

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Missiology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**Title: A STUDY ON THE CONCEPT OF MURTAD AND ITS SOCIO-RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS ON MISSION AMONG MBORORO PEOPLE IN MBÉ, NGOUNDÉRÉ CITY, CAMEROON.**

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This study examines the concept of Murtad (apostasy) and its socio-religious implications among the Mbororo of Mbé, Ngoundéré city, Cameroon. The Mbororo, a pastoral community, live according to a strict code of pulaaku (Fulani ethics), which closely links social identity to adherence to Islam, making abandoning this faith a major social taboo. This research aims to understand how the concept of Murtad constitutes a significant obstacle to missionary work and affects the social status of Mbororo converts to Christianity.

The qualitative phenomenological approach employed, which included in-depth interviews with eight Participants, enabled the development of a missionary strategy adapted to the local context. The study's findings reveal that apostates (Murtad) often experience severe and significant ostracism, family separation, and

sometimes violent reactions, generating a sense of insecurity among those who wish to leave Islam. The data collected was used to develop a seven-step mission strategy aimed at reaching Muslims in general and, in particular, the Mbororo people of the Adamawa region.

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A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Missiology

by

Garga Ngola

February 2026

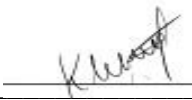
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Dedicated to my wife, Guimi Claudine, and my Children,

Ngayamkal Ngola Sephora, Nalla Giglake Ngola

Sylvain, Nikide Ngola Salathielle,

Nefeavayang Ngola Sadok.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	x
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background of the Study .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Purpose of the Study .....	8
Research Questions .....	8
Significance of the Study .....	9
Limitation.....	9
Delimitation .....	10
Reflexivity.....	10
Research Methodology .....	12
Research Approach and Design .....	12
Population and Sampling .....	13
Data Collection, Procedure, and Analysis .....	13
Ethical Consideration.....	14
Definition of Terms.....	15
Chapter Outline .....	16
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE APOSTASY CONCEPT.....	17
The Concept of Apostasy in the Old Testament .....	18
The Concept of Apostasy in the Pentateuch .....	19
Exodus 32:1-6 (KJV), Worshipping the Golden Calf.....	19
Judges 2:11-15 (KJV), Israel's Unfaithfulness .....	21
Isaiah 1:2-6, and Jeremiah 10:3-5 .....	22
Deuteronomy 13:6-11, and Leviticus 24: A Punishment for Worshipping Idols .....	23
Apostates in Historical Books.....	25
King Solomon .....	25
Solomon's Punishment.....	26
Achan's Disobedience and Punishment .....	26

Imagery of the Concept of Apostasy .....	28
Adultery .....	28
Turning Away .....	28
Rebellion .....	29
Falling Away .....	29
Summary .....	29
Apostasy in the New Testament .....	30
The Concept of Apostasy in the Gospels .....	32
Condemning the Followers of Jesus in Apostasy in the Book of Acts .....	33
Tolerate Sin and Spiritual Wickedness .....	34
Ananias and Sapphira were Involved in the Apostasy .....	35
Apostasy in the Epistles of Paul .....	36
The Theological and Doctrinal Basis for Apostasy .....	37
A Human with Free Will .....	37
Man and Sin .....	38
Origin of Sin .....	39
Effects of Sin .....	39
Theological Implications .....	40
Ellen G. White's View on Apostasy .....	41
Identity as a Contribution .....	43
The Identity of God .....	43
Identity of the Missionary .....	44
Summary .....	45
 3. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	 46
The Concept of Apostasy in the Qur'an .....	50
The Concept of Apostasy in the Hadith .....	52
The Position of the Sunni School: The Maliki School .....	56
The Position of Muslim Scholars .....	57
Muslim Scholars in Favor of the Death Penalty for Apostasy .....	57
Muslim Scholars Opposed to the Death Penalty for Apostasy .....	59
Controversies among Modern Scholars Regarding the Death Penalty .....	61
Opposition to the Death Penalty .....	61
In Favor of the Death Penalty .....	62
The Consensus of the Companions of the Prophet .....	62
Social and Legal Consequences of the Concept of Apostasy .....	64
Early Islamic Theology .....	65
Mu'tazilah Theology .....	65
The World of the Jinn .....	66
The Names for the Jinn in the Arabic Language .....	66
Evidence for the Existence of the Jinn .....	67
Powers of Jinn .....	68
Missiological Implication .....	69
The Adventist Responses toward Murtad: .....	70
Summary .....	71

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	72
Historical Context.....	73
Brief History of Islam in Cameroon.....	73
Brief History of Islam in Ngaoundéré.....	73
Context of the Study.....	74
Localization of Mbé.....	76
Religious Setting of Mbé.....	78
Research Approach and Design.....	78
Population and Sampling Procedure.....	80
Population.....	80
Sampling.....	80
Permissions from the Local Administration.....	81
Data Collection Procedure.....	82
Interviews.....	82
Focus Group Interview.....	83
Research Assistants.....	84
Data Recording.....	84
Data Analysis Procedure.....	85
The Issues of Trustworthiness.....	87
Triangulation Strategy.....	87
Credibility.....	88
Dependability.....	89
Transferability.....	89
Ethical Considerations.....	90
Risk Assessment.....	90
Informed Consent.....	91
Anonymity and Confidentiality.....	91
Summary.....	92
5. DATA ANALYSIS AND PROPOSED STRATEGY.....	93
Description of Participants.....	94
Data Collection and Analysis Process.....	95
Research Questions.....	97
The Concept of Murtad among the Mbororo People of Mbé.....	97
The Traditional Understanding of the Concept of Murtad.....	98
A Lost Person.....	99
The Betrayer.....	101
A Kafir/Munafiq (disbeliever).....	103
Murtad, a Rebel.....	104
Theological Understanding of the Concept of Murtad (Apostasy).....	106
Murtad's Punishment.....	107
Imprisonment, Beatings.....	108
Confiscation of Property, Wives, and Children.....	111
Banishment of Murtad.....	112
Death Penalty.....	113
Missiological Interpretation.....	119
The Concept of Murtad and Its Socio-religious.....	120
The Fear.....	121

Humiliation and Dignity .....	123
Freedom of Religion .....	124
Rejection .....	125
Prejudice and Discrimination.....	126
Summary .....	126
6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	130
Summary .....	130
The Traditional Understanding of the Concept of Murtad by the Mbororo People .....	132
Religious freedom was violated, and challenges were faced.....	132
Missiological Implications.....	133
Proposed Strategy .....	133
Implementation of Nicodemus' Formula .....	134
The Relationship between the GCAMR's Strategy and the Proposed Strategy.....	135
Integration .....	135
Implementation .....	136
Conclusion .....	137
Recommendations.....	137
APPENDICES .....	138
A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	139
B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE.....	141
C. TRANSLATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	142
D. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	143
E. ETHICS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL .....	144
F. LETTERS .....	145
G. GOVERNMENT AUTHORIZATION APPROVAL.....	147
H. TRANSLATED GOVERNMENT AUTHORIZATION.....	148
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	149

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTP	Arabic Class Teacher Participant
AMRC	Adamaoua Mayo-Rey Conference
IMP	Imam Mosque Participant
MBBP	Muslim Background Believer Participant
PMBBP	Pastor Muslim Background Believer Participant
WMP	Woman Muslim Participant

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Conference (AMRC), for their guidance and prayers. I cannot conclude without thanking all the elders and members of the churches in the Adamaoua North District

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion governed by laws. Among these laws, one declares that it is forbidden to abandon Islam after having accepted it, just as it is forbidden to shirk obedience and obligations. Islam prescribes punishments ranging from corporal flogging, confiscation of property, children, women, exclusion from the family, and even the death penalty.

#### **Background of the Study**

Apostasy (Murtad) refers to the act of separating or renouncing a religion, either by adopting another faith or rejecting all religious beliefs. Religion, including Islam, is a matter of personal choice of one's set of beliefs, free from coercion.<sup>1</sup> Accepting Islam is a free and unconstrained choice. However, it should be noted that once accepted, it is forbidden to leave it. In reality, Islam is a religion governed by laws.<sup>2</sup> And, among these laws, one declares that it is forbidden to abandon Islam after having accepted it, just as it is forbidden to shirk obedience and obligations. Islam prescribes punishments ranging from corporal flogging, confiscation of property, children, women, exclusion from the family, and even the death penalty.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Santhira Morgan and Jasni Bin Sulong, "Punishment for Apostasy: A Review and Choosing the Right Perspective (Tarjih)," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 10, no. 6 (2020): 687.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The persecution of Muslims who have converted to Christianity is not limited to Cameroon; it is a significant and widespread global problem, particularly in Muslim-majority regions. According to the 2020 report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Christians in Burma, China, Eritrea, India, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Vietnam are persecuted; these countries are designated as "countries of particular concern" by the U.S. State Department because of their governments' engagement in, or tolerance of, "serious violations of religious freedom."<sup>4</sup>

However, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone can change their religion or belief.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Noble Quran, the primary source of Islamic law, states: "There shall be no compulsion in acceptance of the religion."<sup>6</sup> "So remind, O Muhammad; you are only a reminder. You are not vested with the power to constrain them."<sup>7</sup> This implies that each Muslim is normally free to choose the religion to which they consider themselves most appropriate to belong. These texts also indicate that no one should be forced to enter or accept the Islamic faith.

Moreover, according to Goldziher, the real and daily sanction of Muslims against apostates is the confiscation of their property, if the practical and physical

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<sup>4</sup>United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Annual Report 2020* (New York: United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2020), 1, 11.

<sup>5</sup>Johannes Morsink, *Article by Article: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights for a New Generation*, " *Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 116.

<sup>6</sup>"The Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah 2. 256.

<sup>7</sup>"The Qur'an, Surah Al-Gachiyah 88.21-22.

death penalty is not applied in certain places.<sup>8</sup> Although all kinds of punishments are conveniently applied to an apostate among Muslims, they also include death in many forms. The punishments are more frequently recorded in the Sunnah and, in the majority of cases, take the form of whipping, flogging, and imprisonment.<sup>9</sup>

According to President C.F. Gates of Rober College, Constantinople, "Fear of death is certainly one of the causes of the low number of converts from Islam to Christianity. Every Muslim knows that his life is in danger if he becomes a Christian."<sup>10</sup> A missionary states that: The apostasy from Muslim law was a significant cause of the lack of converts.<sup>11</sup> In this study, the researcher examined the concept of Murtad (Apostasy) and its socio-religious implications, drawing on the experiences of this phenomenon among the Mbororo of Mbé.

Globally, the Mbororo Fulani are widespread in West Africa, Central Africa, and North Africa<sup>12</sup>. Pelican (2012) described the Mbororo as a people belonging to the Fulbe ethnic group.<sup>13</sup> According to Fuhbang Emmanuel Tanifum, the Mbororo are

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<sup>8</sup>Frank Griffel, "Toleration and Exclusion: Al-Sha: Fi'l: And al-Ghaza:L1: On the Treatment of Apostates," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64, no. 3 (2001): 342.

<sup>9</sup> Nigel S. Rodley and UN. Commission on Human Rights. Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, *Question of the Human Rights of all Persons Subjected to any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, in Particular Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: report of the Special Rapporteur, Nigel S. Rodley, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/37* (Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations, 1994).

<sup>10</sup>Samuel Marinus Zwemer, *The Law of Apostasy in Islam: Answering The Question Why There Are So Few Moslem Converts, And Giving Examples Of Their Moral Courage And Martyrdom* (London: Marshall Brothers, 2019), 26.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Aishatu Fabani, Josphe Besong and Charly Ngyap, "The Role of Culture on Higher Education Attainment amongst the Mbororo-Fulanis in Cameroon: An Empirical Analysis," *African Journal of Social Sciences* 12 (2021): 10.

<sup>13</sup>Emmanuel Tanifum Fuhbang, "Toward a Model of Making Disciples of Jesus among Muslims: Case of the Mbororo Muslims of North West Region of Cameroon," (MA thesis, Cameroon Faculty of Evangelical Theology, 2019), 3.

found today in almost all regions of Cameroon.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted, however, that their main sedentary communities are located in the Adamawa, North, and Far North regions; and the Grass fields, that is to say, the West and North West regions, and the East region.<sup>15</sup>

The Mbororo are a semi-nomadic community that arrived in Ngaoundéré city, Cameroon, in the early 1900s.<sup>16</sup> These people constitute the largest nomadic sub-ethnic group. The Mbororo have a unique character. Thus, their semi-nomadic character due to cattle breeding constitutes their main and essential economic activity.<sup>17</sup>

In Mbé village, the ethnic community of the Mbororo people is Muslim, and this is also where the highest percentage of Muslims reside.<sup>18</sup> Many Muslims also adhere to certain aspects of traditional beliefs. Overall, the Mbororo are differentiated from other Fulani by their language, which is Fulfude as their mother tongue, their clothing, their worldview, and their breeding.

In the socio-religious context, the Mbororo people, as well as the Christian religion, believe in religious realities: in creation, the nature of man, life after death, eternal life, the last judgment, the existence of sin, hell, the existence of Satan, the

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<sup>14</sup>Emmanuel Tanifum Fuhbang, "Toward a Model of Making Disciples of Jesus among Muslims: Case of the Mbororo Muslims of North West Region of Cameroon," (MA thesis, Cameroon Faculty of Evangelical Theology, 2019).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Fabani, Besong and Nguyap, "The Role of Culture on Higher Education Attainment amongst the Mbororo-Fulanis in Cameroon," 10.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Office of International Religious Freedom, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2023* (New York: United States Department of State, 2023), 3.

existence of demons, and angels. However, the teaching and interpretation of the Qur'an of these realities differ from those of the Bible.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the socio-religious implications of apostasy among the Mbororo people are multiple: family, tribal, and property repercussions, religious conflicts and dialogue, and tensions between converts and the Muslim community. All this constitutes the central problem of this research, because it is what hinders the progress of the mission among the Mbororo, forced to remain in Islam and fearful of adopting another religion.

In Islam, the religious beliefs of the Mbororo-Fulani are a powerful and influential aspect of the tradition, especially as they encompass other aspects of their culture, customs, and code of socialization. For example, according to Nkengla (2012), the annual fasting periods of the Islamic calendar, often observed by Muslims around the world, encourage Mbororo culture, beliefs, and practices are describe why is this is a problem worth studying.

The crucial Mbororo worldview is based on superiority, called in Fulfude “*Pulaaku*” or on shame, called “*Semtende*”. According to Pelican (2015), “*Pulaaku*” generally refers to a complexity of social values, such as modesty, self-control, common sense, and courage that are supposed to guide the public interaction between the Fulbé Mbororo.<sup>20</sup> As a result of this worldview, some Mbororo Fulani communities interact peacefully with non-Muslims, and there are cases of Mbororo conversions to Christianity. Thus, some Mbororo treat their brothers who have become Christians as “Haabe,” and” Kirdi,” meaning pagans, and persecute them.

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<sup>19</sup>Fuhbang, "Toward a Model of Making Disciples of Jesus among Muslims," 118.

<sup>20</sup> Fabani, Besong and Nguyap, "The Role of Culture on Higher Education Attainment amongst the Mbororo-Fulanis in Cameroon," 118.

However, the Mbororo Fulani would therefore be defined by their belonging to Islam. Thus, any Mbororo who changes religion to the Christian faith is considered spiritually lost, a traitor, who must be excluded from the Islamic community at all costs.<sup>21</sup> According to Fanta Dada Petel and Thierry Vircoulon, the Muslim worldview, it is unacceptable to admit that a Fulani Mbororo could abandon Islam for another. If this happens, it is a betrayal and a perdition on his part.<sup>22</sup>

Existing studies on apostasy in contemporary Cameroon focus primarily on sociological and historical analyses, but neglect the profound theological and missiological implications of this phenomenon. Their contribution lies in describing the social dynamics of religious abandonment, while their main shortcoming lies in the limitation of their theological and missiological analysis. It is therefore crucial to fill this gap to better understand the impact of apostasy on the Mbororo community, Christian doctrines, and local mission strategies.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding Murtad's incidence statistics, no cases of public murder have been recorded. Moreover, the penal code of the Republic of Cameroon does not allow this extreme punitive measure, because it declares on this subject: "Whoever causes the death of another will be punished with life imprisonment."<sup>24</sup> But they secretly use other means to eliminate the Murtad at all costs if they get the chance.

The reason is that there are many cases of persecution against those who leave Islam. We have the case of those who absolutely must go into exile far from their

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<sup>21</sup>Fanta Dada Petel and Thierry Vircoulon, *Les Peuls Mbororo du Nord-Cameroun: insécurité d'une société pastorale et limites d'une réponse sécuritaire hybride* (Paris, France: Ifri, 2021), 57.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Fabani, Besong and Nguyap, "The Role of Culture on Higher Education Attainment amongst the Mbororo-Fulanis in Cameroon," 1–20.

<sup>24</sup>Cameroon Penal Code, Application of Criminal Law, 2016, 139.

former brothers when they adhere to Christianity. Nevertheless, these former Muslim Brotherhood members use the power of unjust jinn to reach apostates.<sup>25</sup> Because some Muslims have the habit of resorting to the power of the jinn in retaliation.<sup>26</sup>

In short, in Islam, apostasy (Murtad) is manifested by an explicit renunciation of the Muslim faith and carries religious, social, and legal consequences. Spiritually, apostasy is considered a major sin. Socially, it can lead to exclusion from family and community. Legally, it can lead to the annulment of marriage and exclusion from inheritance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon states that: "the State shall be secular. The neutrality and independence of the State in respect of all religions shall be guaranteed; freedom of religion and worship shall be guaranteed."<sup>27</sup> This means that every citizen is free to belong to any religion or religious denomination of their choice; they are also free to preach and create their religion as they see fit.

In Mbé, Ngaoundéré, Cameroon, Mbororo converts from Islam to Christianity report experiencing social exclusion and covert persecution, despite the country's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. This situation affects interreligious relations and missionary efforts in the area.

While previous research has examined Mbororo religious identity (e.g., Pelican 2015; Nkengla 2012), few studies have analyzed how the Islamic concept of Murtad affects socio-religious dynamics and mission strategies in Mbé, Ngaoundéré,

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<sup>25</sup>The Qur'an, Surah At-Tawba 9.29.

<sup>26</sup>The Qur'an, Surah Al-Jinn 1-28.

<sup>27</sup>The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 2008, 6.

Cameroon. The concept of Murtad (apostasy) is a subject of study to understand interpersonal conflicts, the evolution of beliefs, and the interaction between religious and civil law, while raising questions of freedom of religious conscience and freedom.

This study seeks to resolve the complex interplay between the Islamic concept of Murtad and the socio-religious structure of the Mbororo people in Mbé, Ngaoundéré. The stigmatization and persecution of converts to Christianity reflect deeper tensions between faith, identity, and community belonging. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective and context-appropriate missionary strategy among the Mbororo.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the concept of Murtad (apostasy) as understood and practiced by the Mbororo people of Mbé village, Ngaoundéré, Cameroon. Focusing on the specific challenges they face when seeking to convert to Christianity, often referred to as the “People of the Book” in this context. This research examined the sociocultural and religious pressures faced by the Mbororo community when an individual leaves Islam for another faith, particularly Christianity.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the traditional and theological understanding of the concept of Murtad (apostasy) among the Mbororo people in Mbé, Ngaoundéré City, Cameroon?
2. What social, cultural, economic, and legal challenges do Mbororo individuals encounter when they choose to leave Islam or convert to Christianity?

3. How does the Islamic understanding of Murtad influence interreligious relations and the socio-religious environment for mission among the Mbororo in Mbé?
4. What contextually appropriate missiological strategy can the Seventh-day Adventist Church adopt to effectively engage the Mbororo community in light of the Murtad phenomenon?

### **Significance of the Study**

The particular significance of this study is important for Muslims who renounce Islam because it clarifies that the severe punishment of apostasy is a matter of theological belief in Allah's divine retribution, as taught in the Quran, and not simply a legal or political issue. It is also important because it promotes religious freedom by affirming the right to choose one's beliefs, fosters interreligious interaction, and encourages greater acceptance and tolerance, which can lead to deeper reflection on missionary activities.

The strategy for solving Murtad's problem lies in identity. The followers of the Christian Church should identify with Muslims as a People of the Book, an honest community whose members devote themselves to reading verses from the Book of Allah and prostrating before Him.<sup>28</sup> A community that doesn't eat pork or drink alcohol. In addition to prayer, House Church is also an effective strategy for solving Murtad's problem.

### **Limitation**

This study had potential limitations. These limitations were presented, such as a small sample size. Due to the small sample size, there may be random variations in

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<sup>28</sup>“The Qur’an, Surah Al-Imran 3. 113”.

the results; thus, the small sample might provide different or opposite results. The lack of reliable data, due to its sensitive nature, the scarcity of in-depth studies on previous research, the limited time available, and insecurity in the locality will hinder consistent and effective data collection.

### **Delimitation**

The study was limited to the study of the concept of Murtad and its socio-religious implications among the Mbororo in the village of Mbé, Ngaoundéré City, Cameroon. I selected a sample size of only eight participants during the interviews and six participants during the focus group discussions. A small sample size allowed me to focus more easily on a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon among the Mbororo people. I therefore recruited participants through purposive sampling. I interviewed both Muslims and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs).

### **Reflexivity**

In 2021, I was a pioneer of the Global Mission in the town of Tignère. Tignère is a town in Cameroon located in the Adamaoua region and capital of the Faro-et-Déou department, and it extends over 10,435 km<sup>2</sup>. The climate is classified as high-altitude subhumid, with an average annual rainfall of 1,400 mm.<sup>29</sup>

Islam is the city's dominant religion. Mosques are built along the roads and in the neighborhoods. Activities are often interrupted during prayer times, especially on Fridays. Because for them, it is an act required of believers. The Qur'an says in this regard: "When the call to prayer is made on Friday, immediately go to prayer and stop your interactions. It would be better for you if only you knew" (Al-Jumu'ah 9).

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<sup>29</sup> Lisette Tongue Kohagne, Acapovi-Yao Genevieve Lydie, Kaba Dramane, and Abah Samuel, "Updating Tsetse Distribution: Presence of *Austenina* Subgenus Group in Northern-Cameroon," *Journal of Basic and Applied Research International* 7, no. 72 (2015): 67.

According to the Prophet: “On Friday, there is a time when, if a Muslim asks Allah for good at that time, He will give it to him.” He said, "And it's a short time." [1973] 15 (...) This was reported by Abu Hurairah.

However, my experience living in this city is crucial. These people are receptive to the message. What can we do to bring them the good news? It was a fundamental question that allowed me to get to work mingling with them, identifying their needs, and addressing their mission to them. I realized that only this method of Christ was effective in reaching people, especially Muslims. Ellen White says, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then he bade them, “Follow Me.”<sup>30</sup>

By presenting the message to Muslims, house by house in this town, and by visiting them regularly, for a short period, the observation was made that the Muslims are receptive to the Adventist message. A people who do not eat pork, who do not drink wine, a people who do not worship idols, a people who do not worship Mary on Sunday. These teachings resonate well with Muslims, bringing them peace of mind. This is how trust was established with the Muslims in the town of Tignère.

However, as soon as some Muslims accepted Jesus as the son of God, persecution began against many of them. Others, because of the punishment of Islamic law, were exiled to other cities, others lost all their property, and still others returned to Islam. Fortunately, there was one death. Because Cameroonian law does not tolerate such acts on its territory, it is a secular country.

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<sup>30</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, c2004), 143.

Therefore, the constitution of Cameroon states that: "the State shall be secular. The neutrality and independence of the State in respect of all religions shall be guaranteed; freedom of religion and worship shall be guaranteed."<sup>31</sup> This means every citizen is free to belong to any religion or religious denomination; he is also free to preach and create his religion as he sees fit. It is perhaps because of this Cameroonian law that we have not yet seen the death penalty for all those who leave Islam.

Even today, some Muslims, after listening to the Adventist message, confess their faith in Christ. But they are gripped by the fear of being punished by Islamic law. Let them recognize that if they adhere to Christianity, they are in danger. They will lose their property, their families, and their lives. As some Muslims belong to folk Islam, they admit that they can be mystically killed or driven mad by the power of jinn.

Brief, all these experiences I have had, motivated me to choose this subject. I would like to understand the overall view of Muslims on how they understand the concept of Murdad and how they apply it to the apostate. The socio-religious implications would be addressed to better propose mission strategies among Muslims.

### **Research Methodology**

This Research Methodology section described the specific methods used to conduct the study, including the research approach and design, population and sampling, data collection and analysis procedure, and ethical considerations.

### **Research Approach and Design**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. This approach involves conducting in-depth investigations, through interviews and focus groups, to

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<sup>31</sup>*The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 2008, 6.*

understand people's behaviors, motivations, and attitudes.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the study used a phenomenological research. The research was phenomenological because apostasy (Murtad) is a lived, deeply personal experience, making phenomenology appropriate. Phenomenological research describes the common meaning or value that many people find in their lived experiences.<sup>33</sup>

### **Population and Sampling**

This study was conducted among the Mbororo population of Mbé village, in the city of Ngaoundéré. Eight Mbororo were purposively selected from Mbé village, where the sample was included. The researcher first identified the Mbororo groups, obtained the names of the individuals within these groups, and then sampled them.<sup>34</sup>

### **Data Collection, Procedure, and Analysis**

Data collection was carried out in light of each research question posed that deserved an answer. Research Question 1 focused on the traditional and theological understanding of the concept of Murtad (apostasy) among the Mbororo people in Mbé, Ngaoundéré town, Cameroon. Research question 2 addressed the social, cultural, economic, and legal challenges that Mbororo individuals face when they choose to leave Islam or convert to Christianity.

Furthermore, to answer research question 3 regarding the Islamic understanding of Murtad's influence on interreligious relations and the socio-religious environment of the mission among the Mbororo, interviews were conducted with

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<sup>32</sup>Sharique Ahmad et al., "Qualitative v/s. Quantitative Research- a Summarized Review," *Journal of Evidence Based Medicine and Healthcare* 6, no. 43 (2019): 2829.

<sup>33</sup>John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2013), 98.

<sup>34</sup>John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2020), 204.

Mbororo and MBBs people, and questions were asked in the local Fulfulde language. Finally, research question 4 was answered by the contextually appropriate missiological strategies that were proposed by the researcher in light of the phenomenon.

The data was recorded by collecting it from sources such as interviews and focus groups. Then, the researcher transcribed and translated the data collected into English. Interviews and focus group discussions were also conducted with participants to ensure triangulation. Data from fieldwork, focus groups, and interviews were analyzed thematically, using research questions to guide the process, to develop an outreach strategy for Mbororo Muslims.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Before collecting data, the researcher obtained ethical clearance for the research project (theses) from AUA-ISERC. The role of AAU-ISERC in ethical approval involved considering the dignity, safety, rights, autonomy, benefits, justice, health, and well-being of both participants and the researcher.<sup>35</sup> The researcher first obtained voluntary informed consent from each participant before collecting data.

” However, the researcher sent a letter of informed consent to each participant. This letter explained the purpose and aim of the research, research ethics, and issues of confidentiality and anonymity.<sup>36</sup> The researcher preserved the anonymity and

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<sup>35</sup>Adventist University of Africa, "Research Ethics Guidelines,"

<sup>36</sup>Hadjer Mirza, Fouzi Bellalem, and Chahrazed Mirza, "Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research: Summary Guidelines for Novice Social Science Researchers," *Social Studies and Research Journal* 5, no. 11 (2023): 443.

confidentiality of the participants by not revealing their names and identities in data collection and analysis.<sup>37</sup>

### **Definition of Terms**

The key words to be defined in this study are: Murtad, Islamic law, and Mission.

Apostasy (Murtad) is defined as abandoning Islam, returning to disbelief (kufur), and breaking away from Islam (Al-Husni, 2016, p.637). Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat defines Murtad as a person who has transformed into moving away from Islam, whether through actions, words, or intentions; they are unbelieving (kufur), rebellious, and unfaithful to Allah SWT (The Almighty).<sup>38</sup>

*Islamic law* is the body of Islamic rules and teachings that govern the relationships of Muslims with their families, society, and the nation.<sup>39</sup> Its sources are the Quran and hadiths. The Quran states that: It is not for a man or a woman to follow their own choice when Allah and His Messenger have decided otherwise. He who allows himself to disobey Allah and His Messenger goes astray (Surah Al-Ahzab 36).

*Mission:* According to Robert Reeves, "Mission is the sending across cultural barriers by Christ through the church evangelists whose primary function is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the good news about Jesus.

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<sup>37</sup>Siti Roshaidai Mohd Arifin, "Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Study," *International Journal of Care Scholars* 1, no. 2 (2018): 30.

<sup>38</sup>Nazihah Rusli and Firdaus Khairi Abdul Kadir, "The Challenges Encountered by Mualaf after Conversion to Islam: A Study on The Apostasy (Murtad) Cases in Malaysia," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 12, no. 8 (2022): 539.

<sup>39</sup>yussef Auf, *Islam and Sharia Law: Historical, Constitutional, and Political Context in Egypt* (Washington, DC; Atlantic Council, May 2016), 2.

*Murtad*: is a person who forsakes Islam for unbelief or for another religion.<sup>40</sup>

*Riddah* is the Arabic equivalent of apostasy, according to al-Maghribi (2008) and Siddiq (1979). Among other connotations means to retract, to retire, to withdraw from, or fall back from. In the context of Islamic jurisprudence, it is equated with the renunciation or abandonment of Islam by one who professes Islamic faith (Khalil, 2004).<sup>41</sup>

### **Chapter Outline**

Chapter 1 presented the problem to be addressed. Chapter 2 presents the biblical and theological foundations of the concept of apostasy. Chapter 3 reviews the literature by consulting the sources of Islamic law (Quran and Hadith) concerning the death penalty for apostates (Murtad). Chapter 4 described the research methodology. Chapter 5 presented findings of the research. Finally, chapter 6 gave the summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

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<sup>40</sup>Ja'afar Agaji Abdullahi, "Riddah (Apostasy) in Islamic Jurisprudence: The Views of The Jurists," *South Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2021): 96–104. 10.48165/sajssh.2021.2306.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, 97.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE APOSTASY CONCEPT.

This section presents the biblical and theological foundations of the concept of apostasy. This concept appears in both the Old and New Testaments. The biblical texts relating to apostasy have given rise to various theological interpretations, particularly concerning the question of salvation and the possibility for a sincere believer to lose their salvation.

The term "apostasy" refers to a general abandonment of religion or a denial of faith by those who previously practiced it.<sup>1</sup> It is also defined as desertion, relapse, rejection of religious faith and beliefs, and abandonment of faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> John Owen says it is a total abandonment of all divine commandments and doctrines of God.<sup>3</sup> In this logic, Thomas Aquinas affirms that: "apostasy is a distancing from God caused in multiple ways, concordant with the various ways in which man attaches himself to God: by faith, by submission to his commandments, and by works accomplished in religious life, and by the confessional state or sacred orders."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Davie, *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 53.

<sup>2</sup>James Paul Humphries, "Apostacy," *Bible Dictionary and Concordance* (Steinbach, Canada: Project L.A.M.B.S. International, 2015), 22.

<sup>3</sup>T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 383.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Apostasy in the Old and New Testaments is presented as a great sin. In Jewish antiquity, apostates were punished by stoning. Apostasy came in many forms, such as idolatry and heresy, which posed a significant challenge to the Israelites.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter discusses the biblical Theological foundation of the concept of Apostasy. It is a subject that perplexes many biblical scholars, such as Daniel Hays,<sup>6</sup> Mark J. Boda,<sup>7</sup> B.J. Oropeza,<sup>8</sup> and Kent P. Jackson,<sup>9</sup> who have addressed the question of apostasy in the Old and New Testaments. In the light of the Holy Scriptures, we will examine this subject carefully and precisely. We will first examine the concept of apostasy in the Old Testament. Then, in a similar way, we will study it in the New Testament, and finally, we will examine the debate within the scholarship cycle.

### **The Concept of Apostasy in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, an apostate is a person who abandons the worship of the true God in favor of idolatry (Deut 13:6-10). The Torah, therefore, presents idolatry as a form of apostasy, and this act is called spiritual adultery, a betrayal of the covenant between God and his people (Jer 3:20). The concept of apostasy in the Old Testament derives from the Covenant of the People of Israel, specifically when the apostates

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<sup>5</sup>Saul Istifanus, "Understanding Apostasy and Freedom of Religion among Fulani Muslims in Mayo-Belwa, Adamawa State Nigeria," *Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 2, no. 1 (2023): 135. 10.51317/jpr.v2i1.389.

<sup>6</sup>Daniel J. Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him? Narrative Subtlety in 1 Kings 1-11," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28, no. 2 (2003): 174.

<sup>7</sup>Mark J. Boda, *Exploring Zechariah*, vol. 1, *The Development of Zechariah and Its Role within the Twelve* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017), 292.

<sup>8</sup>B. J. Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy: Eschatology, Perseverance, and Falling Away in the Corinthian Congregation*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament*, 115 (Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

<sup>9</sup>Kent P Jackson, "'Watch and Remember': The New Testament and the Great Apostasy (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1990), 81–117.

reached a critical mass in the collective soul of the community, causing the nation to drift away from its allegiance to God (Jer 3:20).

In reality, idolatry in the Old Testament context is the worship of idols, images, and statues; it is a rejection of the authority of God, the Creator, and a dependence on other objects or entities as objects of worship and devotion. In this section, we will review some texts to shed light on the concept of apostasy.

### **The Concept of Apostasy in the Pentateuch**

The Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament, such as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) presents the concept of apostasy as a turning away from God, His laws, and His covenant, in favor of worshiping other gods, idols. This is both a collective and individual issue, illustrated by the story of Israel's disobedience. The following texts will help us understand the situation of the concept of apostasy in the Pentateuch.

#### **Exodus 32:1-6 (KJV), Worshipping the Golden Calf**

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, these be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, tomorrow is a feast to the LORD. And they rose early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose to play (Exod 32:1-6).

The above text relates the punishment inflicted on the children of Israel for their worship of the golden calf and their fatal prostration before the Baal of Peor. In

this context, the children of Israel became apostates by rejecting the authority of the true God in favor of idols.

According to Hyatt, the account in Exodus 32:1-6 dates from the time of Hosea, who "condemned the bull worship of Dan and Bethel as idolatry and apostasy from God" (Hosea 8:5, 11; 10-5.; 13:2).<sup>10</sup> Now, in Exodus 20:3-5 and 24:3, the people of Israel had promised not to worship idols, but to fulfill everything the Lord had said before and after the covenant was made. Unfortunately, soon after, they broke their promise by making the golden calf. ROLF A. JACOBSON says that sin in this story of the children of Israel has often been understood as the creation of "another god" - that is, a false god that people worship instead of God."<sup>11</sup>

Idolatry distorts the hearts of men, causing them to worship the creature rather than the Creator. God had given the children of Israel instructions on how to worship Him. However, they willingly chose to worship the golden calf. In verse two, the children of Israel made their gods from their possessions, like the gold earrings they wore. God had entrusted them with resources, but instead of giving Him glory, they did it for their own pleasure, making other gods.

In the context of the covenant between God and the people, the children of Israel had broken it by making the golden calf, the idol, an act of apostasy. In his Ten Commandments, God says:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation to them that hate me (Exod 20:3-5).

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<sup>10</sup>Jung Jin Chun, "Reading the Golden Calf Episode in Theological and Critical Perspective," (PhD thesis, University of Bristol, August 2000), 20.

<sup>11</sup>Rolf A. Jacobson, "Moses, the Golden Calf, and the False Images of the True God," *Word & World* 33, no. 2 (2013): 131.

The above text emphasizes the exclusive nature of worship of God and categorically prohibits the making of idols or any representation. In other words, the text commands believers to worship only God, the sole creator of heaven and earth. Overall, the book of Exodus 32:1-6 describes the primary form of apostasy, associated with the making and worship of the golden calf, intended to replace the Creator God.

This practice established idolatry, a direct disobedience to God's covenant and commandment, which prohibited the making and worship of idols. It demonstrates a turning away from the true God and a preference for a physical representation of the deity. It is not a matter of abandoning one religion for another where one feels more comfortable in the faith.

### **Judges 2:11-15 (KJV), Israel's Unfaithfulness**

Chapter two of the Book of Judges describes Israel's apostasy after Joshua's death, when the people abandoned God to worship Canaanite gods like Baal and Asherah. This unfaithfulness resulted in a double divine judgment: the loss of blessings, the inability to resist enemies, and the oppression of foreign peoples, as described below:

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

The above text tells us about another form of apostasy, still linked to idolatry, where one abandons God to serve idols. More precisely, the people of Israel had

abandoned their true God to serve the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the Canaanite gods. They had transgressed the covenant which God had commanded their fathers, and they had not obeyed his voice.

### **Isaiah 1:2-6, and Jeremiah 10:3-5**

The book of Isaiah 1:2-4 records the people of Israel's rebellion against God. They rejected God's counsel and turned to idolatry. This idolatry is characterized by a complete rejection of the covenant with God and a preference for the worship of foreign gods, idols. The prophet Isaiah, however, reveals the actions of Israel, indicating their abandonment of the Lord, their contempt for the Holy One of Israel, and their resort to pagan practices. In this context, idolatry is not limited to idol worship. Still, it involves a deeper spiritual and moral corruption that led the children of Israel to abandon their covenant relationship with God.

Furthermore, the book of Jeremiah 10:3-5 describes apostasy through the making of idols, false gods, that is, carved images. The emphasis is placed on the artificial nature of these carved images and their cultic aspect. To shed more light on the apostasy related to idolatry found in the books of Isaiah 1:2-6 and Jeremiah 10:3-5, Rev. John Schultz reports that:

Jeremiah displays the same sarcasm as Isaiah on the issue of idolatry. Not only are idols man-made, but they occupy an infinitely inferior place to man in the order of creation. Isaiah describes the process of making an idol from a tree: "The carpenter fashions a god and worships him; he burns half the wood in the fire; I am warm, I see the fire." Moreover, he makes a god, his idol; he bows down before him and worships him. He prays to him and says, "Save me, you are my god." They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered, they do not see, and their minds are closed, they do not understand."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>John Schultz, "Commentary to the Book of Jeremiah (*Bible-commentaries.com*, 2008), 20–21.

Man is an apostate when he abandons God the Creator, worships carved images, and opens his mind to demons; then apostasy sets in. According to Reverend John Schultz, idolatry paves the way for demonic involvement.<sup>13</sup> God is the God of heaven and earth; we are created by him and in his image; we are not born from trees or pieces of wood. Only worship is to be given to him.

### **Deuteronomy 13:6-11, and Leviticus 24: A Punishment for Worshipping Idols**

The book of Deuteronomy 13:6-11 describes apostasy as the incitement to worship other gods. Furthermore, the text emphasizes the seriousness of this offense, specifying that one should show neither pity nor compassion to those who mislead others, for it is an act that opposes God and his law and follows a deity other than Yahweh, the Creator. Thus, this book of Deuteronomy mentions that the death penalty is pronounced for any abandonment of the faith. Furthermore, the book of Leviticus 24:15-16 adds that God commanded the Israelites that anyone who abandons God and worships other gods or idols be stoned.

This book proves that idolatry is a form of apostasy that breaks the covenant between God and his people. It was to preserve this covenant that Moses ordered the execution of anyone who served gods, idols, other than God the Creator. This punishment was intended to strengthen the covenant between God and the people. Worshipping idols provokes God's anger and therefore constitutes a breach of the covenant. Anyone who does this turns away from their Creator and breaks the covenant.

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<sup>13</sup>John Schultz, "Commentary to the Book of Jeremiah (*Bible-commentaries.com*, 2008), 20–21.

According to John H. Walton and Victor H. Matthews, the death penalty was imposed on apostates who served other gods, idols.<sup>14</sup> They mention that stoning was the most common death penalty for those who served idols, and that other offenses merited burning alive or stabbing. The goal, therefore, was to eradicate anything that could contaminate society and the evil that would distance people from their covenant with God.<sup>15</sup>

According to Peter C. Craigie, this punishment was inflicted as a preventative measure to remind all the people of Israel of the consequences of serving idols, which leads to apostasy.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the punishment was introduced to prevent the community from doing the same bad thing among themselves in the days to come. According to J.A. Thompson, this punishment was so important in Deuteronomy because it encouraged the people of Israel to forget their apostasy and maintain God's covenant with them, which was based on loyalty and love.<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately, the concept of apostasy in the book of Deuteronomy also refers to idolatry, which severed the bond established between the people and their God. It was a way of refusing to worship the Creator; it is a grave and punishable sin. Thus, God, the Creator, reveals the fault and sin of conversing with false gods as objects of

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<sup>14</sup>John H. Walton and Victor H. Matthews, *Genesis - Deuteronomy*, The IVP Bible Background Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 247.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>16</sup>Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 225.

<sup>17</sup>J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 175.

worship. Human contact with false gods produces a deadly spiritual blindness of the heart and mind if it is not completely circumcised.<sup>18</sup>

## **Apostates in Historical Books**

### **King Solomon**

King Solomon had become an apostate because he had embraced the idolatry of his foreign wives, to whom he had attached himself instead of God, and his heart had turned away from his Creator. He had abandoned the faith by breaking his covenant with God and had turned to other gods. This is why God had forbidden and warned of the dangers of marrying a foreigner. Solomon persisted in loving Pharaoh's daughter and many other foreigners.<sup>19</sup>

According to Dr. Thomas L. Constable, King Solomon's foreign wives were divided into two categories: Canaanite women, forbidden in Deuteronomy 7, and women of other nations, forbidden in Deuteronomy 23. However, King Solomon violated this law by giving favors to these women who had led him into idolatry.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Solomon's apostasy stemmed from political alliances, culminating in the marriage of women to neighboring nations like Moab, Ammon, and Edom to the east; Sidon, through the treaty with Hiram (1 Chr 5:1); and Syria (Hittites) and the Arameans, to the north.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>*Le grand dictionnaire de la Bible*, Collection OR, ouvrages de référence, 3e éd. révisée (Éditions Excelsis, 2017), 739.

<sup>19</sup>Iain William Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 91.

<sup>20</sup>Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Expository Note on the Whole Bible - 1 Kings* (Dr. Thomas L. Constable, 2015), 44.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

However, Solomon apostatized by worshiping the idols of the nation that his wives brought to him, thereby favoring syncretism (1 Kgs 5. 4, 6). His heart (affections) was attached to false gods. He worshiped false gods such as Ashtoreth, the Canaanite goddess of fertility; Molech, who allowed human sacrifice, even the sacrifice of children, Lev 18:21; 20:1-5; and Kemosh, who was just as cruel.

### **Solomon's Punishment**

Salamon's apostasy is based on his adherence to idolatry. God was angry with Solomon, 1 Kings 11:9, because he had turned his heart away from the Lord to serve other gods and bow down to them, while God had forbidden him to follow other gods, but Solomon did not keep the commandments of God (1 Kgs 11:9-10). As punishment for this act, Allah destroyed the kingdom above Solomon and gave it to his servant (1 Kgs 11:11). According to Gina Hens-Piazza, the fact that the kingdom is entrusted to one's servant draws attention to the seriousness of the crime and the punishment.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, during his life, Solomon suffered some punishments related to his apostasy, but not capital punishment, such as being stoned. Allah had raised many adversaries for him, 1 Kings 11:14-40, such as Hadad the Edomite. Edom wanted revenge for David's army's massacre of the Edomites. Another opponent was Rezon, who ruled Syria and hated Israel. The last was Jeroboam.

### **Achan's Disobedience and Punishment**

The book of Joshua 7 tells us about an apostate who was attached to forbidden things, which caused apostasy: it is the story of Achan, one of the saddest and most painful in the Bible. Achan had committed an infidelity by taking with him forbidden

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<sup>22</sup>Gina Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings* /Gina Hens-Piazza, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 111.

objects, such as a magnificent robe, a bar of gold, and two hundred shekels of silver. The anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel (Josh 7:1). Achan had transgressed the covenant God had commanded them by stealing sacred things and hiding them (Josh 7:1).

God gave a command to punish Achan and his family for this act of apostasy by stoning and burning them ((Josh 7:25). According to John A. Huffman Jr., a large pile of stones rose above him to remind them of Achan's sin and to show them that the Lord was turning away from his fierce anger, thus restoring Israel's right relationship with themselves.<sup>23</sup> According to Richard D. Nelson, Achan's transgression led the people of Israel to a point where they were unable to defeat their enemies; they fled, suffered the deaths of their men, and ultimately lost heart. Thus, we must understand that God will not be with the people of Israel and defeat the enemy unless He destroys the causes of apostasy.<sup>24</sup>

However, in the book of Joshua seven, Achan's punishment for these actions included burning and stoning, including his entire family (sons and daughters) and his possessions (his oxen, donkeys, sheep, tent, and everything he owned). This severe punishment was inflicted on him for disobeying God. He had taken forbidden items to Jericho and hidden them, resulting in the defeat of the entire people of Israel. This punishment was intended to cleanse the Israelite camp of its sins and demonstrate the consequences of disobedience.

Achan's apostasy is linked to his disobedience to God's command when he seized forbidden goods destined for destruction during the capture of Jericho. In short,

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<sup>23</sup>John A. Huffman, *Joshua*, The Communicator's Commentary, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (New York: W Pub Group, 1986), 145.

<sup>24</sup>Richard D. Nelson, *Joshua: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 103.

it is God who has the right and the power to punish the apostate. In Achan's case, he commands Joshua to sanctify the people. Once the guilt is discovered, Joshua says to Achan, "The Lord shall trouble thee this day" (Josh 7:25).

### **Imagery of the Concept of Apostasy**

Looking through the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, one finds at least four distinct images of the concept of apostasy: adultery, backsliding or turning away, rebellion, and falling away.<sup>25</sup> These images used to designate apostasy generally indicate a gradual and voluntary distancing from God.

#### **Adultery**

In the Old Testament, adultery is the most frequent practical image of apostasy. It is represented by Israel, the unfaithful wife who turns away from God, her husband, to follow the advances of other gods (Ezekiel 16). The term adultery is sometimes used to explicitly express the horror of betrayal and covenant-breaking inherent in idolatry. In its literal sense, it refers to a person blinded by fanaticism, in this case toward an idol.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Turning Away**

In Jeremiah 17:5-6 and Ezekiel 3:20, apostasy is described as a heart that turns away from the Lord and from righteousness and does evil. The term refers to Israel's breaking of its covenant with God through wickedness and backsliding from the law (Jer 2:19), including following other gods to serve and to bow down to them (Judg 2:19).

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<sup>25</sup> Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman, eds., "Apostasy," *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 38-40.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

## **Rebellion**

According to classical literature, apostasy was used to denote a coup or defection.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the King James Version describes it as rebellion against God (Josh 22:22). The main image is the rebellion of Satan (the “adversary”) against God.

## **Falling Away**

It’s a fundamental change in a person's relationship with the Lord, in their religious traditions, and in any religious organization.<sup>28</sup> The image of falling includes the awareness of being headed toward eternal destruction. Armand Mauss describes three aspects of falling away: cognitive, affective, and social.<sup>29</sup>

So Brian Simmons clarified what is meant by "apostasy." He described it in several ways. It can be referred to as "falling away," drifting away, "falling away from the faith," "disaffiliation," or "backsliding"; these are more powerful expressions in the King James Version.<sup>30</sup>

## **Summary**

The Old Testament addresses the issue of apostasy as an individual or collective act of abandoning God and worshiping idols, false gods. Since this is a central point of the Old Testament, it makes sense that when apostasy is addressed or

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<sup>27</sup>Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman, eds., "Apostasy," *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 38-40..

<sup>28</sup>Brian Simmons, *Falling Away: Why Christians Lose Their Faith and What Can Be Done About It*, 2nd ed. (Abilene: ACU Press, 2014), 5.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 36-37.

illustrated, it is within the framework of the covenant that God establishes, both for the nation and the individual.

In the Old Testament, apostasy consisted of denying God and serving false gods or idols. It had nothing to do with abandoning one religion for another, as in the case of Muslims who left Islam to embrace the People of the Book. Islam considers such people apostates, even if they had not previously served idols. In most cases of apostasy in the Old Testament, the punishment inflicted on apostates came from God, commanding humans to do what was right. Most often, punishments included famine, epidemics, enemy attacks, and so on.

Furthermore, if a case of apostasy were observed, God would send his prophets to warn the people of the danger associated with apostasy and to announce to them that a door is open to forgiveness. As in Hosea 14:4, God says, "I will heal their apostasy or their backsliding." It should be noted, however, that "the Lord GOD does nothing, but he reveals his secret to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3.7).

### **Apostasy in the New Testament**

In the New Testament, the concept of apostasy refers to a wide variety of things, including falling away from the faith due to persecution, division within a community (the New Testament meaning of "heresy"), loss of faith due to persistent sin, the teaching of false doctrines, blasphemy, and denial of the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup> It is in this context that the book of Hebrews 3:12 (KJV) declares: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." The expression that sums up this idea is "turning against God" or "departing from God."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>James E. Faulconer, *The Concept of the Apostasy in the New Testament (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005)*, 136.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 136.

According to James E. Faulconer, “departing from God” or “rebellious against Him” in some way is the central issue addressed in the New Testament. James also points out that heresy and sin in the New Testament are means of apostasy, but they are distinct from apostasy.<sup>33</sup> So we ask: How does the New Testament present apostasy?

The concept of apostasy in the New Testament retains the same understanding of apostasy in the Old Testament, not only as rebellion against God or turning away from God, but more specifically as rebellion that rejects Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This concept, as understood in the Old Testament, is the same in the New Testament. Anyone who turns away from God's covenant to false gods, idols is an apostate. Apostasy in the New Testament is that inherited from the Old Testament: to apostatize is to refuse to be in alliance with God.

The New Testament explicitly presents idolatry as a form of apostasy, or falling away from the true God. It involves the rejection of faith in Christ and the attachment to and worship of false gods, idols. In fact, in the New Testament, an apostate refers to anyone who rejects Christ and his doctrine. Examples of people who, although close to Jesus, ultimately turned away from him illustrate this concept.

According to Dr. A. Smith, an apostate is described in the New Testament as someone who, after understanding the truth of the gospel and professing faith in Christ, eventually denies it by turning to another god.<sup>34</sup> However, no punishment of apostasy by humans on earth is mentioned in this context.

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<sup>33</sup>James E. Faulconer, *The Concept of the Apostasy in the New Testament (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005)*136.

<sup>34</sup>Sam A. Smith, "The Biblical Doctrine of Personal Apostasy," accessed 26 November 2024, <https://biblicalreadercommunications.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/apostasy.pdf>.

## **The Concept of Apostasy in the Gospels**

Apostasy is revealed in the Gospels when some individuals, after following Jesus, turned away from him, highlighting themes of betrayal and rejection. Thus, apostasy is turning one's back on Jesus Christ immediately after walking with Him, as illustrated by the betrayal of Judas. According to Harold Willmington, Judas Iscariot, the apostate, was under Satan's influence from the beginning.<sup>35</sup> For he was his spiritual father; Jesus called him "the son of perdition" (John 17:12). Satan put into Judas's heart the desire to betray Christ (John 13:2). In this context, apostasy consists of betraying Christ after having known him.

Spiritual defection (loss of faith) is another form of apostasy revealed in the Gospels. The parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-9 illustrates this image, particularly with the seeds falling on rocky ground or among thorns. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus uses powerful statements to describe a form of apostasy. These include impostors who perform miracles and other things in his name, those who pretend to be Jesus, and those who commit lawlessness.

Furthermore, the book of Matthew 24:10-13 specifically addresses apostasy, as it includes expressions such as abandonment, betrayal, and mutual hatred, as well as false teachers who mislead people. Therefore, in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), the punishment of apostates by humans here on earth is neither specifically prescribed nor described. Rather, they focus on the eternal consequences of rejecting Christ: eternal condemnation.

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<sup>35</sup>Harold Willmington, "A Biographical Study of Judas Iscariot," *New Testament Biographies*, 2018, 2, [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=nt\\_biographies](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=nt_biographies).

## **Condemning the Followers of Jesus in Apostasy in the Book of Acts**

**Jason of Thessalonica.** Jason of Thessalonica was a first-century Christian, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as a host who sheltered Paul and Silas in Thessalonica, at the risk of his own life.<sup>36</sup> A mob instigated by Jews burst into his house and, finding neither Paul nor Silas, seized Jason with some converts and accused him before the polistarchs (local magistrates) of sheltering seditious agitators.<sup>37</sup>

Jason tried to protect Paul, Timothy, Silas, and Luke. He and some of the brothers were dragged out and brought before the city authorities. He was accused of harming Caesar and the Roman Empire. Yet Jason was not afraid, knowing that Jesus was with him. It is an honor to suffer for the mission, as Jesus Christ suffered.

**The accusations against Paul.** The accusation was brought against Paul by Jewish opponents before the proconsul Gallio in Corinth. They claimed that “this fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law” (Acts 18:13). The accusation was false. Paul was certainly not violating any Roman law, the one in force in that region.<sup>38</sup> Although Paul taught the abrogation of the Old Testament law, this did not violate the Old Law, for he predicted its replacement with the gospel (Jer 31:31). In fact, nothing Paul taught contradicted the Old Testament but demonstrated its fulfillment (Matt 5:17, 18).

**Members who followed “the teaching of Balaam.”** In Revelation 2:14-15, Jesus rebukes the church at Pergamum, blaming it for having members who followed

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<sup>36</sup> Humphries, *Bible Dictionary and Concordance*, s.v. " Jason of Thessalonica."

<sup>37</sup>J. D. Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1996), 544.

<sup>38</sup>David E. Pratte, *Commentary on the Book of Acts: Bible Study Notes and Comments* (Createspace Independent, 2013), 294–95.

“the teaching of Balaam” and the “Nicolaitans.” These teachings encouraged idolatry (eating food sacrificed to idols) and sexual immorality. The passage compares the problem to that of Balaam, hired to curse Israel, who tempted them to sin through immorality and idolatry. The Nicolaitans are also linked to similar erroneous teachings.

Moses tells the story of Balaam (Num 22-25, 3). Balak, king of Moab, hires Balaam to curse the Israelites, but each time he tries, Balaam blesses them. He then advises Balak to send Moabite and Midianite women into the Israelites' camp to seduce the men and invite them to sacrifice to their god (Num 25:1-2; 31:16). Balaam's instructions were clearly to incite the Israelites to commit idolatry and sexual immorality.

### **Tolerate Sin and Spiritual Wickedness**

In Revelation 2, 20 it says: “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

Under Ahab and Jezebel, the worship of Baal, the god of torrential rains and fertility, became an official part of Israel's worship. Even Elijah, God's prophet, had to flee the murderous intentions of the wicked Jezebel (1 Kgs 19:1-4). She suffered a gruesome death; her body was devoured by dogs, testifying to God's judgment on her wickedness (2 Kgs 9:30-3). Consequently, the name Jezebel became synonymous with evil and the corruption of God's people.

## **Ananias and Sapphira were involved in the Apostasy**

The book of Acts reveals a form of apostasy within the community of believers, as seen in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, whose story is recorded in Acts 5:1-11. This couple had freely and voluntarily decided to sell their property to give to the needy. However, they had withheld part of the sale price and committed to lying about the sale amount. Moreover, they had denied the power of God's Spirit and allowed Satan to enter their hearts. Peter emphasizes that Satan inspires Ananias's attitude.<sup>39</sup>

For this act of apostasy, Ananias and Sapphira fell at the feet of the apostle Peter. Both died and were buried by the young men. According to Carl R. Holladay, the punishment inflicted on this apostate couple is inflicted directly by God in the presence of the believers.<sup>40</sup> We emphasize that this couple's behavior undermines the integrity of the believers and their relationship with God. These are serious offenses with deadly consequences.<sup>41</sup>

Ananias's wife, Sapphira, had suffered the same death penalty as her husband because she persisted in denying the truth she knew (Acts 5:2). According to Craig S. Keener, women were executed in ancient times, but less frequently than men (perhaps because they were considered less threatening, Acts 8:3; 9:2).<sup>42</sup> Sapphira had the

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<sup>39</sup>Benea Alukwe Amakhungu, "Leadership, Community, Charisma, and Culture Redefined: Acts 5:1-11; 8:14-24; 15:7-11: A Biblical Theology in Response to the Need of Christian Leadership and African Spirituality," *Impact: Journal of Transformation* 2, no. 1 (2019): 7.

<sup>40</sup>Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 138.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 198.

opportunity to tell Peter the truth, thus siding with God rather than with her deceitful husband. But she refused to take this opportunity.<sup>43</sup>

To conclude this section, the punishment of apostates in the book of Acts does not come from men on earth, as Muslims do, who force all those who leave Islam to return to it, under penalty of death. The punishment of Ananias and Sapphira is an example that attests to the fact that God has the power to punish apostates. Moreover, lying to God is considered in this context as an act of apostasy deserving of the death penalty.

### **Apostasy in the Epistles of Paul**

1 Timothy 1:18-20 addresses Paul's witness to apostasy in the lives of others. The apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to keep the faith and a good conscience, pointing to some who "have lost the faith and have made a shipwreck in the faith." The abandonment referred to in this text is voluntary and violent. To support his point, Paul cites two men, Hymenaeus and Alexander.

However, Hymenaeus here is the same person mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:17, where he appears again among those who have gone astray.<sup>44</sup> Now, "Alexander" is a common name in the first century (Mark 15:21; Acts 4:6), even among the Jews (Acts 19:33-34). This man, named Alexander, also seems to be the "smith" mentioned among Paul's opponents in 2 Timothy 4:14.

These two people mentioned by Paul were apostates whom humans did not kill to justify their apostasy. Furthermore, Paul, by giving the example of those who

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<sup>43</sup>Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 198.

<sup>44</sup>David W. Pao, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*, Brill Exegetical Commentary Series 1 (New York: Brill, 2024), 126.

have rejected the faith, warns Timothy to avoid the folly and apostasy that have ruined others. Paul also does not recommend that he kill apostates, but rather prevent them.

### **The Theological and Doctrinal Basis for Apostasy**

This section addresses the theological questions raised by the study in the context of apostasy. These questions concern human free will and sin. The section briefly examines each of these three essential points, highlighting their role in the experience of apostasy.

#### **A Human with Free Will**

God created human beings endowed with free will, that is, capable of exercising their own volition. In this sense, human beings are free to choose everything in their lives according to their desires.<sup>45</sup> For example, they are free to have a religion and beliefs; they are free to practice their religion and worship according to their convictions. Thus, In Genesis, God gives man the freedom to rule over creation and to manage it responsibly, with the ability to make his own decisions, including the freedom to do well, so that, by his own efforts, man may attain salvation (Gen 1:26).

According to the theologian Martin Luther, the doctrine of free will is closely tied to the concept of salvation through God's grace. Through this doctrine, Luther explains what free will means. Luther's description is preceded by the teaching of the fall of man into sin.<sup>46</sup> The Church Father Augustine of Hippo (Herawati, 2012) states

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<sup>45</sup>Vianny Bere and Delorens Lorentje Naomi Bessie, "Human Free Will and God's Sovereignty in Biblical and Human Rights Perspectives," *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies* 4, no. 6 (2023): 51, 10.37745/bjmas.2022.0370.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 53.

that without God's grace, human free will cannot turn toward God or progress in Him (Geisler, ed., 1982). For Augustine, free will is a gift from God (Harun, 1980).<sup>47</sup>

This view was later challenged by Pelagius, an English monk, who declared that human nature does not need grace to fulfill its obligation to obey God's law. Humans possess free will that can produce well, so that through their own efforts, they can attain salvation. Thus began the debate on human free will, which continues to this day.<sup>48</sup> According to the remarkable definition of one of the finest religious commentators, Ellen G. White, the will is the guiding power of human nature, subjugating all other faculties. The will is not taste or inclination, but rather the power of decision that compels humankind to obedience to God or to disobedience.<sup>49</sup>

## **Man and Sin**

Sin is any act or omission that contravenes the Creator's expectations of humanity and harms the relationship with God. *The New Dictionary of Theology* describes sin as a deliberate violation of a divine precept, exceeding the limits set by that precept.<sup>50</sup> This means that sin occurs when one acts against a precept or refuses to obey a divine precept. Both action and inaction constitute sin. According to Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, sin is "any act, word, or desire contrary to the eternal law" and consists of "turning away from God and turning towards the creature".<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Vianny Bere and Delorens Lorentje Naomi Bessie, "Human Free Will and God's Sovereignty in Biblical and Human Rights Perspectives," *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies* 4, no. 6 (2023): 51.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, 54.

<sup>49</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1990), 5:513.

<sup>50</sup>Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 954.

<sup>51</sup>Peter Addai-Mensah, "A Theological Reflection on the Concept of Sin in Christianity," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 1, no. 4 (2020): 103, 10.38159/ehass.2020081.

However, John R. Sachs observes: "Sin is perceived as a transgression of a divine commandment, a rebellion against God and his authority."<sup>52</sup> For example, Adam received a commandment from God, and failing to obey it amounts to transgressing that divine commandment. Sachs also employs Old Testament terms such as *Hatta, Awon, and Pesa*, as well as New Testament terms like *Paraptoma, Parabsis, and Hamartia*, which demonstrate that humanity sins against God's will, leading to hardness of heart and stiffness of neck.<sup>53</sup>

### **Origin of Sin**

In the Old Testament, and more specifically in the book of Genesis, we find the origin of sin. It is in the first three chapters that we find the disobedience of Adam and Eve to divine instructions in the Garden of Eden (Gen 1-3, 11). Charles R. Swindoll asserts that, about sin, the misfortune of humanity began with Adam and his wife, who sinned against God's instructions.<sup>54</sup> Sin originates with Satan and not with the first human being.

### **Effects of Sin**

Sin distances humanity from God but brings it closer to his creation. Lockyer writes that "sin has become universal since it entered into the world."<sup>55</sup> All have sinned (Rom 5:12). Humanity is devastated, corrupted, and degraded by sin. Because of sin, humanity no longer enjoys its original communion with God, which has led to a

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<sup>52</sup>John R. Sachs, *The Christian Vision of Humanity: Basic Christian Anthropology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 60.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 60-62.

<sup>54</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life: Returning to Our Roots* (Insight Living Ministries, 1985), 1.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

distortion of its relationship with creation and a lack that is both physical and spiritual. "The lack of communion with God, in obedience, is not a simple error; it entails a radical distortion of the self, breaking all harmonious relationships with God, nature, and oneself, which corresponds to alienation from God."<sup>56</sup>

### **Theological Implications**

According to the Bible, after creating man from the clay of the earth, God breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living being (Gen 2:7). This means that man is, by nature, intrinsically linked to God. This implies that man depends on God. Augustine states in this regard: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."<sup>57</sup> The theological implication is that humanity can never be autonomous and live independently of God. Any attempt by humanity to act in any way without first submitting to God will be futile.

Furthermore, God is the author of life. Since human life emanates from God, this means that all of humanity's movements must be directed toward God. Turning away from God, the author of life, means heading toward death and destruction.

Moses affirms this when he addresses the people of Israel at a certain point:

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; <sup>16</sup>In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. <sup>17</sup>But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; <sup>18</sup>I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: <sup>20</sup>That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land

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<sup>56</sup>Asante, *Soteriology: A Discourse on Salvation*, 9.

<sup>57</sup>Pao, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*.

which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them (Deut 30:15-19).

Sin highlights the burden humanity places on the sin of Adam and Eve, as well as on subsequent sins. Sin has severed humanity's relationship with God, leading to human depravity. This fallen state, therefore, requires a savior to deliver humanity from its current condition and restore the broken relationship with its creator. Lockyer argues that "the biblical concept of sin is a kind of rule that allows us to measure our need for a savior."<sup>58</sup>

### **Ellen G. White's View on Apostasy**

Ellen G. White, in her writings, recounts the apostasy of Israel, linked to the worship of Baal-Peor in Shittim. The apostates of Israel engaged in debauchery with the Moabite women who were forbidden to them, and in the worship of idols, false gods, thus attracting the wrath and punishment of God. Ellen White reports:

“Their iniquitous practices did that for Israel which all the enchantments of Balaam could not do, they separated them from God. By swift-coming judgments, the people were awakened to the enormity of their sin. A terrible pestilence broke out in the camp, to which tens of thousands fell prey speedily. God commanded that the leaders in this apostasy be put to death by the magistrates. This order was promptly obeyed. The offenders were slain, then their bodies were hung up in sight of all Israel that the congregation, seeing the leaders so severely dealt with, might have a deep sense of God’s abhorrence of their sin and the terror of His wrath against them.”<sup>59</sup>

In this context, it was God who ordered that the instigators of apostasy be put to death by the Magistrates to circumcise sin. Similarly, it was in this logic that Phinehas, son of the priest Eleazar, emerged from the midst of the assembly and killed Zimri the Israelite and the Midianite woman in his tent, so that the plague that was

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<sup>58</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper and Row, 1997), 10.

<sup>59</sup> Ellen G White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 412.

raging among the children of Israel might cease.<sup>60</sup> Here is another example of Israel's apostasy related to idolatry: After Jeroboam's death, the people of Israel abandoned the service of the living God and embraced idolatry. Ellen G. White writes:

Nadab the son of Jeroboam, who had succeeded to the throne of Israel for a few months, was put to death, and all his house according to their succession, according to the word of the Lord, which Ahijah the Shilonite spoke to his servant, because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and which he made Israel sin"; (1 Kings 15:29, 30). The idolatrous worship introduced by Jeroboam had drawn punitive judgments from Heaven, and yet the leaders who succeeded him—Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri—continued on the same sinful path."<sup>61</sup> During most of this period of apostasy in Israel, Asa ruled the kingdom of Judah. For many years, "Asa did what was good and right in the sight of the LORD his God: he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, he smashed the sacred images, and cut down the idols. He commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandments. He also removed the high places and the images from all the cities of Judah; and the kingdom was at rest before him (2 Chron 14:2-5).<sup>62</sup>

Once again, we see that whenever the people of Israel became apostate, it was precisely by serving foreign gods or idols, and the punishment for this act always came from a divine order. It could be a plague or death to circumcise the sin that was rampant among the people. Ellen G. White declares that: "It was by associating with idolaters and joining in their festivities that the Hebrew were led to transgress God's law and bring His judgments upon the nation. So now it is by leading the followers of Christ to associate with the ungodly and unite in their amusements that Satan is most successful in alluring them into sin."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Ellen G White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1890). 413.

<sup>61</sup>Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*.

<sup>62</sup>Pao, *1-2 Timothy, Titus*.

<sup>63</sup>White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 419.

## Identity as a Contribution

Religious identity is paramount for missionaries today. Given the attacks targeting religion, it is understandable that the persecution of people of other faiths is primarily a question of identity.<sup>64</sup> Identity answers the question "Who am I?" It is inherent to communities. Thus, Identity refers to our perception of who we are as individuals and as members of social groups. It also refers to our perception of how others might perceive and categorize us.<sup>65</sup>

Answering the question "Who am I?" is an important step toward acceptance or rejection by a group. While the question may seem simple, the concept of identity is complex. The answer to "Who am I?" depends on many factors: how you define yourself, your membership in certain groups, and how others and society perceive you.<sup>66</sup>

### The Identity of God

In the Torah, God called Moses three times in his life for a specific purpose: a first call at the burning bush; a second call on Mount Sinai (for the reception of the Decalogue) (Exod 19:3); and a third in the Tent of Meeting (Lev 1:1). As the story unfolds, he identifies with Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is not an unknown god whom Moses discovered on the mountain. He is neither a "fire god" nor a "mountain god,"<sup>67</sup> but He is the God of the Fathers. Moses does not name God; God names Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

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<sup>64</sup>Chris Sugden, *Identity and Transformation: The Oxford Lectures of Vinay Samuel 1998-2006* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18.

<sup>65</sup> Facing History & Ourselves, "Exploring the Concept of Identity," last updated July 14, 2021, <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/exploring-concept-identity>.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

In short, it is important to note that God reveals and identifies himself; Moses, on the other hand, does not discover this. This contrasts with Adam, who names the animals in Genesis, thus exercising his authority over them.<sup>68</sup> The identification of God rests solely on his authority, that is, on the authority of the presence of the other. The appellation "God of the Fathers" underlines the continuity with the previous narrative.<sup>69</sup>

### **Identity of the Missionary**

What identity should missionaries adopt when working among the cousins? Should they define themselves as Adventist Christians? If the term "Christian" is pejorative, is it acceptable to use only "Adventist" to designate a distinct religion? Never forget that when a cousin asks you a question, they already have a preconceived idea about it. It's therefore best to answer these questions directly. Any answer to our cousins' questions about identity is crucial because it can open or close the door to deeper discussions on spiritual topics.

Never identify with our cousins as "Christians". Because this means that, for our cousins, Christians believe in more than one god, worship Idols, are ritually unclean, women are not modest, Christianity is a religion couched in Western ideologies, violent history of the Crusades and Colonialism. Does this mean we shouldn't call ourselves Christians? That's not my point. The term "Christian" is biblical. Acts 11:26 tells us that "it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians."

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<sup>68</sup>Facing History & Ourselves, "Exploring the Concept of Identity," last updated July 14, 2021, <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/exploring-concept-identity>.

<sup>69</sup>This argument is often used to point out the internal coherence and unity of the books in the Pentateuch.

Do not identify yourselves as Adventists or as Muslims by saying that we are very similar and that there is no difference between us. This implies praying five times a day, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and observing all Islamic rituals. The apostle's prayer gives us advice by saying: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to answer every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

Thus, the missionary identifies himself as belonging to the People of the Book. The expression "People of the Book" (Ahl al-Kitab in Arabic) is an Islamic term referring to Christians as followers of the revealed Scriptures (the Torah and the Gospels, respectively).<sup>70</sup> It should be noted that this does not apply to all Christians. They are not all the same; indeed, among the People of the Book, there is a righteous community.<sup>71</sup>

### **Summary**

In the context of the New Testament, an apostate is one who not only bows down to idols but also categorically rejects Jesus Christ. The punishment for these apostates (those who reject Christ) is eternal condemnation, or the loss of eternal salvation, rather than corporal punishment. In any case, the apostasy expressed in both the Old and New Testaments confirms the logic of God's attribution and aspirations regarding his covenant relationships, even if the details may vary.

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<sup>70</sup>Surah Al-Ma'idah 5.46.

<sup>71</sup> Surah Al-Imran 3. 113.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a synthesis of the literature on apostasy. After a brief introduction, two major Islamic sources (the Quran and the Hadiths) were consulted to understand the concept of Murtad. Next, the positions of the Sunni school, particularly the Maliki School, and those of Muslim scholars were examined. The consensus of the Prophet's Companions was also considered, as well as early Islamic theology.

Islam calls an apostate a "Murtad."<sup>1</sup> This term "Murtad" is divided into two categories: "Murtad fitri" means that the person has apostatized from their birth faith, and "Murtad Milli" implies that the person converted to Islam and then rejected it."<sup>2</sup> Overall, Sharia law prescribes death as punishment for this act of apostasy.<sup>3</sup> Islam considers apostasy to be a betrayal of God and the Muslim community.<sup>4</sup> The Shi'a jurisprudence prescribes that the "Murtad fitri" be executed even if he repents, unlike the "Murtad milli" who has the possibility of converting and escaping execution.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Emeri J. van Donzel, ed. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New York: Brill, 1997), 771.

<sup>2</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, "Apostacy in Islam," accessed 21 June 2025, <https://al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/21330>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Sunni Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) advocates the same punishment in the Arabian Peninsula after the Prophet's death.<sup>6</sup> The Sunni author of the authoritative work *al-Fiqh `ala 'l-Madhāhibi 'l-Arba`ah* writes: "The four Sunni schools (Hanbali, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanafi) are in agreement that it is obligatory to kill a Muslim who becomes Murtad (apostate)."<sup>7</sup>

In Cameroon, the Mbororo Fulani are Sunni, like most Muslim Mbororo Fulani in West Africa, generally influenced by the Qadiriya and Tijaniya.<sup>8</sup> These Mbororo Fulani are, by nature, Muslims, born of Muslim parents. The abandonment of Islam among these Mbororo people constitutes a crucial challenge, because they are attached to their cultural and religious heritage and strive to live in harmony with its laws and rules.

Despite the punishment of Murtad (apostates), the Qur'an does not prescribe criminal sanctions on earth. The only serious punishment prescribed by the Qur'an is eternal hell in the afterlife. Allah will punish the Muslim apostates with painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And there will be no protector or helper for Muslim Murtad (Apostates) on earth.<sup>9</sup>

In these quoted statements, the Noble Qur'an gives assurance that the Muslim Murtad will be punished in the afterlife by the power of Allah and not by acts of violence. "Whoever of you returns from his religion to a disbeliever and dies while he

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<sup>6</sup>Ahmad Dawamul Muthi and Khalid El-Awaisi, "The Contributions of Caliph Abu Bakr to the First Muslim Liberation of Islamic Jerusalem," *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies* 22, no. 2 (2022): 135.

<sup>7</sup>Rizvi, "Apostacy in Islam."

<sup>8</sup>Mohamed Camara, "Benediction and Malediction in Fulani Culture: Exploring an Afro-Muslim Perception of the Socio-Spiritual Dimensions of Success and Failure," *Indigenous Nations Journal* 6, no. 1 (2008): 49.

<sup>9</sup>"The-Quran, Surah At-Tawbah 9.74.

is a disbeliever, for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the hereafter, and they are the companions of the Fire; they will stay there forever.<sup>10</sup>

"However, the decision to kill the apostates was mainly based on three hadiths (another primary source) from Sahih al-Bukhari. First, Ikrima reported that the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) said, "Whoever changes his Islamic religion, then kill him." Second, Mu'adh bin Jabal said to another Companion, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, that the apostate's execution was the decision of God and His Messenger.<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, the Prophet said that a Muslim cannot be executed for the crimes of murder, adultery, or apostasy.<sup>12</sup> It is because of all these hadith declarations reported by the companions of the Prophet that the four schools of Sunni Islam and those of Shi'a admit that the punishment inflicted on an apostate Muslim (Murtad) is death.

In Islamic jurisprudence, Murtad is considered a Hudud crime. Considering the four Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence, we note that only Hanafi jurists affirm that the apostate Muslim woman must not be put to death. But they believe it is important to kill an apostate Muslim adult. An apostate Muslim boy who has reached the age of discernment should not be killed but imprisoned.<sup>13</sup> According to the Maliki, Hanbali, Shafi'i, and School positions, any apostate, man or woman, is liable to the death penalty if they abandon Islam.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>"The Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqara 2:217.

<sup>11</sup>Jonathan Brown, *The Issue of Apostasy in Islam* (Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, 2017), 12, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FINAL-The-Issue-of-Apostasy-in-Islam-1.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Taha Jabir Alalwani, *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural Analysis* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2011), 19.

<sup>14</sup>Chris Hewer, "Apostasy in Islam," *Dawah Highlights*, 2004, 5, [https://chrishewer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Apostasy-in-Islam\\_.pdf](https://chrishewer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Apostasy-in-Islam_.pdf).

In Cameroon, particularly in the north of the country, it is the thought of the Sunni Maliki School that seems to apply to apostates. Because, among the Mbororo People, it does not matter whether a man or a woman leaves Islam, they must be sought out at all costs to eliminate a Murtad if the opportunity presents itself.

Fortunately, under Cameroonian law, a felony is an offense punishable by a maximum sentence of more than 10 years in prison.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon states that: "the State shall be secular. The neutrality and independence of the State concerning all religions shall be guaranteed; freedom of religion and worship shall be guaranteed."<sup>16</sup> It is thanks to these religious freedom laws and government policies that acts of violence by Sunni Maliki Muslims are not practiced publicly, but are secretly driving apostates crazy or killing them with the help of jinns.<sup>17</sup>

In this chapter, we review the literature on the concept of Murtad in light of primary sources (the Qur'an and Hadith), Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), Islamic theology, traditionalist Islam, and practices from the school of Sunni Islam, which address daily realities within the Muslim community. There is a gap in the African studies literature examining the phenomenon in the context of Islamic teachings on established law regarding apostates.

This chapter will establish the literature on the concept of Murtad (apostasy), with particular attention to the Maliki school of Sunni Islam. It will also examine the analysis and position of Muslim scholars on the phenomenon experienced by Muslims wishing to change religion.

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<sup>15</sup>Cameroon Penal Code, Application of Criminal Law. 2016, 139 (p. 8).

<sup>16</sup>The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 6.

<sup>17</sup>"The Qur'an, Surah Al-Jinn 72. 6.

## The Concept of Apostasy in the Qur'an

In the Noble Quran, many verses clearly state that man should not be forced to accept or adhere to any particular belief or religion. Which means that a man is free to follow or abandon a religion. Adherence to a religion depends on one's conviction linked to the teachings of received beliefs. Allah entrusted the Prophet and other messengers before him with the duty of conveying the message to humanity, not forcing anyone to accept it. In Mecca at the time of the Prophet, a message of tolerance and living together was strongly emphasized, and beliefs and religion were not imposed on people.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the prophet, once exiled to Medina, maintained the same nature of the Qur'anic message taught in Mecca. Several verses from the Medina period state that the Prophet and the Muslim people were recommended to continue preaching the word of Allah to people, not by imposing it but through peaceful conversations and discussions.<sup>19</sup>

For the concrete explanation of the concept of apostasy, in the Qur'an, let's first focus on how the Noble Qur'an uses this word. The verbal noun al-riddah is used to indicate a withdrawal from Islam. A believer who renounces his faith in Islam. This term Riddah has been used for a very long time to designate a man who withdraws from religion, and more especially the Islamic religion.<sup>20</sup> The Qur'an makes no mention of reserved earthly punishments for the so-called Islamic sin or crime of

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<sup>18</sup>Abdullah Saeed and Hassan Saeed, *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam* (London: Routledge, 2016), 69.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>20</sup> Alalwani, *Apostasy in Islam*, 7.

apostasy. No trace exists in the Noble Qur'an indicating that an apostate must return to Islam or must be killed if he refuses to follow Islam.<sup>21</sup>

The Noble Qur'an, in its ayahs, addresses the concept of apostasy as a great sin or a great crime. However, these ayahs do not determine any specific punishment for those who leave Islam or for apostates, much less the death penalty for them. Surah Al-Baqarah 108 relates that those who change their faith through disbelief lose the right path. And Surah An-Nisa 4:167 says that those go very far in their error. Ayah 137 of Surah An-Nisa clarifies that Allah gives them no hope of forgiveness and offers them no path to salvation.

The Noble Qur'an also describes those who leave Islam as being deceived by the promises of Satan (Surah Muhammad 47:25). Surah Al-Imran 87 reports that these (the apostates) will suffer, as punishment, the curse of Allah and that of the angels and that of all men. Surah An-Nahl 16:106 states that the apostates will suffer the wrath of Allah and terrifying torment.

Furthermore, several ayahs of the Noble Qur'an report that apostates will be punished in the Hereafter and they will forever be the guests of Hell (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:217). For Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:5, the apostates will be among the real losers. Similarly, other verses of the Qur'an specify that apostates will be condemned to painful punishment; they will have no defenders (Surah Al-Imran 3:91 and Surah Al-Baqarah 2:161-162). In Surah At-Tawbah, it is said that Allah will inflict painful torment on the apostates of this world and the next. They will have neither a protector nor an ally on earth (9:74, 88:23-24).

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<sup>21</sup>Alalwani, *Apostasy in Islam*, 7-8.

Finally, the Noble Qur'an tells us that: "There is no constraint in religion" (Surat al-Baqarah, 2:256); "Surely, if Allah had willed, all men on earth would have believed. Would you force them to believe? (Surah Yunus, 10:99); and "it is not your responsibility to guide them (the apostates) well, Allah alone directs whom He wills to the right path. » (Surat al-Baqarah, 2:272)

In all the ayahs of the Noble Qur'an, none of them mention the death penalty, loss of property, and imprisonment of apostates or those who leave Islam by earthly humans. The Noble Quran rather refers to Allah, who alone will punish them, and it is He alone who guides man on the right path. No one has the right to force a human being to follow a religion, even though Allah does not force a human being to believe in him.

According to Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad Khalifatul Masih, current Muslims and future generations should never want to promote the idea of coercion in religion.<sup>22</sup> When Allah says: "O Muhammad! I tell you that I intend that there be freedom in questions of religion (...) "Will you force men...? If the position of the Noble Qur'an is that the punishment of apostates is the business of Allah alone, and not of man, what then of the ahadith?

### **The Concept of Apostasy in the Hadith**

In the Noble Qur'an, no earthly punishment is specifically determined for apostates; only it is in the Sunnah that we find the death penalty reserved for all those who abandon Islam. The Hadiths are the second source of Islamic law, from which teachings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The most famous hadith cited to justify acts of violence against Muslims who change religion is the following:

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<sup>22</sup>Hadhrt Mirza Tahir Ahmad and Khalifatul Masih IV, *The Truth about the Alleged Punishment for Apostasy in Islam* (Tilford, UK: Islam International Publications, 2005), 32.

Narrated `Ikrima:

Some Zanadiqa (atheists) were brought to `Ali, and he burnt them. The news of this event reached Ibn `Abbas, who said, "If I had been in his place, I would not have burnt them, as Allah's Messenger (SAW) forbade it, saying, 'Do not punish anybody with Allah's punishment (fire).' I would have killed them according to the statement of Allah's Messenger (SAW), 'Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him'(Sahih al-Bukhari 6922, Book 88, Hadith 5, vol.9).

According to Ṭaha Jabir Fayyad `Alwani, Nancy N. Roberts, and Iqbal J.

Unus, this hadith or this story is told by several people, such as Ahmad (1:282), Abu Ya`la (2532), Ibn Habban (5606), al-Darqutni (3:113), and Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, who reports the hadith in al-Tamhid (5:304). Al-Bayhaqi (8:202) cites the same story.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, the hadith is similarly narrated by people like Ibn Majah (2535), At-Tirmidhzi (1458), Abu Dawud (4351), and An-Nasaa-ee (4076).<sup>24</sup> The same expression and story repeat themselves in these hadiths mentioned above. The bloody hadith states that: "whoever changes his religion, then kill him!" This means that a Muslim by birth or who has converted to Islam but decides to change his religion and adopt Christianity or another religion must be killed.

According to Belayet Hossen and Abdul Bari Awang, this hadith is part of the verbal hadiths of the Prophet (SAW), which nevertheless became widespread just after the beginning of Islam. It was at this time that Islamic jurists and scholars began to use the ḥadith to prove and justify the death penalty for apostasy. This

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<sup>23</sup>Ṭahā Jābir Fayyād `Alwānī, Nancy N. Roberts, and Iqbal J. Unus, with International Institute of Islamic Thought, *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural Analysis* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2011), 80.

<sup>24</sup>Nik Rahim Nik Wajis, "Revisiting Law of Apostasy in Islamic Law," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 6, no. 2 (2018): 25-39.

recommendation was claimed to come directly from the Prophet (SAW). “If someone changes his religion, put him to death” (Al-Bukhari, 1214).<sup>25</sup>

According to Alwani, this ḥadīth was not so vulgar before, but it became popular after the early years of Islam. In terms of authentication, it is an ahadḥadīth (solitary hadith) which is considered an incomplete transmission. He linked this ḥadīth to a crisis. Some Jewish leaders wanted to destabilize the Prophet (S.A.W), his revelation, and his mission to Medina by plotting to create division.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, Alwani said that this ḥadīth directly invites people to kill human beings, while the Noble Qur'an invites safeguards. Muhammad Al-Shawkani, the famous scholar, declared that “there is a problem with the narration chain (isnad) of these reports and therefore, they are not considered to be reliable and authentic, particularly in matters of capital punishment” (al-Shawkani, pp. 2-3).<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, Ali relates another hadith that further incites acts of violence against so-called apostates from Islam. The hadith offers a great reward on the Day of Judgment or the Day of Resurrection to the one who kills anyone who changes his religion. Narrated by Ali:

No doubt I heard Allah's Apostle saying, "During the last days, there will appear some young foolish people who will say the best words but their faith will not go beyond their throats (i.e., they will have no faith) and will go out from (leave) their religion as an arrow goes out of the game. So, wherever you find them, kill them, for whoever kills them shall have a reward on the Day of Resurrection. (Sahih al-Bukhari 6930, Book 88, Hadith 12).

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<sup>25</sup>Belayet Hossen and Abdul Bari Awang, "Tāhā Jābir Al-‘Alwānī’s Viewpoint on Apostasy: An Analytical Study from Bangladesh Perspective," *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Law*, 1, no. 2 (2021): 89.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

The hadith in question vindicates Muslims who faithfully follow these teachings without turning left or right. Who does not want to be rewarded by Allah on the Day of Resurrection? Muslims do not kill an apostate only for his act of abandoning Islam, but at the same time, in search of a great reward which is reserved by Allah on the Day of Resurrection.

However, some hadith narrators who support the death penalty for apostasy claim that before killing the apostate, he incites him to repentance. According to Abd Allah ibn Umar, the apostate must have three graces: repent and return to Islam. If he repents, and if he refuses, he must be killed.<sup>28</sup>

Given all that has been said, I agree with Alwani's point of view when he says that about two hundred verses of the Qur'an deny coercion in matters of religion, but value absolute human freedom to choose what a man wants. And in addition, "The Quran is the criterion for verifying the authenticity of the Sunnah or the hadith; it is not a hadith to do that."<sup>29</sup>

The problem of apostasy is due to three hadiths obtained from Sahih al-Bukhari (1414), the Prophet (SAW) said that the penalty for the apostate is death. The first hadith was reported by Ibn Abbas, who said: "The Prophet said: Whoever changes his religion, kill him." The second hadith was narrated by Mu'adh bin Jabal, who informed another companion, Abu Musa al Ash'ari, that: "the execution of the apostate was the decision of God and His Messenger (al-Bukhari, 1414)."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Alwānī, Roberts, and Unus, *Apostasy in Islam*, 94.

<sup>29</sup>Hossen and Awang, "Tāhā Jābir Al-‘Alwānī’s Viewpoint on Apostasy," 89.

<sup>30</sup>Santhira Morgan and Jasni Bin Sulong, "Punishment for Apostasy: A Review and Choosing the Right Perspective (Tarjih)," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 10, no. 6 (2020): 744.

Finally, the third hadith, the Prophet (SAW) said that a Muslim can only be killed for the crimes of murder, adultery, and apostasy. All these hadiths confirm that the penalty for apostasy is death without taking into account the context and form of the apostasy.<sup>31</sup>

In summary, the death penalty for apostasy has been established by the Sunnah or hadith. It is based on his teachings that the schools of Islamic jurisprudence established the law of punishing with death all those who dare to change their religion. Thus, many Muslims today believe that the death penalty is a “divine law,” taught by the Qur’an and the Prophet. The Quran speaks of the divine punishment that apostates will suffer on the Day of Resurrection or the Day of Judgment. Allah alone is the judge.

### **The Position of the Sunni School: The Maliki School**

Within Sunni Islam, the Maliki School is one of the four major schools of Islamic Jurisprudence (fiqh). It is the second school founded in the 8th century by Malik Ibn Anas (715-795 AD) and is called the Hejaz school or Medina school. Among all the other Islamic fiqhs, this school uses the Quran and hadith as its primary sources. It considers itself the most orthodox and authentic of Islam.<sup>32</sup>

The Imam Malik, speaking of apostasy, quotes the hadith that the Messenger of Allah said: “If anyone changes his religion, let him be beheaded.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, Imam

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<sup>31</sup>ISanthira Morgan and Jasni Bin Sulong, "Punishment for Apostasy: A Review and Choosing the Right Perspective (Tarjih)," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 10, no. 6 (2020): 744

<sup>32</sup>Ikenga K. E. Oraegbunam, "Maliki Jurisprudence and *Boko Haram* Ideology versus Nigerian Nation Building: Need for Pluralism in Islamic Praxis," *OGIRISI: A New Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 1 (2016): 25, 10.4314/og.v12i1.2.

<sup>33</sup>Alwānī, Roberts, and Unus, *Apostasy in Islam*, 102.

Malik gives meaning to the hadith with this explanation: All those who have changed their religion from Islam to something else must be killed and must not be allowed to repent. Because it is impossible to know whether their repentance is sincere and whether they profess to be Muslims in hypocrisy by hiding disbelief in their heart.<sup>34</sup>

Maliki's position on apostasy is that all those who leave Islam must be put to death, both men and women, because it is a "requirement of God."<sup>35</sup> There is no difference in punishment between men and women in this regard.<sup>36</sup> Apostasy is also considered a civil offense. Therefore, the property of those who leave Islam is seized and distributed to Muslim parents. His marriage is annulled (faskh), and his or her children are taken and considered wards of the Islamic State. If the whole family has left Islam or there are no surviving Muslim parents recognized by Sharia law, the apostate's property is sold by the Islamic State.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Position of Muslim Scholars**

This part discusses the different positions of Muslim scholars regarding Murtad (apostasy). Knowing that the sources of Islamic law are the Qur'an and the Sunnah or hadith of the Prophet. It is because of these sources that the law of the death penalty was instituted for all those who change religion. Several Muslim scholars discuss different interpretations related to apostasy.

#### **Muslim Scholars in Favor of the Death Penalty for Apostasy**

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<sup>34</sup>Alwānī, Roberts, and Unus, *Apostasy in Islam*, 103.

<sup>35</sup>Oraegbunam, "Maliki Jurisprudence and *Boko Haram* Ideology versus Nigerian Nation Building," 28.

<sup>36</sup>Morgan and Sulong, "Punishment for Apostasy," 741.

<sup>37</sup>Oraegbunam, "Maliki Jurisprudence and *Boko Haram* Ideology versus Nigerian Nation Building," 28.

Although some Muslim scholars differ on repentance, it seems that a majority believe that the apostate must die for their act. There are, however, different views among Muslim scholars on the issue of an apostate's repentance. Above all, they believe that the apostate should have the opportunity to repent. According to Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, it is preferable to ask an apostate to repent, but it is not obligatory. For him, the declaration “whoever changes his religion, kill him” does not specify the obligation to repent before his scheduled execution, but specifies death.<sup>38</sup>

For scholars such as Ḥassan al-Baṣri, Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, Ṭawus, and al-Ṭaḥawī, repentant apostates are never acceptable; they should be killed with one blow.<sup>39</sup> According to Al-Muwardi, an apostate who does not immediately repent must be killed instantly so that the fulfillment of God's right is not delayed. While according to the following scholars: Ata (b. Abī Rabah) Ibrahīm al-Nakha'i, Malik b. Anas, Sufyan al-Thawrī, al-Awza'i, Ishaq (born Rahawayhi), Ashab al-raa'y, and Ahmad b. Hanbali, the option of repentance must be obligatory.<sup>40</sup>

Nonetheless, Umar states that imprisonment is better for apostasy than execution as punishment. Likewise, Sufyan al-Thawri and Ibrahīm Al-Nakha'i would allow the apostate to repent forever, or, in another way, while there is hope for his repentance than to kill him. Furthermore, Al-Nakha'i maintains that an apostate must be allowed to repent even if he repents a hundred times<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Razi H. Quadir, "Apostasy in Islam: An Overview of Sources and Positions," in *Religiously Exclusive, Socially Inclusive?* eds. Bernhard Reitsma and Erika Van Nes-Visscher (Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 186.

<sup>39</sup>Quadir, "Apostasy in Islam," 186.

<sup>40</sup>Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 128.

<sup>41</sup>Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 129.

## **Muslim Scholars Opposed to the Death Penalty for Apostasy**

The position of Muslim scholars in favor of capital punishment for apostasy in Islam is presented clearly above. In the following lines, a presentation of the opinion of classical and modern Muslim scholars who are against the death penalty for apostasy in Islam will be fully brought to light. Popular classical scholars known as Ibrahim al-Nakha'i and Sufyan al-Thawri assert their position on the subject of apostasy by stating that: "the apostate should always be allowed to repent but never executed."<sup>42</sup>

To go further, the Muslim scholar Ibn Qudama, for his part, brought together the two opinions: He maintains that the apostate will never be killed. Whoever supports the death of the apostate contradicts the Sunnah and the ijma (consensus) of the scholars.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, modern Muslim scholars are against the death penalty for apostasy.<sup>44</sup> To support their thesis, several arguments have been put forward. The nature of these arguments is as follows:

First, they claim that in the Noble Qur'an, there are approximately two hundred verses that support and value freedom of choice, as Muslim scholar Taha Jabir Alalwani (2016) notes 29 ayahs.<sup>45</sup> Here are some of them below: "There are no constraints in religion (Surah Al-Baqarah 256). Certainly, if Allah had willed, all men on earth would have believed. Would you force them to believe, Mohammad? (Surah Yunus 99). You are not responsible for forcing them to believe (Surah Qaf 45). Say:

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<sup>42</sup>Quadir, "Apostasy in Islam," 193.

<sup>43</sup>Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*, 129.

<sup>44</sup>Quadir, "Apostasy in Islam," 194.

<sup>45</sup>Quadir, "Apostasy in Islam," 194.

“This is the truth from your Lord! Whoever wants to will believe it, and whoever wants to will deny it! (Surah Al-Kahf 29).

The second argument of modern Muslim scholars against the death penalty for apostasy is the oldest. They cite a hadith: “Whoever changes his religion, kill him”. According to Muslim scholars, this hadith is called solitary or ahead and became important after the beginning of the period of Islam, and was unknown at the time of the Prophet.<sup>46</sup>

Muslim scholars claim that in early Islam, it was a solitary and incompletely transmitted hadith.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, the chain of narrators (isnād) of this hadith contains ‘Ikrimah, who was the slave of Ibn ‘Abbas, and at this level, these hadiths were widely disseminated.<sup>48</sup> Some Muslim scholars consider ‘Ikrimah reliable, while others do not.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, those who are against the death penalty find this hadith weak; therefore, for them, this hadith cannot be used as tangible evidence to justify that the punishment for apostasy is the death penalty. Finally, the third argument advanced by Muslim scholars against apostasy is that the Prophet never killed anyone for apostasy.<sup>50</sup>

In summary, because of all these arguments put forward by classical or modern Muslim scholars, they are all in favor of the death penalty for apostasy. Whether it's Muslim scholars who are Sunni or Shia. Although some discuss the

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<sup>46</sup>Quadir, “Apostasy in Islam,” 194.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Morgan and Sulong, “Punishment for Apostasy,” 744.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Morgan and Sulong, “Punishment for Apostasy,” 745.

repentance of the apostate, other scholars reject this idea of repentance. To kill the apostate is a divine will and is crowned with a reward on the last day or the day of resurrection.

However, few modern Muslim scholars oppose the death penalty for apostasy. We cite the example of Taha Jabir Alalwani (d. 2016). It maintains the position of the Quran, which says: There shall be no compulsion in (the acceptance of) religion. (2:256). I completely agree with this position. If all classical and modern Muslim scholars could understand this position, religious freedom and the teaching of the Quran would prevail over human will and its deviant teachings.

### **Controversies among Modern Scholars Regarding the Death Penalty**

The death penalty is a controversial topic among modern Muslim scholars: some oppose it, others defend it. The heart of the problem lies in the different interpretations of the main Islamic sources: the Qur'an and the hadiths (sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad).

### **Opposition to the Death Penalty**

Many contemporary Muslim scholars, such as Mohammad Hashim Kamali,<sup>51</sup> Tariq Ramadan,<sup>52</sup> Cherif Bassouini,<sup>53</sup> and Mahmoud Mohammed Taha,<sup>54</sup> oppose the

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<sup>51</sup>Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Maqāṣid Al-Sharīḥ Made Simple*, Occasional Papers Series, 13 (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008), 1.

<sup>52</sup>Abdeladim Zehani, "Who Is Tariq Ramadan?" *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 12, no. 5 (2022): 1996-2005.

<sup>53</sup>Kai Ambos, "Current Issues in International Criminal Law," *Criminal Law Forum* 14, no. 3 (2003): 225-59.

<sup>54</sup>Hakkı Göker Önen, *Mahmoud Muhammed Taha and His Legacy of the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 5th International Middle East Symposium: Reconsidering History and Identity in the Middle East, December 2020, 1.

death penalty. They argue that the Quran emphasizes freedom of conscience and explicitly states that "there is no compulsion in religion."<sup>55</sup> They claim that the Quran only prescribes punishment in the afterlife for apostasy, and not earthly punishment.

### **In Favor of the Death Penalty**

Several modern Muslim scholars, such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi<sup>56</sup> and Muhammad Saalih Al-Munajjid,<sup>57</sup> support the death penalty, basing their position on traditional interpretations of Sharia, particularly for crimes classified as hudud (crimes against God) and qisas (retribution for murder).

### **The Consensus of the Companions of the Prophet**

This section discusses the consensus of the Prophet's companions on the issue of killing the apostate when the Prophet (SAW) Muhammad died and Abu Bakr became his successor. Abu Hurayrah said that: When Prophet Mohammad (SAW) died, some Arabs returned to disbelief. 'Umar said: "O Abu Bakr! How can you fight these people when the Messenger of Allah Said:

I have been ordered to fight the people till they say: 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, 'and whoever said, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah', Allah will save his property and his life from me, unless (he does something for which he receives legal punishment) justly, and his account will be with Allah?<sup>58</sup>

Abu Bakr said: "By Allah! I will fight anyone who differentiates between prayers and Zakat because Zakat is the right to be taken from property (according to Allah's commandments). By Allah! If they refused to pay me, even a child whom they

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<sup>55</sup>Surah Al- Baqarah 2:256

<sup>56</sup>Ana Belén Soage, "Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaradawi: A Moderate Voice from the Muslim World?" *Religion Compass* 4, no. 9 (2010): 563–75.

<sup>57</sup>Muhammad Saalih Munajjid, *How He Treated Them?* (Zad Group Publishing, 2014), p. 1.

<sup>58</sup>Shaykh Rabee bin Haadee al-Madkhali, "The Ruling Regarding Apostasy in Islam," 2007, 9.

paid to the Messenger of Allah, I would fight with them to keep him. 'Umar said: "By Allah, it was nothing, but I noticed that Allah opened Abu Bakr's chest for him to decide to fight, so I understood that his decision was the right one."<sup>59</sup>

The above statements relate to the conversation between Umar and Abu Bakr regarding the Arabs who had apostatized. These Arab Muslim apostates during the time of Abu Bakr belonged to two categories: first, the group of Muslims who renounced Islam and practiced idol worship or followed other religions. Second, the group of those who recognized themselves as Muslims but denied the pillar of zakah or refused to pay it to Abu Bakr.<sup>60</sup>

The consensus of the Companions regarding the first group (those who have renounced Islam) is that they are considered disbelievers and that the Companions must fight for them to abandon the religion of disbelief. The debate between Abu Bakr and 'Umar focused more on the second group (those who refused the pillar of zakah or refused to pay it to Abu Bakr). According to the scholar Qadi Iyyad, the apostates at that time were divided into three groups, which are as follows: Abu Bakr and his companions decided to fight them all; the first two groups for their unbelief, and the third for refusing to pay zakat.<sup>61</sup>

The position of the companions of the Prophet, after his death, regarding the death penalty for apostates, is that Abu Bakr declared that their death would go to hell. Most accounts indicate that after the Prophet's death, during the time of Abu

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<sup>59</sup> Shaykh Rabee bin Haadee al-Madkhali, "The Ruling Regarding Apostasy in Islam," 2007, 9.

<sup>60</sup> Sulṭān al-'Umayrī, "The Punishment for Apostasy in Islam," 18, accessed 23 March 2025, [https://www.academia.edu/41311894/The\\_Punishment\\_for\\_Apostasy\\_in\\_Islam\\_by\\_Dr\\_Sul%E1%B9%AD%C4%81n\\_al\\_Umayr%C4%AB](https://www.academia.edu/41311894/The_Punishment_for_Apostasy_in_Islam_by_Dr_Sul%E1%B9%AD%C4%81n_al_Umayr%C4%AB).

<sup>61</sup> Sulṭān al-'Umayrī, "The Punishment for Apostasy in Islam," 18, accessed 23 March 2025, [https://www.academia.edu/41311894/The\\_Punishment\\_for\\_Apostasy\\_in\\_Islam\\_by\\_Dr\\_Sul%E1%B9%AD%C4%81n\\_al\\_Umayr%C4%AB](https://www.academia.edu/41311894/The_Punishment_for_Apostasy_in_Islam_by_Dr_Sul%E1%B9%AD%C4%81n_al_Umayr%C4%AB).

Bakr and Umar, his companions largely agreed that apostates were disbelievers and should be executed for renouncing Islam and worshipping idols. However, Umar ordered their execution, which indicates that he favored their execution.<sup>62</sup>

### **Social and Legal Consequences of the Concept of Apostasy**

For any act of apostasy in Islam, the social and legal consequences are considered as follows: property is seized, and marriage is dissolved. According to the Hanafi School, the property of those who leave Islam must be distributed to close Muslim families.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the marriage of those who leave Islam, whether the husband or the wife, is automatically annulled because, according to Islam, this marriage has become illegal. Likewise, the children of those who abandon religion are taken from them. Because he can no longer inherit from his Muslim parents, he cannot bequeath this property to his children, and he cannot be buried in a Muslim cemetery.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, children who leave Islam remain Muslim and are raised as such. If the father and mother leave Islam, the children will continue to receive Islamic religious education. And when they become adults, they will receive identity papers that qualify them as Muslims.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Sultān al-'Umayrī, "The Punishment for Apostasy in Islam," 18, accessed 23 March 2025, [https://www.academia.edu/41311894/The\\_Punishment\\_for\\_Apostasy\\_in\\_Islam\\_by\\_Dr\\_Sul%20E%20B%20AD%20C%2081n\\_al\\_Umayr%20C%20AB](https://www.academia.edu/41311894/The_Punishment_for_Apostasy_in_Islam_by_Dr_Sul%20E%20B%20AD%20C%2081n_al_Umayr%20C%20AB).

<sup>63</sup>Christine Schirrmacher, *Let There Be No Compulsion in Religion" (Sura 2-256): Apostasy from Islam as Judged by Contemporary Islamic Theologians: Discourses on Apostasy, Religious Freedom and Human Rights*, Religious Freedom Series (IIRF) 4 (Germany: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, C2016), 66.

<sup>64</sup>Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah 256.

<sup>65</sup> Nobert E. Fuchs, "Knowledge Representation and Reasoning in (Controlled) Natural Language," in *Conceptual Structures: Common Semantics for Sharing Knowledge: 13th International Conference on Conceptual Structures, ICCS 2005, Kassel, Germany, July 17-22, 2005, Proceedings* ed. by Frithjof Dau, Marie-Laure Mugnier, and Gerd Stumme (New York: Springer, 2005), 51.

## Early Islamic Theology

The rationalist Mu'tazilite school and the al-Ash'ari school's reaction to it characterized early Islamic theology. The Mu'tazilites used reason, influenced by Greek philosophy, to defend divine justice, human free will, and the creation of the Quran. Al-Ash'ari, on the other hand, proposed a middle way combining scriptural tradition and rationalism, affirming God's power over human actions and presenting a different view of divine attributes.

### Mu'tazilah Theology

The oldest rationalist school of Islamic theology is that of the Mu'tazilites (it is a speculative theology, kalām). It was one of the most influential doctrinal texts and schools of thought of Islam.<sup>66</sup> On the subject of apostasy, although they have not expressed their position, they nevertheless support man's free will. The Mu'tazilites defend human free will and attribute to Allah the power to carry out His actions. They argue that if humans could not choose and freely carry out their activities, it would be of no use. They also argue that God alone has the reward of the righteous and that God alone is the one who punishes humans for their actions.<sup>67</sup>

Given the analysis of Mu'tazila theology, the Mbororo Muslim is free to choose those who correspond to his desires. Man on earth has no right to force him to adopt a religion. Allah has not given man any command to judge for him. Allah is the only one who rewards the righteous and imposes great punishments on those who disobey. This reward or punishment will be carried out on the Last Day.

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<sup>66</sup>Diwan Taskheer Khan, "Mu'tazilaism: An Introduction to Rationality in Islam," *International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences* 4, no. 10 (2017): 60-62.

<sup>67</sup>Diwan Taskheer Khan, "Mu'tazilaism: An Introduction to Rationality in Islam," *International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences* 4, no. 10 (2017), 61.

Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite views on apostasy diverge: the Mu'tazilites emphasize reason and justice, while the Ash'arite school is more traditional. Both schools generally agree on the seriousness of apostasy, often citing the Quran and Sunnah as their main arguments. The debate centers on the theological implications, the severity of the penalty, and the role of individual intention versus the public act of apostasy.<sup>68</sup>

### **The World of the Jinn**

The word jinn in Arabic refers to something that is concealed and hidden.<sup>69</sup> Dr. Umar Aulaiman Al-Ashqar states that the jinn constitute a separate world, distinct from that of humans and angels. They possess, like humans, the capacity to think and reflect. Likewise, they can choose between the path of good and the path of evil, just like humans.<sup>70</sup> They are called jinn because they are invisible to human sight.<sup>71</sup> Lo! He sees you, him, and his tribe, from where you cannot see him.<sup>72</sup>

### **The Names for the Jinn in the Arabic Language**

Ibn Abdul Barr said that the jinn, according to the scholars of the language,<sup>73</sup> are of different types:

- If one mentions the jinn purely for themselves, they are called a jinni.

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<sup>68</sup> "Ash'arism," Wikipedia, accessed 21 March 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash%27arism#cite\\_note-ReferenceA-47](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash%27arism#cite_note-ReferenceA-47).

<sup>69</sup> AbuTMundhir Khaleel ibn Ibraaheem Ameen, *The Jinn and Human Sickness* (London: Nasiruddin Al-Khattab, 2005), 24.

<sup>70</sup> Umar Sulaiman, *The World of the Jinn and Devils* (Amman, Jordan: University of Jordan, 1998), 12.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Surah Al-A'raf 27.

<sup>73</sup> Sulaiman, *The World of the Jinn and Devils*, 13.

- If one mentions the jinn that live among mankind, they are called aamar.
- If one mentions the ones that antagonize the young, they are called arwaah.
- If one mentions the evil ones that antagonize humans, they are called shaitan.
- If they cause even more harm and become strong, they are called afreet.

### **Evidence for the Existence of the Jinn**

#### 1. Evidence from the Noble Qur'an

“And (remember) when we sent towards you (Muhammad) a group (three to ten persons) of the jinn, (quietly) listening to the Qur'an.”<sup>74</sup> Say (O Muhammad): It has been revealed to me that a group (from three to ten in number) of jinn listened (to this Qur'an). They said: Verily, we have heard a wonderful Recitation (this Qur'an)!<sup>75</sup>

#### 2. Evidence from the Sunnah.

Muslim narrated in his Saheeh that Ibn Mas'ud said:

“We were in the company of the Messenger of Allah one night, and then we noticed he was missing. We searched for him in the valleys and mountain passes, then we thought that he had either been taken away (by the jinn) or killed secretly. We spent the worst night that any people have ever spent, then when morning came, we saw him coming from the direction of Hira”. We said: O Messenger of Allah, we missed you and looked for you, but we could not find you, and we spent the worst night that any people have ever spent. He said: “A petitioner of the jinn came to me and I went with him and recited the Qur'an to them.”<sup>76</sup>

These elements prove that the world of the Jinn exists. The Jinn exist and are alive; they possess powers of understanding and are subject to commands. The jinn are hidden creatures who can see us, but we cannot see them. According to the Quran,

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<sup>74</sup> Surah Al-Ahqaaf 46:29.

<sup>75</sup> Surah Al-Jinn 72:1.

<sup>76</sup> Ameen, *The Jinn and Human Sickness*, 40.

among the jinn are Muslims, disbelievers, and various other groups. According to the Qur'an, among the jinn are Muslims, disbelievers, and various other groups."<sup>77</sup>

### **Powers of Jinn**

In Islamic belief, a fundamental distinction between humans and jinn lies in their innate powers and abilities. Muslims believe that these superior powers were bestowed upon the jinn by God as a test. The text of "Mission Islam (2007)" stipulates that jinn who abuse their powers to oppress others will be held accountable for their actions and face the consequences.<sup>78</sup> Muslims believe that jinn can take various physical forms (human, animal, plant, etc.) and that their powers can help explain the mysteries of the world.<sup>79</sup>

In popular Islam, jinn are spirits invoked for magical purposes and are often held responsible for miraculous or unusual events, as well as a wide variety of illnesses, generally attributed to an imbalance between internal and external jinn. "Healers often address the jinn directly before expelling them from patients" (Esposito 2010).<sup>80</sup> Muslims believe that jinn, good or bad, possess people for various reasons. "Sometimes it is because the jinn or its family has been accidentally injured. It may also be that the jinn has fallen in love with the person. However, most often, possession occurs because the jinn are simply malevolent and perverse" (Esposito 2010).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Surah Al-Jinn 72:14-15

<sup>78</sup>Vivian Laughlin, "A Brief Overview of al Jinn within Islamic Cosmology and Religiosity," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 11, no. 1 (2015): 67–78.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Vivian Laughlin, "A Brief Overview of al Jinn within Islamic Cosmology and Religiosity," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 11, no. 1 (2015): 67–78. 10.32597/jams/vol11/iss1/9/

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

## **Missiological Implication**

To approach the mission to Muslims and, in particular, to the Mbororo people, the missionary must be aware that all those who leave the Islamic religion to join Christianity are considered Murtad (apostates). Thus, when a Mbororo Muslim accepts and adheres to the Injil (Gospel) of Isa Almasiih and abandons Islam, the implications are multiple, namely:

- The Mbororo Muslim brothers consider apostates as unbelievers, alcohol drinkers, pig eaters, worshipers of the three gods, the images of Mary and Jesus, and muchrik (Associators/polytheists).
- Family repercussions: The family is separated or divided in the event of abandonment of Islam by the husband or wife.
- Tribal devaluation: The Mbororo tribe into which the apostate arrives is considered devalued by the other Mbororo tribes.
- Religious conflicts and dialogue: tensions or war between converts and the Muslim community. There will be a lack of peaceful dialogue between converts and former Muslim brothers.
- Resistance to being receptive to the gospel of salvation by the rest of the Mbororo.
- The impact on social life: apostates can no longer exercise their activities freely because they are afraid of being killed.
- The impact on property: the property of apostates is systematically snatched and distributed to close relatives of apostates, if not to the Islamic State.

## **The Adventist Responses toward Murtad: GCAMR's Strategy to Reach Cousins**

The General Conference Adventist Muslim Relationship (GCAMR) strategy provides the official high-level mission framework and theological foundation for engagement with cousins. It has provided three very robust strategic steps to ensure the complete safety of our cousins. Here are the three steps of GCAMR's strategy:

- **Step 1: Spiritual Preparation:** Aim: To encourage and mobilize members to have an intercessory Prayer. The intercessory prayer life allows God, the owner of the mission, to direct His work. This intercessory prayer ministry includes:
  1. **Personal prayer:** prayer of confession
  2. **Territorial prayer:** praying for the unreached people groups and un-entered areas.
  3. **Prayer for sons and daughters of peace** (Lk 10:4-9): praying for specific people.
  4. **Prayer for Ramadan Prayer Initiative:** praying for activities during the month of Ramadan.
- **Step 2: Acts of Kindness:** This step invites us to action. Acts of kindness facilitate our integration and initiate us into dialogue. Before engaging in dialogue, we must first get to know our Muslim friends, then engage in healthy dialogue. Finally, we must always be intentional and guided by the Holy Spirit.
- **Step 3: House Church:** A house church is an ideal private place for our cousins to gather for worship and fellowship, rather than in a traditional church.

## Summary

This chapter analyzed the concept of apostasy in Islamic theology. The reality that emerges from this analysis is that apostasy in Islam is the act of abandoning Islam and joining Christianity or another religion. According to Muslims, all those who abandon religion must be put to death.

However, the Noble Quran supports religious freedom. In several Quranic verses, it is clear that there is no constraint in matters of religion (Surat al-Baqarah, 2:256); “Surely, if Allah had willed, all men on earth would have believed. Would you force them to believe? (Surah Yunus, 10:99); and “it is not your responsibility to guide them (the apostates) well, Allah alone directs whom He wills to the right path. » (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:272).

Furthermore, the hadiths support the death penalty for all those who leave Islam. One of the most famous hadiths in favor of the death penalty is that of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW), who said: “Whoever has changed his religion from Islam, kill him” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6922, Book 88, Hadith 5, vol.9).

This hadith influences and takes precedence over the Qur’anic texts to the point that all Muslims in the world, whether Sunni or Shi’a, implement it and enforce any act of apostasy or blasphemy occurring in Islam. Thus, all Sunni schools, regardless of their difference, are in favor of the death penalty for apostates. I can say that Muslims practice Islam out of fear and not out of conviction.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research methodology constituted the systematic approach employed to conduct this study, including the specific procedures for data collection and analysis used to answer the research questions. It represented the blueprint for this thesis, explaining the study's progress and justifying the choice of certain methods, thus ensuring the validity and reliability of this research. Its key components included the overall research plan, the data collection methods, and the data analysis techniques.

This chapter described the methodology used to conduct this research. The research approach used in this study was qualitative research. According to Schwardt, Creswell, and Tashakkori, this methodology explained and defined the problem that deserved to be studied in the field, and what constituted a research problem.<sup>1</sup> This chapter addressed the research approach and design used in this study.

A phenomenological research design was used in this study. This phenomenological research was applied by collecting data through in-depth interviews and focus groups to understand the subjective and lived experiences of the Mbororo and the meanings they attach to these experiences. The research methods used in this study include a description of geographic Settings, population, sampling procedure, research protocol, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 68.

## Historical Context

### Brief History of Islam in Cameroon

In Cameroon, certain communities converted to Islam in the 17th century.<sup>2</sup> Despite its presence in the ten Cameroonian regions, Islam is strongly established in the three northern regions, the Far North (Maroua), the North (Garoua), and Adamawa (Ngaoundéré), which account for 70% of the country's Muslims. The emerging centers comprise Noun and Mbam (Bafia and Babouté).

The Mbororo (Fulani) pastoralists spread Islam in northern Cameroon through trade and Sufi brotherhoods starting in the 19th century.<sup>3</sup> Their presence and interactions with local non-Muslim communities facilitated Islam's spread, a phenomenon that continues to impact the religious landscape of the region today, challenging Christianity. At the end of the 19th century, the Bamoun people converted to Islam under their leader Njoya, using Hausa mallams for Islamization, unlike the Fulani, who were the main influence in the north.<sup>4</sup>

### Brief History of Islam in Ngaoundéré

Ngaoundéré city is the capital of the Adamawa Region of Cameroon. It had a population of 152,700.<sup>5</sup> According to Mark Dike Delancey, Ardo Hamman Ndjjobdi founded Ngaoundéré around 1835 after the Fulani (Mbororo) settled in an area previously controlled by the indigenous Mboum population. As chief of the Vollarbe

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<sup>2</sup>Gilbert L. T. Fah, "Muslim Rulers, Justice and Politics in Cameroon during French Colonialism," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2009): 82-95.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Margo Brookfield, "The Impacts of Education: A Case Study of Muslim Women in Ngaoundéré, Cameroon" (*International Studies: Comparative Development and Francophone Africa* French and Spanish, University of Oregon 2013), 17.

clan, Ardo Ndjjobdi established a new administration and forged mostly peaceful, mutually beneficial relations with the Mboum people.<sup>6</sup>

The history of Islam in Ngaoundéré, as divided into three phases by Martin Z. Njema, spans the period before Ardo Ndjjobdi's 1835 invasion, the subsequent Fulbe hegemony, and the era of colonial rule.<sup>7</sup> While various ethnic groups like the Mboum, Mbaya, and Mbororo are present, they are all predominantly Islamized, with Islam's strong influence noted to dominate the city's character, a fact confirmed by Margo Brookfield, who states that approximately 60% of the population is Muslim.<sup>8</sup>

### **Context of the Study**

The Mbororo Fulani of the village of Mbe are generally a people of semi-nomadic people who reside particularly in rural areas as part of the easy grazing of their herd. They are traditionally nomadic breeders and traders. Indeed, “the Mbororo often assert that they only know how to work with animals and admit being incapable of any other activity” (Boutrais, 1996).<sup>9</sup>

The Mbororo are a semi-nomadic group whose main religion is Islam, though they blend it with pre-Islamic customs. They are known for their beauty, knowledge, and ceremonial riches. The Mbororo have been extensively documented and are noted for their original social organization, environmental use, and leisure activities.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Mark Dike DeLancey, "Between Mosque and Palace Defining Identity through Ritual Practice in Ngaoundéré, Cameroon," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 52, (2012): 975-998.

<sup>7</sup>Artin Z. Njeuma, "The Foundations of Radical Islam in Ngaoundéré," in *Peuples et cultures de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun)*, eds. H. Adala and Boutrais Jean (Paris, France: ORSTOM, 1993), 87-101.

<sup>8</sup>Brookfield, "The Impacts of Education," 17.

<sup>9</sup>Linda Pamela Kamgne Kamwa and Maurice Tsalefac, "Processus d'intégration des migrants Mbororo à l'économie urbaine : Cas de Bafoussam et Dschang (Ouest-Cameroun)," *European Scientific Journal* 16, no. 17 (2020): 156.

<sup>10</sup>Assana Bello, "Guéréwòl: le Festival Mbororo-Wodaabe comme Source de l'Histoire et de Tourisme au Cameroun," *Revue Nzassa* 13 (2023): 458-471.

The greatest cultural manifestation of the Mbororo is the guéréwòl. This festival is one of the most important cultural events of the Mbororo culture. Indeed, during the celebration of this event, many events linked to the expression of culture are organized by the Mbororo in all its essence. Events take place, like camel races, herd parades, exhibitions, and Mbororo youth dance competitions. For a week, young men will participate in a beauty contest whose jury is made up of the most beautiful girls of the tribe, and on this occasion, the winners seduce the young girls to invite them to marriage.<sup>11</sup>

This all happens once a year. It is at the end of the rainy season that the Mbororo gather for six days and six nights for their cultural ceremony.<sup>12</sup> The Mbororo rite, far from being an act of initiation, training, and integration, allows us to retrace Mbororo history. Likewise, Guéréwòl is the perfect illustration of this, especially as it plays a role in integration in traditional societies. What makes this festival strong is not its intrinsic meaning or its practical effectiveness, nor the subjective security it brings. Rather, the fact that it transforms society strengthens the solidarity of the group that carries it out.<sup>13</sup>

Mbororo faithful to Islam are called Muslims and believe that Islam is the religion of Allah. Their worldview is based on the ritual practice enshrined in the Islamic tradition called Ibadat. Ibadat refers to Islamic jurisprudence and Muslim religious fiqh. Just as Islam is based on five foundations, the Mbororo Fulani live their faith according to these established pillars.

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<sup>11</sup>Assana Bello, "Guéréwòl: le Festival Mbororo-Wodaabe comme Source de l'Histoire et de Tourisme au Cameroun," *Revue Nzassa* 13 (2023): 458-471.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 469.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 470.

These pillars are shahadah (statements of faith), salat (praying five times a day), zakat (giving a part of its possessions), the sawm (Ramadan fast), and the Hajj (pilgrimage to the Kaaba in Mecca during the month of Dhu' l-Hijjah).<sup>14</sup> In addition to the pillars, the Mbororo, like other Muslims around the world, adhere to the fundamental beliefs taught by Islam. These beliefs support the core of the faith taught by Islam. Thus, the Mbororo believe in the Oneness of God (Allah), in Angels, in books, in the Prophet, and the Day of Judgment.

### **Localization of Mbé**

Mbé is a commune in Cameroon's Adamaoua region, located on National Road N°1 between Ngaoundéré and Garoua, and bordered to the North by Wack, South by Baadangré, East by Lake Mazéré, and West by the Bénoué. Its strategic position halfway between Adamaoua and the North region makes it a key location. Mbé village is also situated in the Sudanian phytogeographic domain, characterized by a mixed vegetation of low shrubs and taller trees, forming a combination of shrub savannah and wooded savannah within a 3000 km<sup>2</sup> area.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Almadina Safitri, Diva R. Alvina, and Nazwa R. Afifah, "The Five Pillars of Islam," *Jurnal Religion: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, dan Budaya* 1, no. 6 (2023): 446-452.

<sup>15</sup>Republic of Cameroun, *Plan Communal de Développement de Mbe* (Mbe, Cameroon: Mbe Council, June 2014), 20.

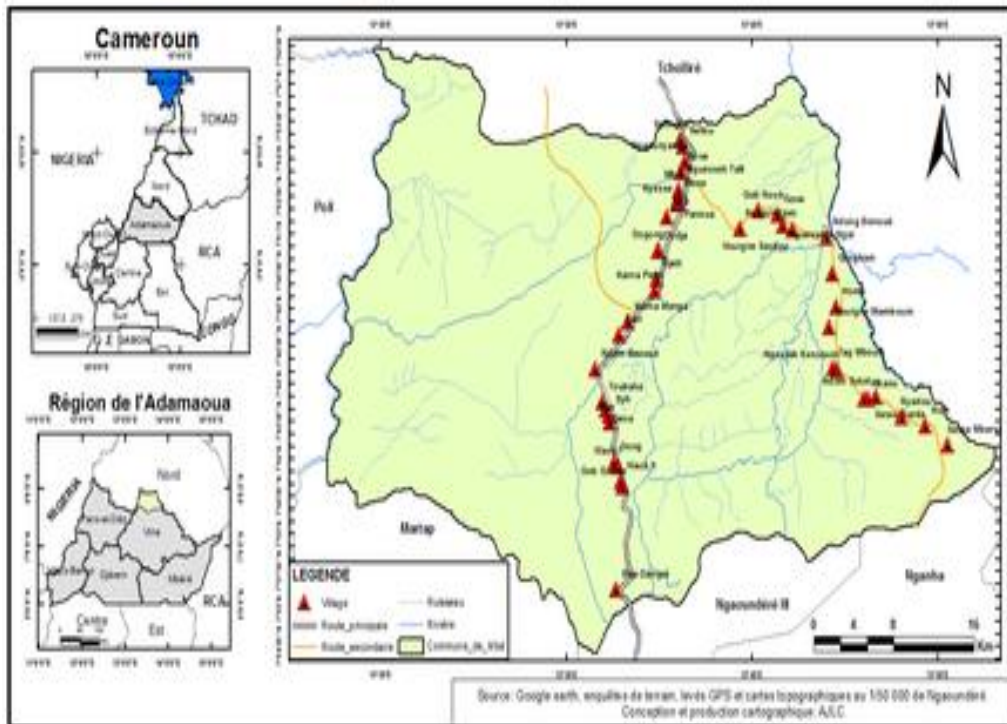


Figure 1. Map of Mbé Village

According to the 2013 municipal development plan, Mbé Village had 42,763 inhabitants with a density of 14 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>. Its attractive climate mainly attracts populations from the far North of Cameroon. It is mainly characterized by a dry season ranging from October to May and a rainy season spread over 5 months (May to September). The distribution of these seasons is determined by the two flows of air masses coming from:

- The Saharan or Libyan anticyclone: causing a cold and dry wind blowing from the northeast to the southwest, called Harmattan, which often reaches 19°C;

- The southern anticyclone or Saint Helena: at the origin of a hot and humid wind called monsoon wind because it causes rain, which often reaches 25°C.<sup>16</sup>

Generally speaking, the ethnic groups found in Mbé alongside the Dii natives are the Gbaya, the Guiziga, the Massa, the Toupouri, the Moufou, the Mada, the Mafa, the Moudang, and the Bororos. These populations live in perfect harmony in an active life. Thus, their main activities are agriculture, commerce, and livestock. The Mbororos, however, only have livestock as their main activity.

### **Religious Setting of Mbé**

Mbé as a whole has five approved religions established. These include the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (ELCC), the Catholic Mission, Islam, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Evangelical Church of Cameroon (CEC). In addition to these five religious congregations, a diversity of Awakened Church. All these different religions present in Mbé all work for the moral and spiritual rearmament of the populations.<sup>17</sup>

### **Research Approach and Design**

This study used a qualitative research approach that detailed participants' feelings, opinions, and experiences and interpreted the meaning of their actions. Qualitative research allowed researchers to uncover participants' inner experiences and understand how meanings were shaped across and within cultures.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Republic of Cameroun, *Plan Communal de Développement de Mbe* (Mbe, Cameroon: Mbe Council, June 2014), 22.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>18</sup>Md Shidur Rahman, "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Language "Testing and Assessment" Research: A Literature Review," *Journal of Education and Learning* 6, no. 1 (2016): 102.

The researcher collected qualitative data through in-depth interviews, participant observations, open-ended questions, and field notes.<sup>19</sup> Qualitative researchers alternated between data collection (e.g., interviews, focus groups) and data analysis.<sup>20</sup>

Qualitative research designs included phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative research.<sup>21</sup> However, this study employed phenomenology as a design. The researcher collected detailed information using various data collection procedures for two months to finalize this study.<sup>22</sup>

In-depth interviews used for this study as a Method. These were personal and unstructured interviews whose aim was to identify the participants' emotions, feelings, and opinions regarding the concept of Murtard and its socio-religious implications among the Mbororo Fulani of Mbe village.

The research design used in this study was phenomenology. The researcher described the participants' lived experiences regarding the concept of Murtad and its socio-religious implications as described by the participants.<sup>23</sup> In this study, the description summarized the essence of the experiences of many people who had experienced the same Murtad phenomenon among the Mbororo people.

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<sup>19</sup> Larry B. Christensen and R. Burke Johnson, *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2019), 161.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 42.

## Population and Sampling Procedure

### Population

In this research, the population studied was the Mbororo people of the village of Mbe. According to Jilcha Sileyew and Garg, this population represented the complete set of elements that the researcher would like to study and on which the researcher would like to conclude.<sup>24</sup> Defining the population in this study was a very important step in research design because it established the boundaries and scope of the study's findings.<sup>25</sup>

### Sampling

In this study, the sample would consist of a subset of Mbororo from Mbe village, selected for the study. This sample represented a smaller and more manageable number of Mbororo, which the researcher used to draw inferences about the entire population.<sup>26</sup> A sample of eight Mbororos was selected to participate in this study. These individuals were competent to collect information that was analyzed to conclude. The researcher was looking for a sample of men and women, middle-aged and 35 years old, to participate in the study. These were people known and unknown to the researcher.<sup>27</sup>

The researcher would recruit participants in person to answer interview questions during the group interview, which would last approximately 25 to 30

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<sup>24</sup>Nurhafizah Ahmad, Fadzilawani Astifar Alias, and Aina Abdul Razak, "Understanding Population and Sample in Research: Key Concepts for Valid Conclusions," SIG : e-Learning@CS (2023): 20.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>27</sup>Alex Casteel and Nancy Bridier, "Describing Populations and Samples in Doctoral Student Research," *International Journal reDoctoral Studies* 16 (2021): 339–62.

minutes. The researcher would interview eight respondents, who would notably be four Mbororo Muslims and also four MBBs. Because small participant research was the expected standard of qualitative research, such a small number allowed the researcher to understand the participants' experience better and develop a thick and rich description of this experience.

As I stated in the first chapter, the researcher recruited participants through purposive sampling, such as two masjid imams, two Muslim teachers, and four Muslim Background Believers (MBBs). The purposive sampling method was used to constitute the sample. According to this method, which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling techniques, the members of the sample are selected based on their knowledge and expertise concerning the concept of Murtaf.<sup>28</sup> Purposive sampling provided the researcher with an in-depth analysis of the understanding of the Murtaf concept being studied.<sup>29</sup>

### **Permissions from the Local Administration**

Before beginning my field research, researcher requested government permission from the Sub-divisional officer of the Mbé district. Once this permission was obtained, the researcher traveled to the village of Mbororo to meet with the village elder, who would be my first point of contact, and helped me conduct my research in the village. The village elder and researcher decided to visit Chief Mbororo, who, in turn, introduced researcher to the others for interviews, instead of entrusting him with the government's instructions regarding his mission.

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<sup>28</sup>Spyros Langkos, "Athens as an International Tourism Destination: An Empirical Investigation to the City's Imagery and the Role of Local DMO's," (M.Sc thesis, University of Derby, 2014), 6.

<sup>29</sup>Khim Raj Subedi, "Determining the Sample in Qualitative Research," *Scholars' Journal* 4 (2021): 5.

It should be noted, however, that the Mbororo were subdivided into clan communities, each based on an authority or chief, commonly called a "djaoro." This statement was based on my knowledge, as we lived together. Once the village djaoro has given its consent, all other arrangements would be made to carry out the research work. All these steps helped researcher build a strong relationship with the village chief, or djaoro. They helped establish complete trust and unwavering respect with him and all the villagers.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

In qualitative research, the data collection steps included gathering information through unstructured or semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and establishing the protocol for recording the information. The goal was to better understand individuals' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors.<sup>30</sup>

### **Interviews**

During the interviews, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with participants and, when this was not possible, by telephone. These interviews included a few unstructured, generally open-ended questions aimed at gathering their perspectives and opinions.<sup>31</sup>

The researcher had personal and direct contact with the interviewees (Participants), so he eliminated non-response rates, but he developed the skills necessary to conduct a successful interview.<sup>32</sup> The researcher conducted in-depth

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<sup>30</sup>John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 239.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Langkos, "Athens as an International Tourism Destination," 6.

face-to-face interviews with participants to explore respondents' perspectives, experiences, feelings, and behaviors in depth. The advantage of face-to-face interviews was that they took place in the participant's home, in an office, or in another suitable location.<sup>33</sup> This allowed the researcher to obtain information from the participants to better understand their experiences and challenges related to the concept of Murtad.

Additionally, the researcher conducted an unstructured, open-ended interview, recorded the interview, and transcribed the analysis into English, as the interview was conducted in French and Fulfulde, the local languages spoken. This study was carried out in the village of Mbé, city of Ngaoundéré, Cameroon. The population was composed of eight (8) Muslim Background Believers (MBB), aged 30 to 45, who have lived as Murtad, who was interviewed.

### **Focus Group Interview**

Collected deeper and more concreted data on perceptions, worldviews, ideas, attitudes, experiences, or beliefs. Focus groups were used to gather information from participants from different stakeholders. A focus group was defined as a qualitative data collection technique.<sup>34</sup> This focus group consisted of men and women who focused on a discussion of the concept of Murtad and its socio-religious implications among the Mbororo.

According to Denscombe, this focus group consisted of six participants, i.e., four AMBBs/non-Adventist MBBs men and two AMBBs/non-Adventist

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<sup>33</sup>P. Gill and J. Baillie, "Interviews and Focus Groups in Qualitative Research: An Update for the Digital Age," *British Dental Journal* 225, no. 7 (2018): 670.

<sup>34</sup>Rana Muhammad Dilshad and Muhammad Ijaz Latif, *Focus Group Interview as a Tool for Qualitative Research: An Analysis*," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 33, no. 1 (2013): 192.

MBBs women aged 45 to 50, with lived experience of Murtad, who was brought together by the researcher to study behaviors, worldviews, perceptions, feelings, and ideas about the concept of Murtad.<sup>35</sup>

### **Research Assistants**

The face-to-face focus groups were led by two researchers: a moderator (Researcher) and assistants. Research assistants were selected based on their good reputation within the Mbororo community and their knowledge of Islam. To establish a relationship of complete trust, these research assistants might be indigenous Mbororo Muslims, one man and one woman. These assistants would have easy access to information. The woman worked primarily with women, while the man worked with men.

The researcher facilitated group discussion, and the assistant monitored group dynamics, behaviors, non-verbal signs, and the order of speech, which was essential for transcription and analysis.<sup>36</sup> The researcher would plan the focus group and the research questions as a guide to ensure that everyone approached the topic with an interest.<sup>37</sup>

### **Data Recording**

As the researcher indicated above, two methods of data collection were used: in-depth individual or telephone interviews and focus group interviews. The researcher recorded the interview information by taking handwritten notes, audio

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<sup>35</sup>Rana Muhammad Dilshad and Muhammad Ijaz Latif, *Focus Group Interview as a Tool for Qualitative Research: An Analysis*, "Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences" 33, no. 1 (2013): 192.

<sup>36</sup> Gill and Baillie, "Interviews and Focus Groups in Qualitative Research," 671.

<sup>37</sup> Dilshad and Latif, "Focus Group Interview as a Tool for Qualitative Research," 192.

or video recording, and then finally transcribing it. Therefore, given the importance of the data to be collected, researcher began transcribing the recorded interviews. The collected data would then be translated from Fulfulde or French, the local languages, into English.

After translation, the researcher manually coded the collected data, coding the data by hand. Although hand coding was a laborious and time-consuming process, researchers used it because they were not very proficient with qualitative software, to help the researcher quickly organize, sort, and search for information in a text.<sup>38</sup> So researcher was going to go through each line of text and assign codes. Additionally, the researcher located all passages or segments of text coded in the same way and determined whether participants reacted similarly or differently to a coded idea. The researcher would then compare the different codes.<sup>39</sup>

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Before starting the analysis, the researcher checked the data to understand how the data was collected and reviewed it. For example, as the data consisted of interview transcripts, the researcher read and re-read the general content to understand and interpret it. The researcher organized the data so that it is more manageable and easier to navigate. The researcher grouped the data, including by date, by data type of collection (such as an interview, observation, and focus group), or by question asked.

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<sup>38</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 245.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 245.

The researcher analyzed a previously collected interview, write memoranda included in the final report, and organize the structure of the final report. For example, in data analysis, the researcher sifted the data, which consists of focusing on some data and neglecting others.<sup>40</sup>

The researcher coded all the data. Coding would be the process of organizing data using parentheses or segments of text. The researcher wrote a word that represents a category in the margins.<sup>41</sup> So, the researcher took the textual data collected during data collection, segmented sentences and paragraphs into categories, and labeled these categories with a term that was based on the actual language of the participant.<sup>42</sup>

The researcher used axial coding. This technique made it possible to produce categories and themes. This description involved a detailed account of information about people, places, or events. Thus, the researcher used coding to produce five to seven themes for this research study. The researcher used manual coding of participant data. Manual coding provided readers with sources, descriptions, and recommended applications.<sup>43</sup> Selective coding of the case study consisted of a detailed description of the Mbororo people in Mbe village, followed by data analysis for Murad's concept.

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<sup>40</sup>Creswell, *Research Design*, 245.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2013), 24.

Finally, researcher interpreted the findings or results. This interpretation would be personal and was superimposed on the understanding the researcher brought to the study based on culture, history, and experiences.

### **The Issues of Trustworthiness**

Pilot and Beck say that the trustworthiness of a study requires confidence in the data, interpretations, and techniques used to preserve the quality of a study.<sup>44</sup> In this study, the qualitative researcher collected valid data to obtain trustworthiness. However, as part of verifying the Trustworthiness of the data, the qualitative researcher used a triangulation Strategy, Credibility, Dependability, and Transferability of this study.

### **Triangulation Strategy**

Triangulation was defined as the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a global understanding of the phenomenon. It had also planned a qualitative research strategy for testing validity through the convergence of information from different sources.<sup>45</sup> In simple terms, triangulation means using multiple sources of information or procedures from the field to repeatedly establish identifiable information motives.<sup>46</sup> According to Kimchi and al, the qualitative

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<sup>44</sup>Lynne M Connelly, "Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research," *Medsurg Nursing* 25, no. 6 (2016): 435-436.

<sup>45</sup>Nancy Carter et al., "The Use of Triangulation in Qualitative Research," *Oncology Nursing Forum* 41, no. 5 (2014): 545-547, 10.1188/14.ONF.545-547.

<sup>46</sup>Norman A. Stahl and James R. King, "Understanding and Using Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Developmental Education* 44, no. 1 (2020): 26-28.

researcher used triangulation because they further combined three sources of data this would be the interview, Observation, and focus group.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, for Heale and Forbes, qualitative data was collected in more depth from three sources using the same methodology. Furthermore, the convergence between these methods guaranteed the validity of the results. According to Maxwell, triangulation reduced the risk that this study's conclusions were distorted by a single method.<sup>48</sup>

### **Credibility**

In this research study, the credibility of the qualitative data was ensured through data collection to ensure that the data was reliable. A qualitative researcher established credibility based on field experience, temporal sampling, a triangulation strategy, protocol interviews, and verification of respondents.<sup>49</sup> Verification of Respondents, also called respondent validation, was a qualitative research technique in which the researcher and study respondents collaborated to ensure the accuracy of the data.<sup>50</sup>

The credibility of the data in this study was ensured by multiple perspectives throughout data collection to ensure that the data findings were appropriate. This

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<sup>47</sup>Ramakrishnan Vivek, Yogarajah Nanthagopan, and Sarmatha Piriyaarshan, "Beyond Methods: Theoretical Underpinnings of Triangulation in Qualitative and Multi-Method Studies," *SEEU Review* 18, no. 2 (2023): 105–22.

<sup>48</sup>Márcio Moutinho Abdalla and Leonel Gois Lim A Oliveira, Carlos Eduar Do Franco Azevedo, and Rafa El Kura Moto Gonzalez, "Quality in Qualitative Organizational Research: Types of Triangulation as a Methodological Alternative," *Administração: Ensino e Pesquisa* 19, no. 1 (2018): 71.

<sup>49</sup>Vicent N. Anney, "Ensuring the Quality of the Findings of Qualitative Research: Looking at Trustworthiness Criteria," *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 5, no. 2 (2015): 276.

<sup>50</sup>Tor Slettebø, "Participant Validation: Exploring a Contested Tool in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Social Work* 20, no. 5 (2021): 1223–1238.

could be done through data, interviewers, or strategy triangulation and participant validation. Lincoln and Guba argue that “ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness.”<sup>51</sup>

### **Dependability**

Dependability was necessary when it comes to trustworthiness. Because the researcher established the research results in a manner consistent and reproducible. In this sense, the qualitative researcher sought to verify the consistency of the results with the raw data collected.<sup>52</sup>As a part of securing dependability, the researcher sent the transcript and initial results of data analysis to the interviewees. The researcher wanted to ensure that if certain researchers had examined the data, they had reached similar results, interpretations, and conclusions about the data. This is essential to ensure that nothing had been overlooked in the study and its final report.<sup>53</sup>

### **Transferability**

The researcher's task was to describe the respondents in detail. This allowed the reader to examine whether the results are transferable to their context. This means that it was the reader who judged it on its transferability. The researcher reported descriptive data like the context in which the research was conducted, the sample, sample size, sampling strategy, demographic characteristics, and interview protocol.

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<sup>51</sup>Andrew K. Shenton, "Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects," *Education for Information* 22, no 2 (2004): 63–75.

<sup>52</sup>Helen Noble and Joanna Smith, "Issues of Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research," *Evidence Based Nursing* 18, no. 2 (2015): 34–35.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Several authors address the importance of ethical considerations in qualitative research design.<sup>54</sup> Ethical considerations guided the researcher throughout the study. The researcher's task towards the participants was to warn them and help them avoid any type of harm. Participants in this qualitative research study were reassured that the information provided to the researcher would be kept confidential. Therefore, the information provided by participants had not been disclosed or given to anyone else. The participants, in turn, agreed to maintain the confidentiality of their informed consent and their comments on the results.

Before collecting data, the researcher obtained ethical clearance for the research project (theses) from AUA-ISERC. The role of AAU-ISERC in ethical approval involved considering the dignity, safety, rights, autonomy, benefits, justice, health, and well-being of both participants and the researcher.<sup>55</sup> As soon as a letter of introduction was obtained from the ethics committee of the AUA Institution to help obtain permission to conduct the study in the village of Mbe, all participants signed the form before being interviewed. Furthermore, the steps of ethical considerations were presented below:

### **Risk Assessment**

The researcher carefully assessed the risk of harm before participating in the study. The researcher also assured that there was no minimal risk. Thus, the researcher wrote in the proposal that there were no risks associated with participating in the research study. If the risk was minimal, the researcher had to specify this so that

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<sup>54</sup>Creswell, *Research Design*, 141.

<sup>55</sup>Adventist University of Africa, "Research Ethics Guidelines," accessed 28 April 2025, <https://www.aua.ac.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Read-the-Research-Ethics-Guidelines.pdf>.

the ethics committee and potential participants were aware of it. This could help the ethical review board and potential participants self-assess whether this risk was minimal.<sup>56</sup>

### **Informed Consent**

The researcher obtained informed consent from the participants in the research study. These participants were informed of what was required of them regarding the data to be provided to avoid consequences. Participants provided clear, active, signed consent to participate in the research study. Additionally, they understood their rights to access their information and their right to withdraw at any time. The informed consent process was considered a contract between the researcher and the participants. Participants were free to participate, without any influence from anyone, since the right to withdraw from the research was free.<sup>57</sup>

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The identity of the participants remained confidential or anonymous, and the guarantee extended beyond protecting their names from harm. Self-assessments and outcome information had not been published. Anonymity and confidentiality were very important to protect participants from potential harm during data collection. All significant research files remained confidential and anonymous and met acceptable ethical standards.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Safary Wa-Mbaleka, "Ethics in Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide," *Ethics in Qualitative Research* 22, no. 2 (2019): 123.

<sup>57</sup>Jenny Fleming and Karsten E. Zegwaard, "Methodologies, Methods and Ethical Considerations for Conducting Research in Work-Integrated Learning," *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, Special Issue* 19, no. 3 (2018): 205-213.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid*, 211.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the methodology for carrying out this research study. The approach was qualitative. The study used a phenomenological design. Data collection was done through interviews and focus groups. A total of eight (08) participants were interviewed, and 06 participants were in the focus group. Ethical considerations guided the researcher throughout the study. Ethical considerations protected participants, researchers, and the institution against any form of prejudice or suspicion.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PROPOSED STRATEGY

This chapter discussed the data analysis that followed the research questions, which include sub-questions. The logic for presenting the results answered these questions. The chapter showed the results of the data obtained during the field research to propose a strategy. A data analysis strategy was a plan describing how the missionary would use the data to make better decisions regarding the mission to the cousins.

This research could contribute to academic work in missiology. The data obtained in the field could help the Church of Christ understand the traditional view of the concept of Murtad and its socio-religious implications. It would be useful for missionary work among the Mbororo Fulani and all Muslims. Question guides were written in Fulfulde to facilitate targeted data collection and were used for the interviews. Their preparation was essential given the lack of an official research language for data collection.

This was the only way to prepare them, particularly to ensure the objectivity of the interviews the researcher conducted with mosque imams, Qur'anic course teachers, and MBBs, all of whom were available and enthusiastically agreed to be interviewed. MBBs were more willing to provide all the necessary information without taking any risks, especially since they were no longer part of their former Muslim brothers.

The logic of the prepared questionnaires aimed to provide a traditional understanding or interpretation of the concept of Murtad and the socio-religious implications of the cases as applied by the Mbororo people concerning the punishment meted out to those who abandon Islam. Participants reframed their knowledge of the cases studied in light of the teachings of the Maliki Sunni Islamic School, as described in the "Literature Review" section of Chapter Three. These questionnaires also aimed to understand why and how the Mbororo of Mbé village apply this concept to those who abandon Islam for Christianity.

In light of the research questions, we addressed the main categories and themes to be analyzed, including: participant descriptions; data collection and analysis process; the concept of Murtad among the Mbororo of Mbé; traditional understanding of the concept of Murtad; punishment of Murtad; missiological interpretation; the concept of Murtad and its socio-religious implications among the Mbororo of Mbé; proposed strategy; and a summary.

### **Description of Participants**

Regarding the data, they were collected in the field using two research methods: interviews and focus groups. The researcher emphasized that an intentional sampling of participants was favored to select the most appropriate participants for the interviews. These participants come from two groups: practicing Muslims and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), all residing in the village of Mbé, in the city of Ngaoundéré, Cameroon. The participants are divided into two categories according to their gender, age, and experience with the concept of Murtad. Eight participants were interviewed, six men and two women.

Among the Participants, women were fewer in number than men, as they were more likely to take the initiative to leave Islam or decide the fate of an apostate. They

were only subject to pressure from their husbands and only followed their decisions. Thus, the population included a young married woman and a middle-aged widow. On the men's side, they were in the majority. There were six men, namely two mosque imams, one Arabic course teacher, and three MBBs. All belong to a middle-aged group.

Indeed, the eight respondents, namely six men and two women, had perfect knowledge of the Islamic religion, because they were and had all been Muslims by birth. Thus, among the three MBBs men interviewed, there was one Mbororo Protestant pastor, responsible for preaching only to the MBBs Mbororo Daneeji; two MBBs were volunteer Protestant missionaries among the Mbororo, having mastered Islam in the locality. The other three respondents are Muslims who declared themselves Sunni Muslims by birth and adhere to the teachings of Imam Maliki.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Process**

The primary objective of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of the Mbororo Daneeji regarding their traditional understanding and application of the concept of Murtad, and to examine its socio-religious implications in the lives of the Mbororo of Mbé village. Data processing was done manually. The entire process of collecting, sorting, theming, and other logical operations was performed manually, without the aid of electronic software. It was an inexpensive method that required few or no tools, but it was prone to errors, incurred high labor costs, and was time-consuming.

However, data analysis used a coding system to generate several themes or categories for this study. The codes were then grouped into broader themes or categories, capturing the meaning of the data. Thematic analysis proved particularly useful for exploring the phenomena of Murtad and subjectivism, as well as

understanding how Mbororos interpret and make sense of their experiences. Coding was a fundamental aspect of the analytical process.<sup>1</sup> Through coding, researcher were able to break down their data to generate new insights and understandings. Code names had to be concise and representative of the data to be represented. Each code corresponded to a unit of meaning, a recurring pattern, or anything the researcher began to identify in the data as an independent unit of analysis.<sup>2</sup>

These themes emerged from the main findings obtained during the field interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify, categorize, and interpret trends and themes in the qualitative data. It allowed for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, perspectives, and narratives, going beyond a superficial analysis. Beyond identifying themes during coding, researchers could leverage these themes to create additional levels of complex analysis.<sup>3</sup>

When developing the themes for the field interviews, the data collected during the group interviews were grouped under several codes. Data collection was carried out using a telephone recorder. Two research assistants facilitated my task during data collection through their skills, which facilitated their integration into the collection. The recorded data were transcribed from Fulfulde, the local language, into English for analysis. Data processing was performed manually, as described previously.

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<sup>1</sup>Alexios Brailas, Elena Tragou, and Konstantinos Papachristopoulos, "Introduction to Qualitative Data Analysis and Coding with QualCoder," *American Journal of Qualitative Research* 7, no. 3 (2023): 22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>3</sup>Creswell, *Research Design*, 249.

## **Research Questions**

Developing research questions was essential in qualitative research. They guide the investigation, clarify its scope, and ensure a clear direction. They helped define the problem, identify relevant information, and make the research process more efficient and appropriate. These were the primary questions the researcher aimed to address in this study, which helped him focus his research and achieve his objectives.<sup>4</sup>

This study focused on three main research questions. Questions 1 and 2 each included five to six sub-questions. Question 3 does not include any sub-questions. Therefore, the field results presented the data analysis and the themes that emerged. The results of each research question were analyzed and interpreted based on the questions developed chronologically.

### **The Concept of Murtad among the Mbororo People of Mbé**

The first research question of this study was “What is the traditional and theological understanding of the concept of Murtad (apostasy) among the Mbororo people in Mbé, Ngaoundéré City, Cameroon? It was segmented into four sub-questions. This first research question aimed to examine the understanding, interpretation, and traditional application of the concept of Murtad by the Mbororo people concerning the teachings of the Sunni Maliki school of Islam. It prompted him to formulate the first sub-question: “What is Murtad and how is it manifested in Islam?” To this end, an in-depth individual interview and a focus group discussion were used to collect the data.

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<sup>4</sup> Monash University, “Developing Your Research Questions,” accessed 24 June 2025, <https://www.monash.edu/library/help/assignments-research/developing-research-questions>.

To better understand this concept of Murtaḍ among Mbororo Muslims, a purposive sampling of middle-aged participants with some knowledge of Islamic teachings was carried out. These were Mbororo Muslims, including mosque imams, Arabic teachers, and MBBs. They were better positioned to discuss the internal practice of this phenomenon and the challenges they regularly encounter.

However, eight (8) middle-aged participants, including six (6) men and two (2) women, were interviewed. The questions focused more on the punishment and death penalty applied to apostates following the teachings of the Sunni Maliki School and on the issue of religious freedom. For this reason, respondents were asked to describe the traditional understanding of the concept of Murtaḍ recommended by Islam and to share their lived experience with this phenomenon.

### **The Traditional Understanding of the Concept of Murtaḍ**

This section addresses research question 1: What is the traditional and theological understanding of the concept of Murtaḍ (apostasy) among the Mbororo of Mbé, in the city of Ngaoundéré, Cameroon? The answer, based on the data collected, sheds light on the traditional and theological understanding of this concept.

The imams of the mosques were interviewed about what Murtaḍ was and how it manifests itself in their traditional context. All the imams first responded by defining in their own words what they meant by the word or concept of Murtaḍ. According to IMR 1 (Imam Mosque Respondent one), Murtaḍ is divided into two categories, saying: "First, he was the one who, during a gathering, publicly expresses before the community, during a prayer in the mosque, his desire to reject Islam, and intends to prostrate himself before an idol and/or, the one who throws a Quran in a dirty place.

Second, one who believed, then disbelieved, then believed again, then disbelieved again, and increased in disbelief; Allah would not forgive them nor guide them to a (straight) path (Tumma amanu tumma kafaru tumma zdadu kufran). Thus, traditionally, the Murtad was the one who publicly declared his disbelief before the Ummah (community) during a prayer at the mosque. Muslims consider this act a challenge to Islam and its prophet.”

The IMR 2 (Imam Mosque Respondent two) confirmed this statement by saying that: “We traditionally consider the Murtad to be an enemy of Allah, Islam, the Quran, the Prophet, and all Muslims. He rebelled against Allah by abandoning prayer, often throwing the Quran in a dirty place, backbiting the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and insulting all Muslims. He was the one who publicly declared before the Ummah that he had joined disbelief. It was he whose death the Prophet recommends.”

PMBBR (Pastor Muslim Background Believer Respondent) adds that the apostate (Murtad) was no longer considered the same man by Muslims in general and by the Mbororos in particular. The apostate (Murtad) was a pagan; he no longer had a religion, he was an enemy of Allah, and he was useless, especially if he converted to Christianity.

### **A Lost Person**

For some Mbororo Muslims, the Murtad was traditionally considered a lost person or someone who had strayed from the straight path, or someone who had rejected his faith and become irreligious, even if he was born into a Muslim family or had already accepted Islam, especially if he had adhered to Christianity, he is a lost person.

MBBP 1 (Muslim Background Believer Participant One) confirms that:

*"Haa Mbororo 'en, mo acci diina Islama, nasti masiiha lutti laawol darningol jey o fini o tawi, e o nasti keereraaku, laawol majeere. O majuudo!"* (For Mbororo Muslims, a Murtad was someone who abandons Islam, the original religion of peace into which they were born, and embraces Christianity or paganism, a path that leads to perdition. They therefore consider him a being who had strayed from the straight path (al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaḳīm).<sup>5</sup>

In interpreting these Qur'anic verses, in his *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* (Collection of Statements on the Interpretation of Verses of the Quran), Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī argued that those who follow the straight path are Muslims.<sup>6</sup> To illustrate this point of view, let us mention the text of the Qur'an, which says: "And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger – those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs, and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions."<sup>7</sup>

As for "those on whom the wrath of Allah is exercised," it specifies that these are those described in the Qur'an, which says: Say: "Shall I inform you of the worst punishment from Allah? The one whom Allah has cursed, the one who has incurred His wrath, those whom He has made into apes and pigs, and even the one who worships Taghut (false gods, idols, demons, misguided belief) - these are the worst places and the most astray from the straight path."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>"The Qur'an, Saheeh International, surah Fatiha 6-7".Ihdina al-ssirata al-mustaḳīma. Sirata al-ladina an amta alayhim gayri al-magdubi alayhim wa la al-ddallina (Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom you have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray).

<sup>6</sup>Mohammed Gamal Abdelnour, "The Straight Path (al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaḳīm)," St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology, first published 1 August 2024, <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/TheStraightPath.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>"The Qur'an, Surah Al-Nisa 4:69.

<sup>8</sup>"The Qur'an, Surah Al-Ma'ida 5:60.

Abū al-Fiḍā' Imād al-Dīn, Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr, stated in his Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm (Interpretation of the Noble Qur'an) that the only straight path is Islam. Therefore, the Murtad was the one who had abandoned this straight path, which was Islam. MBBP 1 (Muslim Background Believer Participant One) attests that this was why they did everything possible to bring back the misguided apostates to Islam. However, they inflicted punishment on all those who persisted in their so-called disbelief.

Moreover, whether a person who converts from Islam to Christianity is “lost” depends entirely on his or her theological and religious perspective. From the Mbororo perspective, an apostate is considered to have renounced God and their religion, which for them constitutes a serious act, likely to lead to religious and potentially legal consequences. In contrast, for Christianity, this person, considered lost by Mbororo Muslims, is deemed to have found the truth and the path to salvation in Jesus Christ. Eternal life is reserved for those who know God and those who have Jesus Christ.

### **The Betrayer**

In Islam, betrayal was a serious act considered disobedience to Allah and his teachings. According to Islamic teachings, it demonstrated a lack of faith and scruples, as well as moral weakness on the part of the person who committed it. Among Muslims, and the Mbororo in particular, becoming a Christian is considered an act of betrayal.

However, the Murtad is therefore perceived as a betrayer. PMBBP (Pastor Muslim Background Believer Participant) reports that: “Murtad, among the Mbororos, was considered the one who betrayed the Muslim faith by abandoning light

for darkness. He betrayed the Mbororo family, the Muslim religion, and its prophet Muhammad (SAW), as well as all Muslims.”

IMP 2 (Imam Mosque Participant Two) attests that: “the Murtad is the one who betrays Allah and His Messenger. Allah does not like ungrateful traitors. A good believer must not betray Allah and His Messenger.” To support his argument, he cites the following passages from the Qur’an: “Ya-ayyuha al-ladina amanu la tahunu al-lahu wa al-rrasula wa tahunu amanatikum wa antum ta’lamuna (O you who believe! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger. Do not knowingly betray the trust placed in you).<sup>9</sup> Inna al-laha yudafi’u ani al-ladina amanu inna al-laha la yuhibbu kulla hawwanin kafurin (Allah protects the believers. Allah does not like ungrateful traitors).<sup>10</sup> Inna al-laha la yuhibbu al-ha’inina (Allah does not like betrayers.)”<sup>11</sup>

In this context, Murtad was traditionally regarded by the Mbororos and all Muslims as a betrayer whom Allah hates. Then, IMP 2 (Imam Mosque Participant Two) asks: "What can we do with someone whom Allah hates? He is a sworn enemy, and we must take appropriate action against him at all costs."

Ultimately, claiming that leaving one religion for another constitutes "betrayal" is complex. From the perspective of Mbororo Muslims, anyone who leaves Islam for another religion is considered a traitor. From a Christian perspective, changing religion is not seen as betrayal, but rather as a quest for faith, an act of freedom of conscience, and a search for God. In terms of evaluation, the term "betrayal" is subjective and depends on the religious perspective.

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<sup>9</sup>*The Qur’an, Saheeh International.*

<sup>10</sup>“The Qur’an, Surah Al-Hajj 22:38.

<sup>11</sup>“The Qur’an, Al-Anfal 8:58.

## **A Kafir/Munafiq (disbeliever)**

The Murtaḍ is considered a kafir by the Mbororos and all Muslims. The term kafir refers to a disbeliever, a person who does not believe in Allah and his prophet Muhammad, or who rejects the teachings of Islam. The ACTP (Arabic Class Teacher Participant) specifies in this term that "the Kafir rejects or denies the Muslim faith for others, which is often associated with the idea of divine punishment and eternal perdition." To support his point, he quotes the Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran 3:85, which says: "And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter, he will be among the losers."

According to IMP 1 (Imam Mosque Participant one), "the Kafir is the one who denies and refuses to practice the five pillars recommended by Islam, namely:

Shahada (Faith), the profession of faith in one God (Allah) and His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). 2. Salat (Prayer) Ritual prayer is obligatory for every Muslim five times a day throughout their life. 3. Zakat (Alms): Giving part of one's wealth to the needy throughout one's life. 4. Sam (Fasting) Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. 5. Hajj (Pilgrimage) The pilgrimage to Mecca is obligatory for every Muslim at least once in their life, if the place falls under their jurisdiction."<sup>12</sup>

These pillars of Islam are fundamental duties that every Muslim is required to fulfill to serve as a guide and reference for their religion. They were taught from a very early age so that Mbororos and all Muslims could better understand and practice them daily. Moreover, they constituted the foundation of the faith of the Mbororos and every Muslim, and might be constantly practiced to preserve their faith throughout their lives. But whoever rejects these pillars becomes a disbeliever (Kafir), an enemy of Islam and its Messenger."

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<sup>12</sup> Safitri, Alvina, and Afifah, "The Five Pillars of Islam," 446-452.

Analyzing this, almost all Mbororos consider non-Muslims to be disbelievers (kuffar). However, the Noble Qur'an distinguishes the "People of the Book" (Jews and Christians) from other non-Muslims, and their status is more nuanced, although the term "disbeliever" is sometimes used. The interpretation of disbelief varies among individuals and schools of thought, and the history of Islam is marked by relationships of fairness and benevolence towards non-Muslims.

### **Murtad, a Rebel.**

During the field survey, when the researcher asked the respondents what the traditional understanding of the concept of Murtad was, some respondents unanimously stated that Murtad referred to a person who was rebellious against Islam. WMP 1 (Woman Mbororo Participant one) said: "Among the Mbororos, Murtad was considered someone who rebelled against what he knew to obtain what he did not know (he rebelled against Islam for another religion). Whoever rebels against Islam is a disbeliever without religion. Whoever is without religion is cursed by Allah; keep away from him."

IMP 2 (Imam Mosque Participant two) confirmed this by saying: "Islamic teaching informs us that abandoning Islam and adhering to Christianity was an act of rebellion against Islam." WMP 2 (Mbororo Woman Participant Two) testified to this by stating that: "a Murtad was a troublemaker or a disruptor of the Islamic faith. Every Muslim might avoid him at all costs so as not to turn away certain believers or incite them to rebel against Islam."

ACTP (Arabic Class Teacher Participant) points out that in Islam, a Murtad was a "rebel," muharib in Arabic. This person rebelled against the legitimate authority of a Muslim leader or opposed the Muslim community during a prayer meeting. Thus,

the term "rebel" can also apply to a person who committed acts of violence or treason against the Muslim community.”

Furthermore, ACTP claimed that even in the Holy Quran, rebellion was primarily manifested in the rejection of revealed truth and opposition to God's prophets and messengers. To support his claim, he cited the rebellion of Iblis in the Qur'an, who refused to bow down to Adam. The Qur'an reported that it was said: “Wa'id qulna li-l-mala'ikati sjudu li-adama fa-sajadu illa iblisa aba wa stakbara wa kana mina al-kafirina. (Then we said to the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam!" They prostrated themselves, except Iblis, who refused and became arrogant and was one of the disbelievers.)<sup>13</sup>

To this end, according to IMP 1, “the Murtad followed in the footsteps of Iblis, the footsteps of rebellion. Whoever follows in the footsteps of the Devil is a rebel. When a Mbororo Muslim turns away from Allah, he is under his influence and drawn into corruption and rebellion.”

It is worth noting that among Mbororo Muslims, apostasy is an act of "rebellion." This perspective can be analyzed from both religious and social perspectives. From a religious perspective, rebellion is a resistance to God's authority and a refusal to obey Him, a refusal that can be internal or external. However, is becoming a Christian or accepting Christ a symbol of disobedience or rebellion against God? Far from it! Rather, it is an act of faith and obedience. It is the choice to follow Christ's teachings, to find meaning in life, and to trust in Him.

From a social perspective, an apostate is perceived by the Mbororos as a rebel because of his rejection of his community and cultural identity. However, belonging

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<sup>13</sup>“The Qur’an, Surah Al-Baqara 2: 34, and Surah Ta-Ha 20:116.

to a religion does not automatically mean rejecting one's community, but rather integrating into it to incorporate a new perspective of belief while preserving one's culture and new identity.

### **Theological Understanding of the Concept of Murtad (Apostasy)**

The theological understanding of Murtad (apostasy, or ridda in Arabic) in Islam is a complex subject that is subject to numerous interpretations within different schools of thought. The Quran addresses the issue of apostasy in several verses, without, however, specifying any earthly punishment. It simply warns apostates of the punishment that awaits them in the hereafter.<sup>14</sup> Several Quranic verses (Surah Al-Baqarah:108 and Surah An-Nisa:167) describe apostates as having strayed from the right path; one verse describes them as having been seduced by Satan,<sup>15</sup> and another warns them that they cannot hope for God's forgiveness.<sup>16</sup>

The Qur'an also informs us that apostates will suffer either the wrath of Allah<sup>17</sup> or the curse of God and the angels.<sup>18</sup> Some Quranic verses dealing with apostasy emphasize the punishment that will be inflicted upon apostates in the hereafter. Among these verses, some explicitly contemplate the natural death of apostates in their state of unbelief, thus avoiding any mention of a specific earthly punishment for their unbelief.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ali Akbar, "The Classical Islamic Laws of Apostasy in the Present Context," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 12, no. 6 (2018): 667.

<sup>15</sup>Surah Muhammad 47:25.

<sup>16</sup>Surah An-Nisa 4. 137.

<sup>17</sup> Surah An-Nuhl 16.106.

<sup>18</sup> Surah Al-Imran 3. 87.

<sup>19</sup>Akbar, "The Classical Islamic Laws of Apostasy in the Present Context," 667.

For example, the Qur'an states: "Those of you who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers - their deeds will be in vain in this world and the Hereafter, and they will abide eternally in the company of the Fire."<sup>20</sup> It is noteworthy that the Arabic word used in the quoted verse is "fa-yamūt," indicating natural death, not murder. Only one Qur'anic verse mentions that apostates will be punished in this life and the Hereafter<sup>21</sup> (9:74), but it does not specify the nature of the punishment inflicted by God upon apostates in this life, thus only emphasizing that apostasy is a sin. This verse also seems to indicate that apostates should be punished only by God, and not by men.

The theological understanding of the term "Murtad" (apostasy) is the act of turning away from Islam and converting to another religion. According to classical Islamic law, a Muslim is considered an apostate when he pronounces or destroys a copy of the Quran, humiliates the Prophet, insults him or an angel, or abandons basic Islamic ritual obligations such as prayer and fasting.<sup>22</sup> To conclude from the Qur'anic verses dealing with the issue of apostasy that the Qur'an condemns abandoning Islam and warns against such an error, but does not prescribe any earthly punishment for apostasy, much less the death penalty.

### **Murtad's Punishment**

This section addresses research question 2: What social, cultural, economic, and legal challenges do the Mbororo face when they choose to leave Islam or convert

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<sup>20</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah 217, 161-162; Surah Al-Imran 91; Surah Al-Ma'ida 5; Surah Al-Gachiyah 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> Surah Al-Tawbah 74.

<sup>22</sup> Akbar, "The Classical Islamic Laws of Apostasy in the Present Context," 1.

to Christianity? This question deals with the sanctions imposed on Mbororo who wish to leave Islam for Christianity.

All the men interviewed affirmed that "Islamic jurisprudence requires that all apostates (Murtad), those who abandoned Islam, be punished by death. However, most of those interviewed maintain that this punishment stems solely from the hadiths. MBBP 3 (Muslim Background Believer Participant Three) confirmed this by stating that the Mbororo and Muslims in general, to justify the acts against the Murtad, systematically cited this hadith reported by 'Umar ibn Hafsh, according to my father, and by Al-A'masy, according to 'Abdullah ibn Murrah, according to Masruq. Masruq cites Abdullah, according to whom the Prophet Muhammad revealed:

The life of a Muslim who testifies that there is no god but Allah and acknowledges that I am the Messenger of Allah will not be taken, except in three cases: murder, marital adultery, apostasy (Murtad) from the religion, and separation from the Muslim community.

MBBP 3 (Muslim Background Believer Participant Three) added that "Murtad is therefore considered a grave sin in the Islamic religion, as it undermines the religious and social order. Therefore, the above hadith requires that a Murtad be punished with imprisonment, confiscation of property, and the death penalty. All Islamic schools agreed that, for the preservation of the Islamic religion, Murtad deserved the death penalty."

### **Imprisonment, Beatings**

When the researcher questioned his interviewees about the reality of Murtad's imprisonment and beatings among the Mbororo, the three Muslim Background Believers Participants confirmed it. For MBBP 1 (Muslim Background Believer One), he testified to this reality by sharing his conversion experience:

"If Isa Almasiih's grace had not been enough for me, I was allegedly killed by my Muslim brothers when the researcher abandoned Islam. I was arrested at night and taken to the village chief, the supreme leader of all imams. That same night, I walked five kilometers barefoot, and they violently beat me and forced me to convert to Islam. When I arrived at the chief's house, he ordered that I be taken to the Grand Imam of the Al-Jumu'ah (Friday) Mosque. When I arrived at this imam's house, he ordered that I be tied up and imprisoned for three days.

It was a Tuesday evening, the ropes tightened around my arms and feet, and the sticks danced dangerously over my body, morning, noon, and night, forcing me to return to Islam. Thanks to Isa Almasiih, I was able to miraculously escape on Thursday morning, just as the imam was being buried. He died early that same morning, while I was imprisoned in one of his huts."

The PMBBP (Pastor Muslim Background Believer Participant) testifies that Murdad was beaten if he was arrested. He says, "When I left Islam, it was not easy at all. He miraculously escaped flogging. But I saw with my own eyes how one of his brothers, with whom we had left Islam together, was flogged, forcing him to return to Islam or face death. At that moment, my mother, seeing this, wept and said: "What a shame! What a shame! It would be better for me to learn of my son's death than to learn that he has become Murdad and thus escape corporal punishment. Perhaps by beating him, he would change his mind and return to Islam."

WMP 1 (Woman Muslim Participant one) adds that "among us Mbororos, Murdad is physically punished: beaten, tied with ropes, imprisoned, and deprived of food until he converts to Islam. All this is done to bring Murdad back to the right path and prevent him from going astray. If, despite all the punishments inflicted on him, he

persists on the path to perdition, and given the law in force in the country, Murtad is today purely and banished from the Mbororo clan, and even from his family.”

However, according to WMP 2, Murtad's punishments do not apply to all age groups. She explains: "Among us Mbororos, punishments such as whipping, imprisonment, and/or threats do not apply to all age groups. The punishments inflicted on women, children, and adults are not the same. Children who express their refusal to believe in Islam are whipped and imprisoned for several days without food until they regain their senses."

Furthermore, WMR 2 adds to make the difference by saying that: "The punishment of adults is carried out in two ways: by a pure Mbororo code (Pulaaku) or by war (Kuunyu) in case of refusal of the Pulaaku. As soon as they learn that a Mbororo has apostatized, his brothers mobilize to find peaceful solutions. They call other Muslims for reinforcement in case the apostate hardens and questions the religion. Women are "held hostage." They must be beaten every three days to bring them back to Islam. This exception justifies.”

Finally, according to Islamic tradition, a Murtad must be imprisoned for three days, in the hope that his change of attitude and conversion to Islam will benefit him; failing this, he must be executed. Similarly, the Jama'a Sagheer reports that an apostate must explain his faith and, if he rejects it, he must be executed.<sup>23</sup> The fact that he must be imprisoned for three days simply means that if the Murtad requests a reprieve, he will be granted three days, which is generally accepted and permitted for review purposes.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Samuel Marinus Zwemer, *The Law of Apostasy in Islam Answering The Question Why there are so Few Moslem Converts, and Giving Examples of their Moral Courage and Martyrdom* (London: Marshall Brothers, 2019), 147.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

It is therefore out of concern not to lose a loved one, to preserve the image of religion, to preserve the identity of the community, and to remain faithful to the principles of religion that the Mbororos resort, as religion imposes on them, to imprisonment and whipping against apostates to bring them back to Islam and keep them there. Ultimately, it must be known that imprisonment and mistreatment of apostates should not be considered a "normal" means of bringing back those who have chosen to adhere to a religion. Adhering to a religion is a matter of freedom of conscience and expression, rejecting all forms of repression.

### **Confiscation of Property, Wives, and Children**

All participants affirm that Islamic law recommends confiscation of the Murtad's assets. WMP 2 (Woman Muslim Participant two) supports this idea by arguing that: "to be fair, Murtad carries civil consequences such as denial of a Muslim burial, dissolution of marriage, and confiscation of the apostate's and their children's assets. The assets are seized, and a portion is paid to the apostate's Muslim relatives if they are alive; otherwise, the Islamic State is responsible for everything."

The PMBBP, for its part, stated: "If the apostate is arrested, he would be tied up and beaten mercilessly with sticks, forcing him to return to Islam. If he refuses, all his property, wives, and children will be confiscated and handed over to the Islamic State or his family." Regarding the confiscation of Murtad's property, some scholars have demonstrated that Murtad's property, which he had amassed before his act of apostasy, and if he became Murtad, his property would revert to the Muslims.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ayad Kamil Ibrahim Al-Zeebaree, "Apostate's Rules from the Perspective of AlZulmi as a Fundamentalist Approach," *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2023): 22 <https://doi.org/10.58256/0n476z73>.

To describe what is observed, the confiscation of the property, wives, and children of apostates by the Muslim community represents a major challenge for the mission. Being suddenly separated from their property and families plunges the Mbororo into deep reflection. What will become of me without my family, without my possessions? Sending the mission to an Mbororo without considering his entire family is tantamount to putting him in difficulty in his new faith.

### **Banishment of Murtad**

In the Mbororo Muslim context, banishment is a form of punishment that involves excluding the Murtad from his community and family, and often even from his homeland. The ACTP (the Arabic class Teacher Participant) confirms this point by stating: "A Mbororo born into the Muslim faith to Muslim parents who voluntarily decide to abandon Islam and become non-believers no longer has a place within the Muslim community. He will be banished not only from his Mbororo family but also from Islamic society. One cannot live with a rebellious or deceased person; it would be better to banish him."

Furthermore, the ACTP (Arabic Class Teacher Participant) emphasizes that "although banishment is not always prescribed by Sharia law, it is applied in certain circumstances to publicly humiliate and punish the Murtad and preserve Islam and the Islamic social order. For we, who belong to the Maliki School, consider banishment or exclusion of the Murtad from the community or family as an ideal punishment inflicted in countries where the law prohibits execution or murder, such as our country, Cameroon."

The analysis of the banishment of the apostate among some Mbororo is based on a traditional interpretation, which implies the exclusion of the apostate from the family and from the whole of Islamic society. This banishment is based on certain

hadiths and on reformist currents which emphasize the freedom of conscience enshrined in the Quran, notably the verse "No compulsion in religion."<sup>26</sup>

The Mbororo feel deep pain at the thought of banishing an apostate Mbororo Muslim. This phenomenon is considered abnormal, as it is a complex and controversial issue, devoid of any Qur'anic basis and contested by religious texts. Although the Qur'an does not mention any punishment for apostates, a controversial hadith attributes this responsibility to the Prophet Muhammad, which contradicts Qur'anic principles. Analyses suggest that apostasy should be a personal matter between the individual and God, without any civil or physical sanctions.

### **Death Penalty**

When the Researcher asked his Participants if the death penalty for apostates was applicable today among the Mbororo Fulani, they all confirmed: "Yes, it is applicable, because the prophet says: whoever changes religion, kill him." To justify these claims, IMR 1 confirms by stating that "Any Muslim who publicly declares his rejection of Islam before the community, during prayer or a gathering, and who joins disbelief and worships idols, must be executed immediately and without mercy in the mosque itself."

Furthermore, IMP1 (Imam Mosque Participant one) adds: "He must be killed to preserve the image of Islam and, at the same time, to obey the Sunnah of the Prophet, which recommends killing anyone who abandons Islam. However, given the country's law, which condemns murder, this penalty is not applied publicly." For more details, IMP 2 (Imam Mosque Participant Two) attests that "under such circumstances, Murtad's head will be cut from front to back with a knife. If he is not

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<sup>26</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah 2. 256.

killed, he risks divulging the secrets of Islam and denigrating Islam, the Quran, and the Prophet to non-Muslims by claiming to know everything, and they will believe him."

Moreover, according to IMR 1, the Murtad risks inciting many Muslims to disbelief and could even provoke violence against Islam. If he happens to throw the Qur'an in a dirty place or insult the Prophet, it means he has launched a war against all Muslims and their Prophet. In retaliation, he must be killed before his time. But before killing him, he is given a chance to convert. He is warned that after three or four prostrations, he must be seen performing his ablutions for prayer, or he will be killed.

In addition, IMP 1 (Imam Mosque Participant one) continued to report that: "The Murtad is then surrounded by sentries who guard him so that he cannot escape. If, after three or four prostrations, he persists in his attempt to abandon Islam, he will be killed with machetes or long knives. Subsequently, the punishment of Allah will be inflicted on him in the Hereafter. Allah will not forgive him nor guide him to the straight path. Such is the one who believed, then disbelieved, then believed again, then disbelieved again, and has only increased his disbelief. Even if Allah punishes him in the Hereafter and the Muslims arrest him in this world, he will be punished with death, for he has only increased his disbelief."

All MBBs (Muslim Background Believers) were also interviewed about this to understand the extent of the phenomenon. They stated: "The death penalty for apostates is a reality among the Mbororo and all Muslims in general. Since the law of our country prohibits murder, they practice it in secret, by poisoning and by the power of the jinn, for fear of being prosecuted by the country's law."

For more details, PMBBR shares a real-life experience. “Last time, we intervened to save a Mbororo woman from Tcholire, who abandoned Islam and decided to follow Jesus as her lord and savior. Her Muslim brothers wanted to kill her, and we took her into hiding in the town of Tibati for her safety. Similarly, we rescued a young Mbororo boy from Bertoua, a believer in Jesus, who had abandoned Islam, and transferred him to Ngaoubela for his safety. His Muslim brothers nearly killed him. All were persecuted and narrowly escaped death because they believed in Jesus and wanted to follow him by converting to Christianity.”

It should be noted that the death penalty in Mbororo Muslim communities requires a nuanced approach, taking into account pressures related to religious interpretations, sociocultural traditions, and political and social dynamics. It is crucial to avoid generalizations, as the death penalty is not a universal practice among the Mbororo, as it is in any other community facing these complex issues.

Furthermore, these testimonies show that this phenomenon is an unavoidable reality among the Mbororo. It is these phenomena that hinder or slow down the progress of the mission within the Mbororo community. Although receptive to the mission, the inhabitants, faced with the challenges it represents, hesitate to accept it and readily adhere to it for security reasons; otherwise, exile is conducive to the free expression of faith.

**Killing Secretly.** Killing Murtads in secret is a reality among the Mbororo Fulani. The PMBBR explains this phenomenon: "Indeed, despite the country's law prohibiting violence and murder, Mbororo Muslims kill anyone who abandons Islam. Although they do not do so publicly, they practice it in secret. Often, they go to the apostate's home at night and secretly kill him on his bed. Then, in the morning, his

death is announced, or they arrest the Murtad at night and take him to the bush to be executed quietly."

Today, Mbororo Muslims often resort to poison to silently kill Murtad if they can, to avoid suspicion and prosecution. MBB1 (Muslim Background Believer One) testifies: "My Muslim brothers poisoned me because they had failed to kill me physically. But thanks to Isa Almasiih, I did not die." Imagine: A few weeks after I abandoned Islam, my family plotted against me by inviting me to join them, promising not to harm me. I naively agreed, but since they called me a disbeliever, I couldn't eat from the same plates as them.

As a result, they kept my plate separate, and I ate alone. But one evening, they poisoned my meal. After praying in the name of Isa Almasiih, I opened the plate and discovered that the food was spoiled. While they were eating theirs, and I was supposed to eat mine, the same food was being prepared in the same pot." Indeed, the food was poisoned, for a few days later, one of my Muslim brothers confessed to me that "the food was poisoned and that you're God had saved you from death."

To escape government suspicion and uphold the Sunnah, some Mbororos adopt a strategy of silent and cruel punishment against apostates. These punishments can include death, excommunication, insults, and physical violence. However, it must be recognized that the Mbororo are a social, united, and dynamic people, not only within their families but also in the camps, which allows them to keep their own information secret.

**Killing by the power of the jinn:** Ahmad ibn Abdul Haleem ibn Taymiyah defined jinn as demons.<sup>27</sup> According to Dr. Umar Sulaiman Al-Ashqar, they are called

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<sup>27</sup>Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, *Ibn Taymiyah's Essay on the Jinn (Demons)* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, n.d.), 56.

jinn because they are hidden from human view.<sup>28</sup> Asad teaches that in the Qur'an, the word "jinn" has the following connotation:

In the Qur'an, the term "jinn" has multiple meanings. It refers to spiritual forces or beings which, lacking corporeal existence, escape the perception of human senses: a meaning that includes "Satan" and "satanic forces" as well as "angels" and "angelic forces, since all are "hidden from human senses." To demonstrate that these invisible manifestations are not corporeal in nature, the Qur'an speaks in parable of the jinn created from "the fire of burning winds," "a confused flame of fire," or simply "fire."<sup>29</sup>

In Folk Islam, jinn are demons or evil spirits invoked for magical powers and are often responsible for miraculous or unusual events and a wide range of illnesses, spells, accidents, and deaths generally believed to be caused by an imbalance between internal and external jinn.<sup>30</sup> That said, all Muslims use evil jinn to possess people by shaking their limbs or simply haunting them to contribute to their misfortune. Moreover, they also use the power of these jinn to harm people by driving them mad, causing domestic disturbances, and killing them. Muslims claim that these evil spirits can attack anyone, anytime, anywhere.<sup>31</sup>

However, Mbororo Muslims, to fulfill at all costs their sunnah against the Murtad, which states that "whoever changes religion kills him," use the power of the jinn to do so discreetly without suffering physical violence against them, and also avoid attracting the judgment of the law of the country, which prohibits killing men under penalty of imprisonment. IMR 1 attests that Muslims kill apostates by the power of jinn by reporting his true story as saying: My Muslim brothers called me to

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<sup>28</sup>Sulaiman, *The World of the Jinn and Devils*, 11.

<sup>29</sup>Vivian Laughlin, "A Brief Overview of al Jinn within Islamic Cosmology and Religiosity," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 11, no. 1 (2015): 67–78, 10.32597/jams/vol11/iss1/9/.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>31</sup>Laughlin, "A Brief Overview of al Jinn within Islamic Cosmology and Religiosity," 67–78.

threaten me, saying that if I did not return to Islam, they would drive me mad or kill me by the power of jinn.”

PMBBR confirms this by reporting his story: “They tried to kill me physically, but Christ did not allow it. As soon as I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, the persecution of my Muslim brothers intensified. They cast all kinds of spells on me using the jinn, even causing me a fatal accident. I would have lost my life if Christ had not taken control. My face was devastated, and both my legs were broken. I have received death threats from my relatives and acquaintances on several occasions. In reality, they use silent strategies such as poison, mystical spells of the jinn, or night attacks by the jinn to eliminate the Murtaf.”

In addition, the ACTP (Arabic class Teacher Participant) testifies to this by stating that "to preserve the dignity of the Muslim religion and respect the recommendation of its prophet to kill anyone who abandons Islam, the Mbororo, for fear of the law of the country, always resort to the power of the djinns to kill, drive mad and/or permanently exclude the Murtaf from his family or community."

Thus, most Mbororos are traditionalist Muslims who use the power of jinn. The idea of killing apostates by jinn is linked to concepts of witchcraft or possession. This is not considered a direct physical death warranting prosecution, but rather a gradual weakening of vital health. Jinn "attacks" are often described by symptoms such as life blockages, unexplained chronic illnesses, mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, or hallucinations, and recurring nightmares.

The work of a djinn or the fear it inspires causes a state of unreceptivity to the mission, characterized by stupor, disorientation, and a loss of vital force. In this context, only power encounters, such as miracles, healings, and deliverances from

demons (jinn), as well as other signs and wonders of God, can give hope to those who want to experience Him, as well as to the missionary.

### **Missiological Interpretation**

Missiological interpretation is the process of examining data and formulating relevant conclusions that will guide missionary efforts in the field as they advance knowledge of mission in all its fullness for all Mbororo peoples. To successfully carry out the mission among these Mbororo people, the missionary must be aware of the following points:

First, to approach missionary work among the Mbororo, a missionary must prioritize an approach focused on building relationships based on mutual respect, listening, and understanding their culture, while sharing the message in a relevant and appropriate manner. This involves taking an interest in their daily lives, demonstrating humility and perseverance, and a willingness to learn from their pastoral way of life, while remaining focused on the mission.

Second, the missionary must be aware that the Mbororos are predominantly Muslim, even though their adherence to Islam may sometimes be superficial and coexist with older customary practices. This is explained by their deep attachment to their Fulani culture, to a solid family tradition represented by the Pulaaku (a fundamental ethical code that governs the lives of all Mbororos. It defines behavior, respect, courage, and other values).

Third, the Mbororo consider non-Muslims to be pagans, just like other believers within the Islamic framework. Furthermore, they believe that all non-Muslims eat pork, drink alcohol, and worship idols. Therefore, any Mbororo wishing to belong to this community will commit acts of perdition such as eating pork, drinking wine, and worshiping idols. According to them, the only way to circumcise

evil is to kill anyone who practices this path. Moreover, religion teaches them that anyone who abandons Islam must be killed. And that a great reward is reserved by Allah for anyone who kills the apostate.

Four, among the Mbororos, becoming a Christian is seen as an identification with unbelief, a betrayal of the entire family, and a disregard for the fundamental ethical code that governs the lives of all Mbororos. This is why approaching the mission to the Mbororo requires considering the whole family as a whole to avoid persecution.

Finally, identity is very important for the Mbororo. Because religious identity can be a vector of social identification, but also of competition and distinction from other groups. The missionary must know how to identify with the Mbororo, notably through the feeling of belonging to a religious group and the importance of this belonging in self-perception.

### **The Concept of Murtad and Its Socio-religious Implications among the Mbororo of Mbé**

This section attempts to address and analyze the data collected within the framework of the research question 3: How does Murtad's conception of Islam influence interreligious relations and the socio-religious context of the mission to the Mbororo in Mbé? It focuses more specifically on the socio-religious implications of this conception.

The objective of this research question is to identify and explore the impact, whether negative or positive, of the concept of Murtad and its socio-religious implications among the Mbororo of the village of Mbé, in the city of Ngaoundéré, Cameroon. However, the thematic analysis formula will be used to answer this third

research question. This scheme will distinguish and define the themes collected from the respondents' experiences during the field data collection.

The identified themes enabled me to understand the socio-religious implications of the concept of Murtad. The themes identified and defined during the data analysis are as follows: Theme 1: Fear, Theme 2: Humiliation and Dignity, Theme 3: Freedom of religion, Theme 4: Rejection, and Theme 5: Prejudice and Discrimination. These themes clearly explain the direct implications of the phenomenon on the socio-religious life of the Mbororo in the village of Mbé. The themes will be addressed through interviews conducted in the field.

### **The Fear**

To initiate a discussion on the experiences of fear, a fundamental emotion that triggers a series of physical and psychological reactions in Muslims, Mbororo, and MBBs (Muslim Background Believers) before, during, and after the act. The following question was asked to six Muslim men and three MBBs: "At what moment did you feel the most fear, considered to have the greatest socio-religious impact, regarding Murtad, and why?"

However, they all responded that fear can lead to immobilization, flight, or an attempt to fight the source of fear. It can also influence our judgment and decision-making, which has significant repercussions on our socio-religious lives. Respondents shared their experiences of the negative impact of fear. Their experiences were divided into two categories: fear of being killed and fear of being betrayed.

**Fear of being killed:** Let's start with the Mbororo who want to accept Isa but are afraid of being killed. PMBBP (Pastor Muslim Background Believer Participant) shares an experience:

Mbororo Muslims are receptive to the Gospel of Isa, and many see it as the right path to paradise. However, fearing death and other punishments associated with Murdad, they are reluctant to accept him as their Lord and Savior. As Islam teaches, jihad, or holy war, must be waged against those who abandon Islam. He also teaches his followers that killing someone who abandons Islam is not a sin; on the contrary, Allah will reward them in the hereafter.

MBBP 3 (Muslim Background Believer Participant Three) confirms this by testifying to the extent of the fear he felt:

When I believed in Isa Almasiih, it was difficult for me to express it clearly in front of my Muslim brothers, because I was afraid of the punishment reserved for those who abandon Islam. According to Islamic teaching, any Muslim who leaves Islam to adhere to another religion is considered of no importance in the eyes of other Muslims, even his family. However, I no longer met any of the conditions required by Islam. I was also afraid to identify with the disciples of Isa Almasiih, and even to associate with the Christians in the neighborhood, and I read the Bible in secret, until the day I went into exile in another city. It was then that I identified with the Christian, a disciple of Christ who had long been fearful.

WMP 2 confirmed this fact, stating: "We Mbororos were afraid to follow Isa Almasiih or become Christians, to avoid being labeled as rebels against Islam and followers of another religion. Moreover, Islam teaches that anyone who rebels against Islam is a disbeliever. Allah curses anyone who is a disbeliever; so keep away from him." MBBP 2 testifies to this fact by stating that: "Muslims in general, when they wish to become disciples of Jesus, are gripped by fear. They are afraid of the gaze of others, of what their fellow believers will think and do. They are afraid of the suffering they will endure and of social rejection."

**The fear of being betrayed:** Muslims, when confronted with a Murdad, fear that he will betray them, as betrayal can have negative consequences, both socio-religious and in the afterlife. It can also lead to destruction, the wrath of God, and a loss of trust. IMP 1 attests to this fear by stating that "the Murdad risks inciting many Muslims to disbelief and could even provoke violence against Islam." IMP 2 states that: "Murdad should be feared because he betrays Allah and His Messenger, and

likewise, he will betray the entire religion, i.e., the secret of the Muslims and make non-Muslims believe that Islam is a false religion.”

The analysis shows that fear is a major obstacle to the Mbororos' acceptance of the mission, hindering any form of religious and social engagement with Christianity. This fear creates a vicious cycle that prevents the Mbororos and all Muslims from identifying with Christians, participating in activities such as Bible study, and ultimately attending religious services, suggesting a fear-fueled distancing from the Christian community and doctrine.

### **Humiliation and Dignity**

According to Islam, all Murtads are among the disobedient and are humiliated in this world by loss, because these Murtads are surrounded by humiliations, and therefore only pass from one humiliation to another.<sup>32</sup> WMP 1 (Woman Muslim Participant One) attests by stating that "Islam teaches us that humiliation will always befall the Murtad, and that they will have no protector with God."

ACTP (Arabic Class Teacher Participant) confirms that "if one of its members converts to Christianity, it is a humiliation, a total shame for the entire family and the Mbororo clan. However, if the family does nothing to bring the apostate back to Islam, the shame will fall on them. To avoid this shame, we will do everything possible to eliminate or expel the apostate before he or she is discovered."

Humiliation and dignity are fundamental aspects of being human. For without dignity, one cannot speak of being human. Humiliation, moreover, is its counterpart;

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<sup>32</sup>Lamia Sahib Mashkour, "The Objective Study to the Meaning of Humiliation from the Perspective of the Holy Quran," *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences & Humanities* 13, no. 01 (2023): 556–66.

its absence, therefore, constitutes a guarantee of dignity.<sup>33</sup> Every believer is called upon to respect the dignity of others, regardless of their religion, by avoiding any behavior that gives rise to the idea of demeaning or humiliating a person. MBBR 2 laments that Muslims humiliate their fellow believers, called Murtaḍ. He notes: "Yet, they teach that Islam condemns any form of humiliation or degradation of human dignity, but this is not really the case with Murtaḍ."

The Mbororo believe in the precepts of Islam, which stipulate that apostates will always be humiliated and will have no protector with God. Thus, the conversion of a member to Christianity is a total humiliation for a Mbororo family. However, they do everything possible to bring the apostate back to Islam, so that they may benefit from God's mercy.

### **Freedom of Religion**

Recep Ardoğan defined "freedom of religion" as the freedom of choice and action of each individual, of their own free will, without obligation or hindrance of their religious beliefs and practices.<sup>34</sup> Freedom of religion in Islam is based on the apparent existence of absolute truth. The will to admit or deny the truth exists with the clarity of the truth itself: *La ikraha fi ai-ddini qad t-tabayana al-rrusdu mina al-gayyi* (There is no compulsion in religion).<sup>35</sup>

According to the verse, no one should be forced to adhere to a religion against their will. Rather, religion must be rooted in the mind, understanding, and will.

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<sup>33</sup>Dr Mohammad Hossein Mozaffari, "Human Dignity: An Islamic Perspective," *Hekmat Quarterly Journal: An International Journal of Academic Research* 4 (2011): 1-14.

<sup>34</sup>Recep Ardoğan, "Foundations of Religious Freedom in Islam -Approach With The Perspective of The Muslim Social Theology," in *Human Rights and Tolerance in Islam* (KLM, 2022), 76-110.

<sup>35</sup>Qur'an, Al-Baqarah 2.256.

However, adhering to it and then abandoning it under duress cannot be considered true faith. PMBBP (Pastor Muslim Background Believer Participant) describes this attitude as follows: "Many people remain Muslim against their will. Given the sanctions imposed by Islam on Murtad, this practice is aimed at coercing people into remaining Muslims. Religious freedom does not apply to those who wish to leave Islam to adhere to another religion."

Some Mbororos, after hearing the Gospel, remain Muslims against their will. Given the sanctions imposed by Islam on those who leave Islam, they are forced to remain Muslim. Religious freedom does not apply to those who wish to leave Islam to adhere to another religion. However, according to the verse of the Noble Qur'an, no one should be forced to adhere to a religion against their will. On the contrary, religion must be rooted in the mind, understanding, and will.

### **Rejection**

All the Mbororo Muslims interviewed unanimously affirmed that the rejection of murtad in Islamic society is an integral part of daily life. According to the Mbororo Muslim worldview, rejection is a legal act that manifests itself in several ways, including apostasy, shirk (associating other deities with God), and the rejection of certain fundamental principles of the faith. Considering apostasy a serious offense in Islam, it entails serious socio-religious consequences.

All MBBs testify to these consequences, stating that many former Mbororo Muslims face strong social stigma, family rejection, and even threats for abandoning Islam. Some Mbororo go so far as to hide their true beliefs to avoid these negative consequences. PMBBP confirms this by sharing his experience: "he experienced rejection from my family and friends when he left Islam; some members of my family resorted to extreme reactions and threats."

The Mbororo Muslim community's view of Murtad (apostasy) and its rejection is rooted in Islamic tradition, which considers abandoning the faith a serious offense with serious social and religious consequences. This rejection is manifested within the Mbororo community by strong social stigma, family rejection, threats, and the need for some to conceal their true beliefs to avoid these negative consequences, as evidenced by the number of people ostracized after leaving Islam.

### **Prejudice and Discrimination**

All MBBs Participants unanimously report that all former Mbororo Muslims still face prejudice, discrimination, and even violence because of their non-belief in Islam, particularly in societies where Islam is closely linked to cultural and social norms. In a context of social prejudice, the Murtads suffer serious injustices, oppression, and violations of their rights. As for discrimination, apostates are led to social exclusion, loss of family and friendship relationships, and stigmatization at all levels. In civil matters, Murtads face discrimination, particularly in matters of inheritance rights.

### **Summary**

In summary, this chapter analyzed the data and findings to answer the research questions. Research questions 1 and 2 each include five to six sub-questions. Research questions 3 and 4 do not include any sub-questions. Therefore, the field results present the data analysis and the themes that emerged. The results of each research question are analyzed and interpreted according to the chronological order of the questions. The main objective of questions 1 to 3 was to determine the traditional conceptions of Murtad as expressed by the Mbororo people, as well as the socio-

religious implications of the phenomenon. The fourth question, meanwhile, aimed to propose a strategy for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in its mission to the Mbororo people.

The results of the field data reveal that apostates among the Mbororo are victims of all kinds of atrocities. Mbororo Muslims, or any Muslim who publicly expresses before the Ummah their desire to abandon Islam during a prayer at the mosque, are considered people who defy Islam and its prophet. The entire Islamic jurisprudence relating to apostasy is recalled at this precise moment. The hadith recommending murder is also recalled: “Whoever changes his religion, kill him.” Because he is a disbeliever, Allah will neither forgive him nor guide him to the straight path.

Thus, the Mbororos kill apostates because Islam has taught them that: first, apostates are misguided and disbelievers, for they have adhered to an idolatrous, impure, and outdated religion. Furthermore, they have become drinkers of alcohol, eaters of pork, worshippers of the images of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, and worshippers of three gods (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). They are enemies of God and useless, and the only thing to do is to get rid of them. This is how all Mbororos who have converted to Christianity are perceived by their former Muslim brothers.

Second, they have become traitors, for by abandoning Islam, they have betrayed Allah and His Messenger. They have knowingly betrayed the trust that Islam had placed in them. They have betrayed their families and the entire Muslim community. Allah protects the believers. Allah does not like ungrateful traitors. Third, apostates are rebels. Anyone who abandons Islam for Christianity becomes a rebel

against Islam and all Mbororo Muslims. They are rebels against the legitimate authority of the Muslim leader and troublemakers or disruptors of the Islamic faith.

In addition to the death suffered by others, all apostates among the Mbororo Muslims suffer punishments such as imprisonment, whipping, exclusion, and confiscation of property, wives, and children. It is worth noting that, out of fear of the law of the land, which prohibits murder, but to comply with the sunnah, which recommends the death of apostates, Mbororo Muslims execute them in secret (by poisoning, by strangulation at night, in a room, or in the bush). If physical execution in secret fails, they resort to the power of the jinn (by driving them mad, involving them in road accidents, casting spells on them, etc.).

Finally, in view of all these atrocities suffered by the Mbororo who wish to convert to Christianity, the socio-religious implications that define this phenomenon are the following: The Mbororos are forced to remain Muslim; fear grips them when they want to convert to Christianity. They are afraid of being killed, betrayed, and losing their property and family. They are deprived of the freedom to serve society, as their dignity is violated, and they experience only humiliation through insults such as "Fakir" (unbeliever). They are despised, stigmatized, discriminated against, and rejected at all levels by their family, society, or community.

To address this problem, the proposed strategy for the mission to the Mbororo people is based on the principle that only Christ's method is appropriate for missionaries to save the Mbororo and all Muslims. This method consists of: 1. Immersing oneself in the Mbororo community, taking the time to get to know them and understand their needs, with the intention of doing them good; 2. Demonstrating empathy; 3. Meeting their needs; 4. Gaining their trust by showing them compassion; 5. Adopting their way of life: eating and dressing like them; 6. Helping them turn to

Jesus Christ. This requires faith from both the missionary and the person being helped.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study on the concept of Murtaḍ and its socio-religious implications among the Mbororo. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 are briefly summarized. Chapter 5 then presents the results of the fieldwork, missiological interpretations of the data, missiological implications, and the proposed strategy. This chapter also includes conclusions and recommendations.

#### **Summary**

The study included an introduction, Chapter 1, which presented the problem to be addressed. It focused on the phenomenological experience of Mbororo wishing to leave Islam for Christianity. This also allowed us to establish a contextualized missionary strategy that not only enabled us to reach them easily, but also preserved their faith and taught them the commandments of Jesus. Furthermore, it helped us protect them from the death penalty or any other form of persecution at the hands of their former Muslim brothers and sisters. Chapter 1 also presents the research methodology that was used in the study

Chapter 2 presented the biblical and theological foundations of the concept of apostasy. The term "apostasy" refers to a general abandonment of religion or a denial of the faith of those who previously practiced it. It is also defined as desertion, backsliding, rejection of religious faith and beliefs, and abandonment of faith in Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, an apostate refers to anyone who commits an individual or collective act of abandonment of the true God, the Creator, and worships idols,

false gods, made by human hands. Similarly, in the context of the New Testament, an apostate is someone who not only bows down to idols but also categorically rejects Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3 reviewed the literature by consulting the sources of Islamic law (Quran and Hadith) concerning the death penalty for apostates (Murtad). It appears that the Quran does not prescribe human punishment for apostates. Surah Al-Imran 87 reports that apostates will suffer, as punishment, the curse of Allah and that of the angels. Surah An-Nahl 16:106 specifies that apostates will suffer the wrath of Allah and a terrible punishment, because "there is no compulsion in religion."

The hadith, the second source of Islamic law, from which the teachings and actions of the Prophet (SAW) are derived, recommends the death penalty for apostates. `Ikrima reported: "Whoever has changed his Islam, kill him." Similarly, when one consults Muslim scholars to get an idea of their position, one finds that there are Muslim scholars in favor of the death penalty for apostasy and Muslim scholars opposed to the death penalty for apostasy.

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology. The study is based on phenomenological research. Qualitative research examined the lived experiences of the Mbororo. Eight selected Mbororo were interviewed in-depth. A focus group of six Mbororo was also used to collect data. This data was recorded, transcribed, and coded according to thematic categories.

In Chapter 5, the above-mentioned themes were used to analyze the data and draw conclusions. This section presents the main themes, such as the traditional understanding of the concept of Murtad by the Mbororo people, violations of religious freedom and the challenges encountered, and missiological implications.

### **The Traditional Understanding of the Concept of Murtaḍ by the Mbororo People**

They believe that any Mbororo Muslim who abandons Islam and embraces Christianity becomes a disbeliever. This apostate stands in the way of those who have incurred the wrath of Allah and those who have gone astray. They think all Christians are the same. They eat pork and smothered animals, drink alcohol, worship images and idols, associate things with Allah, and worship three gods (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), while praying to God only on Sundays without purifying themselves. So, when the Mbororo learn that one of them has become a Christian, they have the perception that he has become an idolater; he has abandoned the right path, he has abandoned God the Creator in favor of a false god. And he is lost.

### **Religious freedom was violated, and challenges were faced**

Research has shown that the phenomenon studied among the Mbororo is prescribed by Islamic law and originates from the hadiths. These hadiths recommend the death penalty for apostates. This reality is demonstrated by the fact that the death penalty for apostates in Islam forces the Mbororo and all Muslims to practice Islam against their will, with justifications drawn from certain religious texts, but also from interpretations and practices that sow psychosis among believers.

Their Muslim brothers persecute all those who convert to Christianity. In addition, those who escape death receive the following punishment: confiscation of their property, children, and wives, and exclusion from their families. Converts are not safe in their environment, as they are stigmatized, despised, and mocked. Not all of them are free in their new faith.

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Training should be provided to pastors, elders, and members of FAMR to instill in them knowledge of the Islamic worldview, traditions, culture, and theology, enabling them not only to understand the Mbororo people but also all Muslims, for a smooth and peaceful dialogue with them.
2. Teach Mbororo Muslims the doctrines that extend from his book, the Noble Quran, to the Holy Bible. Muslims reject the Bible, calling it falsified if one begins with it.
3. Approaching the mission to the Mbororo requires more prayer. More prayer, more power. Prayer brings God's power, and that is the key.
4. For the success of the mission, start with the points of convergence and never bring believers to the church for their safety.
5. The mission to the Mbororo Muslims does not require publicity, but rather a calm and discreet atmosphere.
6. The mission to the Mbororo Muslims demands the rejection of all thoughtless and unfounded discussion. Be their teacher, not their student.

### **Proposed Strategy**

1. Identity: Our identity is very important to these people. We are the People of the Book, a virtuous community. A community that does not consume alcohol, pork, or choking animals.
2. Training the Believer: Once a Mbororo Muslim accepts Christ, let him be well trained to understand his beliefs and be a missionary to his family without being brought to the Church.
3. Philip's formula with the Eunuch: Never celebrate their baptism in public. The formula of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch is appropriate.

4. Nicodemus's formula: For optimal safety, never let him visit you regularly during the day. Let him use Nicodemus's formula, in secret, to avoid suspicion from his fellow believers.
5. Be confidential: Never disclose information or post images on social media about them.
6. For their safety, if they accept the Gospel, let a new family be established.
7. People need to have a sense of belonging, and you need to advocate for a 'new family' that provides for them, beyond house churches. Focus more on the Act of Kindness.

### **Implementation of Nicodemus' Formula**

This implementation is a process of inner transformation and moral development, inspired by the biblical story of Nicodemus's journey from secret seeker to courageous disciple. Here is what the missionary must do for those who seek the truth by meeting him secretly:

- Organize a secret meeting for those who, like Nicodemus, are actively and sincerely seeking the truth.
- This meeting can take place in your home, in secret. Like Nicodemus, who belonged to a group fiercely opposed to Jesus, he undoubtedly took a risk by visiting him at night.
- Engage in "Nicodemus-like conversations": Have honest conversations, perhaps initially private or attempting to be so, about faith and its implications.
- Helping them. Acting according to their convictions: the process is complete when conviction translates into courageous public action and

concrete commitment. Nicodemus's final act was to publicly attend the burial of Jesus, an act of great devotion.

- **Fostering spiritual growth:** Implementation involves a progression from hesitant seeker to bold, action-oriented believer.

### **The Relationship between the GCAMR's Strategy and the Proposed Strategy**

**GCAMR Strategy (Guiding Principles):** The official GC AMR approach aims to move beyond traditional, confrontational evangelism to prioritize building genuine friendships and fostering mutual respect and understanding. It highlights commonalities such as shared beliefs in creation, the Second Coming of Jesus (Isa al Masih), the Last Judgment, and a conservative lifestyle (abstinence from pork and alcohol) as opportunities to build bridges.

The goal is to become "spiritual friends" who support one another in preparing for the Second Coming. **While the proposed strategy (specific implementation):** This strategy would likely take the form of a localized and contextualized plan aimed at applying the main principles of GCAMR in a particular context.

### **Integration**

Integrate the guiding principles of the General Conference into a specific "proposed strategy":

1. **Ensuring Consistency:** The proposed strategy must explicitly support the GCAMR's core philosophy, which prioritizes mutual respect over confrontation.
2. **Emphasizing Common Ground:** Integration should actively build upon shared beliefs and ways of life (e.g., health principles, the importance of family, belief in God the Creator).

3. **Adapting to Context:** The proposed strategy should adapt general principles to the local context and the specific needs of the Mbororo community, recognizing that each situation is unique.
4. **Utilizing Resources:** The proposed strategy can draw upon resources provided by the GCAMR, such as documentation and training programs (e.g., the course “Building Relationships with Your Muslim Neighbor”), to ensure that the local approach is grounded in Scripture and theology and consistent with the mission of the universal Church.

### **Implementation**

Implementation involves moving from theory to practice:

1. **Training and Education:** Train church members on Islamic beliefs and culture to overcome a lack of knowledge and fear, as these are major hindrances to interaction.
2. **Building Genuine Relationships:** Encourage Adventists to intentionally develop authentic friendships with Muslim neighbors, colleagues, and friends, focusing on mutual listening, sympathy, and love.
3. **Sharing Faith in Context:** As trust is established, share the Adventist message sensitively and cordially, using the common ground of end-time beliefs and the return of Jesus as a bridge to deeper spiritual conversations.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of the implemented projects in building positive relationships and adjust as needed to ensure the strategy remains relevant and impactful.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the experience of Mbororo Muslims wishing to leave Islam for Christianity presents enormous challenges. These include flogging, confiscation of property, children, and women, exclusion from their families, and even the death penalty. These difficulties influence their decision to become Adventist Christians. When all the pastors, elders, and church members gather for missions training for Mbororo Muslims, many leave their ranks for the righteous path. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

## **Recommendations**

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. The strategy proposed to reach Mbororo Muslims in this study can be adopted by the Adamaoua Mayo-Rey Conference.
2. The missionary identifies with the Mbororo people and all Muslims as belonging to the People of the Book, a virtuous community, and not as Christians.
3. For their baptism, the formula of Philip with the Ethiopian Eunuch can be used (Not publicly)
4. Raising awareness among pastors, elders, and all members about religious freedom to strengthen interreligious dialogue.
5. For the Religious Dialogue, explain to the Muslim Leaders that Adventists do not practice idolatry. Recommend inviting the tribal leaders to come to the Adventist offices and provide special presentations there about our beliefs; also, make friendships.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(Consent to Participate in a Research Study)

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research study entitled: **A Study on the Concept of Murtad and its Socio-Religious Implications on Mission among Mbororo People in Mbé, Ngaoundéré City, Cameroon.**

The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do, and the potential risks and benefits of participating in this study. You are encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification about the nature of the study. Please note that choosing whether to participate in this research is voluntary and entirely your choice.

**The purpose of this study** is to understand the overall view of the Mbororo people on the concept of Murtad with the teachings of Islamic law and to identify the socio-religious implications that will be used to overcome prejudice. To participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview and a focus group discussion on 12 items. Finishing the questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you sign the bottom of this Form, you are giving your consent to be in the study. If you do not want to participate in the study, do not begin to fill out the questionnaire or participate in other research activities. If you start to fill out the questionnaire and decide you do not want to participate, stop filling it out and give it to the researcher. There is no penalty for not participating, and your questionnaire will not be used.

If you participate, you will contribute knowledge about the concept of Murtad and its socio-religious implications, which may help (in addressing the mission). There are no identifiable risks in participation.

Your personal information will be kept confidential. You will NOT write your name on the questionnaire, and this Form is separate from the questionnaire; this ensures that your identity will not be revealed. No one other than the researcher(s) will have access to the data, and all data will be stored on a password-protected computer.

The researcher will answer any questions you have about the study, and you should ask them now by emailing or calling the researcher, whose contact information is listed at the bottom of this letter.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, contact the Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee, Adventist University of Africa <[ethics@aua.ac.ke](mailto:ethics@aua.ac.ke)>

I have read and fully understood the statements on this Form. All my questions were answered satisfactorily. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Contact the supervisor of the research if you need more information or have questions: Obed Olaotse Gabasiane, PhD ([gabasiane@aua.ac.ke](mailto:gabasiane@aua.ac.ke))  
Thank you.  
Garga Ngola,  
(MA Missiology Program, [gargan@aua.ac.ke](mailto:gargan@aua.ac.ke), +237 655269379).

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE

(For Muslims and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), Individuals and Focus Group)

**1. What is the traditional understanding of the concept of Murtad among the Mbororo people in Mbé, Ngaoundéré City, Cameroon?**

- 1.1. What is Murtad, and how does it occur in Islam?
- 1.2. What are Murtad's motivations among the Mbororo people?
- 1.3. Why should a Murtad among Mbororo Muslims be punished?
- 1.4. What do the Quran and hadith teach about Murtad?

**2. What social, economic, and legal challenges do the Mbororo people face when desiring to convert?**

- 2.1. What punishment is given to Murtad in Islam, and how is it applied among the Mbororo people?
- 2.2. What types of punishments are given to apostates?
- 2.3. What are the social consequences of the Murtad sanctions?
- 2.4. What are the economic consequences of the Murtad sanctions?
- 2.5. What are the legal consequences of the Murtad sanctions?
- 2.6. Does Allah forgive a Murtad?

## APPENDIX C

### TRANSLATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(From English to Fulani)

Translation by myself

(Min man lorni bee fulfulde)

1. Dume pamdon dow kongol Murtaddu caka Mbororo haa Mbé, berniiwol Ngaoundere, lesdi Kamarun?
  - 1.1. Dume yidi wi'ugo Murtaddu e noy dum don saalo?
  - 1.2. Dumedon yerfa yimbe laato Murtaddu caka Mbororo'en?
  - 1.3. Ngam dume hannani telbango mo laati Murtaddu?
  - 1.4. Al-Qur'an on umri dum na malla Al-Hadiths?
2. Cadéele de'ye Mbororo'en mari caka ummaatoore e dow jawdi maaɓɓe yakke to be ngidi nuddingo?
  - 2.1. Eltooje de'eye Islama umrani ngam Murtaddu e noy Mbororo'en don huuwtinira de caka maaɓɓe?
  - 2.2. Limte, Irin eltooje de'ye hannani Murtaddu?
  - 2.3. Dume jamma'aaje ngadanta Murtaddu?
  - 2.4. Dume jamma'aaje ngadata bee jawdi Murtaddu?
  - 2.5. Dume tawreeta Islama don anndina dow noy hanni eltugo Murtaddu?
  - 2.6. Allah yaafanan Murtaddu na?

## APPENDIX D

### FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(The same questions as in the interviews)

**3. What is the traditional understanding of the concept of Murtad among the Mbororo people in Mbé, Ngaoundéré City, Cameroon?**

- 1.5. What is Murtad, and how does it occur in Islam?
- 1.6. What are Murtad's motivations among the Mbororo people?
- 1.7. Why should a Murtad among Mbororo Muslims be punished?
- 1.8. What do the Quran and hadith teach about Murtad?

**4. What social, economic, and legal challenges do the Mbororo people face when desiring to convert?**

- 2.7. What punishment is given to Murtad in Islam, and how is it applied among the Mbororo people?
- 2.8. What types of punishments are given to apostates?
- 2.9. What are the social consequences of the Murtad sanctions?
- 2.10. What are the economic consequences of the Murtad sanctions?
- 2.11. What are the legal consequences of the Murtad sanctions?
- 2.12. Does Allah forgive a Murtad?

## APPENDIX E

### ETHICS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Adventist University of Africa

*Developing Leaders for Service*

A Private Chartered University Accredited by Commission for University Education, Kenya



15th May 2025

Garga Ngola  
Theological Seminary  
Adventist University of Africa  
Kenya

**Reference: AUA/ISERC/26/04/2025**

Dear Garga Ngola

**RE: A Study on the Concept of Murtad and its Socio-Religious Implications on Mission among Mbororo People in Mbé, Ngoundéré City, Cameroon.**

This is to inform you that the Adventist University of Africa Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee (AUA-ISERC) has reviewed and approved your research proposal titled above. Your application approval number is AUA/ISERC/2025/0032. The approval period is 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025 – 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

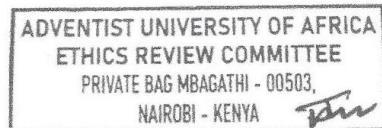
This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- i. Only approved documents (including informed consent and study instruments) will be used.
- ii. All changes, including amendments, deviations, and violations, are submitted for review and approval by AUA-ISERC.
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to AUA-ISERC within 72 hours of notification.
- iv. Any changes anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to AUA-ISERC within 72 hours.
- v. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to the expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vi. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to AUA-ISERC.

Prior to commencing your study, you are expected to obtain permissions or any other clearances needed.

Yours Sincerely

Josephine Ganu, Ph.D.  
Chair, Institutional Scientific Ethics Review C'ttee  
[ethics@aua.ac.ke](mailto:ethics@aua.ac.ke)



## APPENDIX F

### LETTERS

#### A LETTER TO THE SUB-DIVISIONAL OFFICER

(French version)

Garga Ngola  
Etudiant au Séminaire Théologique de l'Université  
Adventiste d'Afrique au Kenya.  
Tel: 655269379  
Email: [gargan@aua.ac.ke](mailto:gargan@aua.ac.ke)

Jeudi, 15 mai 2025

A

Monsieur le Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement de Mbé

**Objet:** Demande d'Autorisation de Mener un  
Travail des Recherches Académiques

Monsieur,

J'ai l'honneur de vous demander l'autorisation de mener une recherche académique auprès des peuples Mbororo du village de Mbé du 18 mai au 10 juin 2025.

En effet, le sujet de ma recherche est intitulé : Étude sur le concept de Murtaf et ses implications socioreligieuses pour la mission chez les Mbororo de Mbé, Ngaoundéré, Cameroun. L'objectif de cette étude est d'examiner le concept de Murtaf parmi le peuple Mbororo du village de Mbé, ville de Ngaoundéré, Cameroun, en soulignant les défis auxquels ils sont confrontés lorsqu'ils souhaitent s'identifier aux Gens du Livre.

Je joins à cette demande la photocopie de l'accord du Comité d'éthique scientifique institutionnel de l'Université adventiste d'Afrique (AUA-ISERC). Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'assurance de ma considération distinguée.

Garga Ngola

A LETTER TO THE SUB-DIVISIONAL OFFICER

(English version)

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Garga Ngola,

Student at the Theological Seminary

Adventist University of Africa in Kenya.

Tel: 655269379, Email: [gargan@aua.ac.ke](mailto:gargan@aua.ac.ke)

To the Sub-Divisional Officer of the Mbe Subdivision

**REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT  
ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

Sir,

I have the honor to request your permission to conduct academic research among the Mbororo people of the village of Mbé from May 18 to June 10, 2025.

Indeed, the subject of my research is entitled: “**A Study of the concept of Murtad and its socio-religious implications for the mission among the Mbororo of Mbé, Ngoundéré, Cameroon.**” The objective of this study is to examine the concept of Murtad among the Mbororo of Mbé village, Ngoundéré town, Cameroon, highlighting the challenges they face when they wish to identify themselves as the People of the Book.

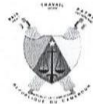
I enclose with this request a photocopy of the agreement of the Institutional Scientific Ethics Committee of the Adventist University of Africa (AUA-ISERC). Please accept, Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Garga Ngola

## APPENDIX G

### GOVERNMENT AUTHORIZATION APPROVAL

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN  
Paix -Travail -Patrie  
\*\*\*\*\*  
REGION DE L'ADAMAOUA  
\*\*\*\*\*  
DEPARTEMENT DE LA VINA  
\*\*\*\*\*  
ARRONDISSEMENT DE MBE  
\*\*\*\*\*  
SOUS-PREFECTURE DE MBE  
\*\*\*\*\*  
BUREAU DES AFFAIRES ADMINISTRATIVES,  
JURIDIQUES ET POLITIQUES  
\*\*\*\*\*



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON  
Peace -Work - Fatherland  
\*\*\*\*\*  
ADAMAOUA REGION  
\*\*\*\*\*  
VINA DIVISION  
\*\*\*\*\*  
MBE SUBDIVISION  
\*\*\*\*\*  
MBE SUBDIVISIONAL OFFICE  
\*\*\*\*\*  
ADMINISTRATIVE, LEGAL AND  
POLITICAL AFFAIRS OFFICE  
\*\*\*\*\*

## AUTORISATION DE RECHERCHE

N° 024 /AR/H52.03/BAAJP

Le Sous-Préfet de l'Arrondissement de Mbé soussigné, faisant suite à la correspondance du Comité d'Ethique Scientifique Institutionnel de l'Université Adventiste d'Afrique basée au Kenya (AUA-ISERC), autorise le Révérend Pasteur **GARGA NGOLA** de l'Eglise Adventiste du 7<sup>ème</sup> Jour de Mbé, à mener des activités de recherches académiques auprès des peuples MBORORO de Mbé du 18 Mai au 10 Juin 2025 sur le thème : « **Etude du concept de MURTAD et ses implications socioreligieuses pour la mission chez les Mbororos de Mbé, Ngaoundéré, Cameroun** ».

Compte tenu de la sensibilité de son thème de recherche, l'intéressé devra se rapprocher des services locaux du MINEPIA afin de faciliter son intégration auprès de sa cible.

En foi de quoi, la présente Autorisation de Recherche leur est délivrée pour servir et valoir ce que de droit. /-

#### Ampliations :

- Préfet/Vina/ATCR
- RFMO/pour suivi
- DAEPIA-MBE/ pour suivi
- Lamido-Mbé/pour suivi
- Chronos/Archives

Mbé, le 16 MAI 2025  
Le Sous-Préfet,  
  
- Mohamad Yaya



## APPENDIX H

### TRANSLATED GOVERNMENT AUTHORIZATION

(Translated by Google Translate)

#### **RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

**N\_024\_/AR/H52.03/BAAJP**

The undersigned Sub-Divisional Officer of the Mbe Subdivision, following the correspondence of the Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee of the Adventist University of Africa based in Kenya (AUA-ISERC), authorizes Reverend Pastor GARGA NGOLA of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Mbe, to conduct academic research activities with the Mbororo people of Mbe from May 18 to June 10, 2025, on the theme: **“A Study on the Concept of Murtad and its Socio-Religious Implications on Mission among Mbororo People in Mbé, Ngoundéré City, Cameroon.”**

Given the sensitivity of their research topic, the person concerned should contact the local MINEPIA services to facilitate their integration with their target group.

In witness whereof, this research authorization is issued to them to serve and be valid for all purposes. /-

Mbe, May 16, 2025  
**Sub-Divisional Officer**  
**MOHAMAN YAYA**

#### **Amplifications**

- Divisional Officer/Vina/ATCR
- RFMO/for follow-up
- DAEPIA-MBE/for follow-up
- Lamido-Mbe/for follow-up
- Chronos/Archives

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