers to each other will guide the way for establishing peaceful relations in the world.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.8.1 Recommendation for further study

The analysis of the transcendence of God presented in this thesis suggests a number of issues for further study. Questions to be addressed are as follows:

➢ What are the dimensions of God's spacio-revelation? Is it possible for God to dwell in space and does God limit himself in a space and confirm his presence on earth?

➢ How does the transcendence of God differ between Islam and Christianity beside in this thesis' context, such as in general revelation and the New Testament?

➢ How is the experience of the transcendence and immanence of God in the New Testament contrasted with that of the Old Testament?

➢ How does the biblical theophany differ from the discussion of the transcendence of God? Is there theophany in the Qur'an?

➢ How does the transcendence of God affect the customs of the people? Has the implications of the transcendence of God penetrated the lives of the believers?

Answers to these questions will further clarify the questions of the transcendence of God as well as ameliorate Christian-Muslim relations.

6.8.2 Recommendation for practical Christian-Muslim relations

A plan of action presented by the Catholic Bishops of Africa and Germany at the end of their meeting in Akosombo, Ghana in October, 2004 provides a practical guideline for Muslim-

Christian relations especially in the African context (Mvumbi 2008b:169-170).[90] This is presented by Christians for Christians, yet the principle of the same practical guideline can be applied to Muslims as well. It is recommended to be modified into one's own context. I recognize that there cannot be a perfect solution for Christian-Muslim dialogue or relations as history has proven. However, with some trial and error these suggestions brought by the Bishops will be useful. Followings are the practical steps to an initiation of Christian-Muslim relationship:

At the Parish Level [Local Level]

➢ Visits to Muslims [Christians] and other forms of interaction.

➢ Common projects in the social and educational fields.

➢ Cooperation in the field of health care.

➢ Cooperation in fighting poverty.

At the Diocesan level [Territorial Level]

➢ In all interreligious work, clergy and laity must work together.

➢ Appointment of promoters of dialogue.

➢ Initiating and facilitating meetings of Christian and Muslim leaders, teachers, media people and academics.

➢ Aiming for objective knowledge of the other and building bridges of understanding.

➢ Platforms for discussing ethical, social, and political issues of common interest.

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[90] Furthermore, *Christians meeting Muslims: WCC papers on 10 years of Christian-Muslim dialogue* (*WCC* 1977) is highly recommended for practical Christian-Muslim relations and dialogue.

- ➢ Mixed bodies for peace monitoring and civic conflict management.
- ➢ Mixed bodies for enhancing honesty and transparency of local budgets.

At the National Level

- ➢ Episcopal commissions for interreligious dialogue.
- ➢ Centres of encounter and documentation.
- ➢ Establishment of official relations between Christians and Muslims in the academic field.
- ➢ Development of an ethical code for journalists.
- ➢ Multiplying efforts towards cooperation in specific health projects (HIV/AIDS, pre-natal and postnatal care for women and children).
- ➢ Continuing and strengthening interreligious cooperation in development projects.
- ➢ Exploring the possibility of programs fostering just relationships between men and women.
- ➢ Promoting projects fostering the rule of law in a democratic and pluralistic society.

At the International Level

- ➢ Exchange of experience, ideas and solutions from different regions in the field of Christian-Muslim relations.
- ➢ Organizing international consultative meetings of experts on Islam [Christianity] and Christian-Muslim relations.
- ➢ Production of pastoral guidelines in the field of interreligious relations.
- ➢ Publication of scientific studies.

- ➢ Making available relevant material by translation and adaptation.

- ➢ Continuing collaboration between SECAM, the German and European Bishop Conferences and other Conferences, especially from Asia and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

- ➢ Interreligious advocacy work aimed at fighting poverty, structural injustice, blatant abuses of human rights and promoting peace as a fruit of justice.

- ➢ Creating and managing an interactive website in English, Arabic and French presenting the Church's current teachings on, and promotion of, Christian-Muslim relations and dialogue worldwide.

African scholar, Mvumbi (2008b:168) distinguishes the Christian-Muslim dialogue at four different levels: the dialogue of life, of common actions, of religious experience, and of truth which is practiced by experts. The above recommendation seems to correspond with Mvumbi's category of the dialogue: *At the Parish Level* (the dialogue of life)*, At the Diocesan level* (the dialogue of common actions)*, At the National Level* (the dialogue of religious experience)*,* and *At the International Level* (the dialogue of truth). Out of these four categories, Mvumbi (2008a:13) states that there is an urgent need to find the way to reach doctrinal inter-religious dialogue (dialogue of truth) for theological reasoning can solve theological problems which in turn influence the overall aspect of Christian-Muslim relations.

Furthermore, the four levels of actions of dialogue can be summarised in one word, "education." Bondarenko (2004:443) testifies to the importance of education for Christian-Muslim relations based on his field research in Tanzania "*A rise in the standard of education level of both Christians and Muslims will rather contribute to an increase in tolerance in*

Christian-Muslim relations in the country." Education, indeed, makes knowledge available to people and thus makes known the differences and similarity between Islam and Christianity. Therefore, the above practical guideline is highly recommended for Christian-Muslim relations as is or in modified form. Through the initiation of the actions, let the peace of God prevail among people for, "The LORD is peace" (Jdg 6:24; 1 Cor 14:33) and "God has called us to live in peace" (1 Cor 7:15). Finally, "Oh God, You are Peace, from you comes peace, to you returns peace. Revive us with a salutation of peace and lead us into your abode of peace" (Fiqh-us-Sunnah 5:66; Sahih Muslim Hadith 283; Prinz 2004:180). Indeed, the God of the Bible and the Qur'an are "Peace," and for "Peace" we Christians and Muslims desire!

6.9   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exegesis of identical passages concerning God's relationship with man found in both the Qur'an and the Bible establishes that the Qur'an presupposes that God, who maintains absolute transcendence from creation, will not allow his immanent state with man. Thus, Muslims can only have a transcendent relationship with God, which diminishes their ability to know God. This reality closes the door to personal relationships between God and man. The lack of God's personal relationship with man has been a key factor in shaping the theology of Islam.

In the Bible, on the other hand, God's relationship with man is expressed in his transcendence and immanence. God first wanted his immanent state with man, but due to man's sinful state the ontological transcendent relationship has been established. God, in turn, uses his transcendent nature as a method of his immanence with man. This transcendence-immanence of God is evident by means of the theology of Christianity. Therefore, the relationship of God

with humans in Christianity can be expressed as God's horizontal-vertical relationship compared to the vertical relationship of God in Islam.

Therefore, the study has demonstrated the hypothesis which can be abridged as: God's relation to humankind is fundamentally different as it is demonstrated by the investigation of the transcendence of God in the Old Testament and the Qur'an. The God of the Bible is an immanent-transcendent God while the God of Islam is an absolute transcendent God. This difference has affected the overall theology of Islam and Christianity. The study also provides a significant inside look at how the differences may cause conflict between Muslims and Christians with some suggestion and recommendations for better Christian-Muslim relations.

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APPENDIX

NAMES OF GOD IN ISLAM

The Qur'an (S 7:180; 17:110; 20:8; 59:24) indicates "the most beautiful names belong to Allah." The following "99 Names of God" refer to God's attributes which are like titles of honour and glory (Ali 1989:766). The list below is gleaned from different sources.[91]

1	*Ar-Rahman*	The All-Compassionate, The All Beneficent
2	*Ar-Rahim*	The All-Merciful
3	*Al-Malik*	The Absolute Ruler, The King, The Sovereign
4	*Al-Quddus*	The Pure One, The Most Holy, The Most Perfect
5	*As-Salam*	The Source of Peace, The Most Perfect
6	*Al-Mu'min*	The Inspirer of Faith, The Guarantor
7	*Al-Muhaymin*	The Guardian, The Preserver
8	*Al-'Aziz*	The Victorious, The Almighty, The Self Sufficient
9	*Al-Jabbar*	The Compeller, The Powerful
10	*Al-Mutakabbir*	The Greatest, The Tremendous
11	*Al-Khaliq*	The Creator
12	*Al-Bari'*	The Maker of Order, The Rightful
13	*Al-Musawwir*	The Shaper of Beauty

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[91] *The Most Beautiful Names* (Kjeilen 2008), *An explanation of the perfect names and attributes of Allah* (http://www.jannah.org/articles/names.html), *Ninety-Nine Names of God in Islam* (Al-Ghazali 1970), *The Moslem doctrine of God* (Zwemer 1905), *Who is Allah in Islam* (Abd-Al-Masih 1970).

14	*Al-Ghaffar*	The Forgiving
15	*Al-Qahhar*	The Subduer
16	*Al-Wahhab*	The Giver of All, The Bestower
17	*Ar-Razzaq*	The Sustainer, The Ever Providing
18	*Al-Fattah*	The Opener, The Victory Giver
19	*Al-'Alim*	The All Knowing, The Omniscient
20	*Al-Qabid*	The Constrictor, The Straightener
21	*Al-Basit*	The Reliever, The Expander
22	*Al-Khafid*	The Abaser
23	*Ar-Rafi'*	The Exalter
24	*Al-Mu'izz*	The Bestower of Honour
25	*Al-Mudhill*	The Humiliator, The Giver of Dishonour
26	*As-Sami*	The Hearer of All
27	*Al-Basir*	The Seer of All
28	*Al-Hakam*	The Judge, The Arbitrator
29	*Al-'Adl*	The Just
30	*Al-Latif*	The Subtle One
31	*Al-Khabir*	The All-Aware
32	*Al-Halim*	The Forebearing, The Indulgent
33	*Al-'Azim*	The Magnificent, The Infinite
34	*Al-Ghafur*	The Forgiver
35	*Ash-Shakur*	The Rewarder of Thankfulness
36	*Al-'Ali*	The Highest, The Sublimely Exalted
37	*Al-Kabir*	The Greatest
38	*Al-Hafiz*	The Preserver

39	*Al-Muqit*	The Nourisher
40	*Al-Hasib*	The Accounter, The Bringer of Judgment
41	*Al-Jalil*	The Mighty, The Majestic
42	*Al-Karim*	The Generous, The Bountiful
43	*Ar-Raqib*	The Watchful One
44	*Al-Mujib*	The Responder to Prayer, The Answerer
45	*Al-Wasi'*	The All-Comprehending, The Vast
46	*Al-Hakim*	The Perfectly Wise
47	*Al-Wadud*	The Loving One, The Kind One
48	*Al-Majíd*	The Majestic One, The All Glorious
49	*Al-Ba'ith*	The Resurrector, The Raiser of The Dead
50	*Ash-Shahid*	The Witness
51	*Al-h Haqq*	The Truth, The Real
52	*Al-Wakil*	The Trustee, The Dependable
53	*Al-Qawi*	The Possessor of All Strength
54	*Al-Matin*	The Forceful One, The Steadfast
55	*Al-Wáli*	The Governor
56	*Al-Hamid*	The Praised One
57	*Al-Muhsi*	The Appraiser, The Accounter, The Numberer of All
58	*Al-Mubdi*	The Originator, The Producer
59	*Al-Mu'id*	The Restorer
60	*Al-Muhyi*	The Giver of Life
61	*Al-Mumit*	The Taker of Life, The Destroyer
62	*Al-Hayy*	The Ever Living One
63	*Al-Qayyum*	The Self-Existing One

64	*Al-Wajid*	The Finder, The Perceiver
65	*Al-Májid*	The Glorious, The Magnificent
66	*Al-Wahid*	The Only One, The Unique
67	*Al-Ahad*	The One, The All Inclusive
68	*As-Samad*	The Satisfier of All Needs, The Self Sufficient
69	*Al-Qadir*	The All Powerful, The All Able
70	*Al-Muqtadir*	The Creator of All Power, The Dominant
71	*Al-Muqaddim*	The Expediter, He Who Brings Forward
72	*Al-Mu'akhkhir*	The Delayer, He Who Puts Far Away
73	*Al-Awwal*	The First
74	*Al-Akhir*	The Last
75	*Az-Zahir*	The Manifest One, The All Victorious
76	*Al-Batin*	The Hidden One, The All Encompassing
77	*Al-Walí*	The Protecting Friend, The Patron
78	*Al-Muta'ali*	The Supreme One, The Self Exalted
79	*Al-Barr*	The Doer of Good, The Most Kind and Righteous
80	*At-Tawwib*	The Guide to Repentance, Ever Relenting
81	*Al-Muntaqim*	The Avenger
82	*Al-Afu*	The Forgiver, The Effacer of Sins
83	*Ar-Ra'uf*	The Clement, The All Pitying
84	*Malik al-Mulk*	The Owner of All
85	*Dhul-Jalali Wal-Ikram*	The Lord of Majesty and Bounty
86	*Al-Muqsit*	The Equitable One, The Requiter
87	*Al-Jami*	The Gatherer, The Unifier
88	*Al-Ghani*	The Rich One, The Independent

89	*Al-Mughni*	The Enricher, The Emancipator
90	*Al-Mani'*	The Preventer of Harm, The Shielder, the Defender
91	*Ad-Darr*	The Creator of The Harmful, The Distressor
92	*An-Nafi*	The Creator of Good, The Benefactor
93	*An-Nur*	The Light
94	*Al-Hadi*	The Guide
95	*Al-Badi*	The Originator, The Incomparable
96	*Al-Baqi*	The Everlasting One
97	*Al-Warith*	The Inheritor of All, The Heir
98	*Ar-Rashid*	The Righteous Teacher, The Guide
99	*As-Sabur*	The Patient One, The Timeless

SUMMARY

Title: *Transcendence of God: A comparative study of the Old Testament and the Qur'an*

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Significant differences as well as similarities between Islam and Christianity in the areas of the transcendence of God is the main discussion of the thesis. The investigation of the transcendence of God in the Bible and the Qur'an is within the limits of corresponding relationship accounts of God with Adam, Abraham, and Moses. Selected passages are used as examples to fulfil the aim of the study. Through this study an attempt is also made to determine what constitutes different aspects of theologies and practices of Christianity and Islam.

The preliminary preparation of the study and the orientation of the readers into the transcendence of God are dealt with in the first three chapters: Chapter 1 presents an overview of the research as well as the various aspects of research methodology, chapter 2 describes the similarities and differences of the Qur'an and the Bible in order to present an appropriate approach to the exegesis of the selected passages, and chapter 3 establishes the theological issues of the transcendence of God from the views of both Christian and Muslim scholars.

The main discussion of the transcendence of God unfolds in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 investigates how God reveals his will in respect to the Qur'an and the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, and describes and analyses the transcendence of God revealed in the Old Testament and the Qur'an within the limits of the parallel passages dealing with Adam, Abraham, and Moses. Chapter 5 carries over the results of chapter 4 to find the cause of the differences between the corresponding episodes of the Old Testament and the Qur'an with regard to the transcendence of God, and analyses the implications of the transcendence of God with regard to the differences in Christianity and Islam theology. Finally, chapter 6 concludes the study as well as presents implications and solutions for the Christian-Muslim conflicts and the necessity for further studies.

In conclusion, the exegesis of identical passages concerning God's relationship with man found in both the Qur'an and the Bible establishes that the Qur'an presupposes that God, maintaining absolute transcendence from creation, will not allow his immanent state with man. Thus, Muslims can only have a transcendent relationship with God, which diminishes their ability to know God, and closes the door to personal relationships between God and man. The lack of God's personal relationship with man has been a key factor in shaping the theology of Islam. In the Bible, on the other hand, God's relationship with man is expressed in both his transcendence and immanence. God first wanted his immanent state with man, but due to man's sinful state the ontological transcendent relationship has been established. God, in turn, uses his transcendence as a method of immanence with man. This transcendence-immanence of God is evident through Christian theology which can be expressed as God's horizontal-vertical relationship compared to the vertical relationship of God in Islam.

KEYWORDS

Transcendence of God

God

Adam

Abraham

Moses

Islam

Christianity

The Qur'an

The Bible

Christian-Muslim Relations