

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Missiology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIVINITY OF ISA AL-MASIH  
AMONG THE MANDARA IN MEME, CAMEROON: TOWARDS A  
MISSIOLOGICAL, THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

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This study investigated the challenges faced by Seventh-day Adventists in Mayo-Sava Local Government in Far North Region of Cameroon in converting Mandara Muslims to the Adventist faith. By employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research explored Mandara Muslims' understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih (Jesus the Messiah) as a foundation for developing contextualized mission strategies.

Data was gathered through interviews, focus group discussions with six Adventist Mandara Background Believers (AMBBs), each representing one of the six districts in Mayo Sava. The results revealed that the AMBBs' perception of Isa Al-Masih's divinity evolved after their conversion, as their encounter with the Gospel

message and the discovery of biblical teachings about Isa changed their conception of his identity. Now, they believed in Isa not only a prophet, but God. Their personal testimonies, marked by transformative experiences, proved to be powerful tools for attracting others to Isa Al-Masih.

Based on the data, a nine-step mission strategy was formulated to guide future evangelistic mission efforts. The study recommends to the Adventist Mission the establishment of an Adventist Muslim Relations (AMR) department at the conference, local church, and district levels. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of training leaders, pastors, and members, and fostering interdepartmental collaboration to effectively engage Mandara Muslims in the region.

AMR training in churches under the jurisdiction of the conference to equip members and leaders with a thorough knowledge of the history of Islam, the Quran and its revelation, the Prophet Muhammad and Isa in this book, the Hadith and Sunnah, theological trends, the factors influencing the interpretation of the Quran, and the different Islamic schools to which the various groups of this religion belong.

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A Thesis

presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirement for the degree  
Master of Arts Missiology

by

Abraham Maspha

May 2026

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Dedicated to my wife, Kechkeme Abraham, and my children,

Anouwai Markama Peniel, Sawari Beni Abraham,

Aviatay Annaelle Nehir Prunelle,

Maspha Bantai T. P.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background of the Study .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	8
Research Questions .....	9
Purpose of the Study .....	10
Significance of the Study .....	10
Limitation.....	11
Delimitation .....	12
Reflexivity.....	12
Methodology .....	14
Research Approach and Design .....	14
Population and Sampling .....	15
Data Collection, Procedure, and Analysis .....	16
Ethical Consideration.....	17
Operational Definitions of Terms .....	17
The divinity of Isa Al-Masih.....	18
Chapter Outline.....	19
2. BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION .....	20
Biblical View of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih .....	21
Divinity in the Old Testament.....	21
The Divinity of Isa Al-Masih in the New Testament .....	25
Protestant Theology of the Divinity of Jesus .....	29
Adventist Theology of the Divinity of Jesus .....	31
Ellen G. White’s View on Divinity Isa Al-Masih.....	34
Summary and Conclusion .....	35
Summary .....	35
Conclusion .....	36
3. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	37
Historical Background of Mayo Sava, Northern Cameroon.....	39
Expansion of Islam .....	40

The Beginnings of Islam in Mayo Sava, Far North Cameroon .....	40
The Arrival of Islam in Mandara land, Mémé .....	41
The Worldview of the Mandara People .....	41
The Pillars of Islam .....	43
Shahada .....	44
Salat or ritual prayer.....	44
Zakat (alms). .....	44
Sawm, fasting.....	45
Hajj.....	45
The Untouchables in Islam .....	45
Belief in Allah (Iman bi ‘l-Lahi);.....	45
Belief in Angels (Iman bi ‘l-Mala’ikah). .....	46
Belief in Books (Iman bi ‘l-Kutub).....	47
Belief in the Prophets (al-Iman bi ‘r-Rusul) .....	47
Belief in the Last Day (Iman bi’l-Yawnu’l-‘Akhir) .....	48
Belief in Destiny (Iman bi ‘l-Qadar).....	48
Islamic Teachings on the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih.....	48
The Figure of Isa Al-Masih in the Quran.....	49
Concept of Divinity, Allah.....	51
Isa, the Son of Mary .....	53
Some Attributes of Isa in the Qur’an .....	55
Isa, the Mercy and Sign of Allah .....	56
Isa, the Word and Spirit of Allah .....	57
The Concept of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih in the Ahadith and the Sunnah .....	58
The Muslim Perception of the Bible .....	60
The Death and Resurrection of Jesus .....	60
Key Studies of the Context of Cameroon .....	62
Missiological and Theological Implications .....	64
Missiological Implications.....	64
Theological Implications .....	65
Dialogue .....	66
Needs of Dialogue.....	68
Common Points.....	69
Challenges of Dialogue.....	70
Christian Identity .....	70
Strategies.....	71
Contextualization .....	72
Summary .....	75
 4. METHODOLOGY .....	 77
Research Setting.....	77
The Geographical Boundaries of Cameroon.....	77
Upper Mayo Sava Department.....	79
The Geographical Setting of Meme .....	79
Religious Demography in Cameroon.....	81
Research Approach and Design .....	82
Research Approach .....	83
Research Design.....	83

Population and Sampling .....	84
Sample Size.....	85
Data Collection Procedure .....	86
Data Analysis .....	88
Ethical Consideration.....	89
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	90
Summary .....	92
5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS .....	93
Description of the participants .....	94
Findings and Discussions.....	95
The First Research Question.....	95
The Second Research Question .....	100
The Third Research Question .....	106
Theological implication. ....	108
Fourth Research Question.....	110
The Fifth Research Question .....	115
Strategy to Reach Mandara Muslims in Meme.....	120
Creation/Establishment of the AMR Department.....	120
Knowing the History of Islam.....	121
Full Involvement of Departments .....	121
Intercessory Prayer and Fasting during the Fasting Month of Ramadan and the Feast of Aïd el-Kebir .....	122
Creating a Redemptive Friendship.....	122
Develop and Implement House Churches.....	123
The Creation of Centers of Influence Such as Schools, Adventist Restaurants, and Adventist Clinics.....	125
6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	126
Summary .....	126
The Understanding of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih before Accepting Isa by the AMBBs .....	127
The Understanding of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih after their Accepting Him .....	127
Theological Implications .....	128
Missiological Implications.....	129
Proposal for a strategy for effective Mission.....	129
Conclusion .....	133
Recommendations.....	133
APPENDIXES .....	135
A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM .....	136
B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	138
C. TRANSLATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM ENGLISH TO FRENCH .....	139

D. TRANSLATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM ENGLISH TO FULFULDE.....	140
E. E-ERB APPROVAL .....	141
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	142
VITA.....	151

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMBBs	Adventist Muslim background Believers
CMUM	Cameroon Union Mission
FCGP	Focus Group
KJV	King James Version
MM	Muslims Mandara
NCC	Northern Cameroon Conference
NCCMS	North Cameroon Conference, Mayo Sava
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
PP	Participants
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

**Background of the Study**

The Mission is great, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore to Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Jesus said (Matt 9:37-38).<sup>1</sup> Everyone under the sun must be reached or called to the gospel of Isa Al-Masih. The concept, Isa Al-Masih is the Arabic form of the Hebrew “maw-shee-akh” or Mashiah,<sup>2</sup> or the anointed one, usually a consecrated person, such as a king, priest, or saint. Specifically, this title refers to a figure, Isa, the anointed Messiah. According to both Testaments, the Old and the New (Gen 21:12, Isa 53:7, and Acts 5:42), the anointed one refers to the Messiah and the Messiah is the Christ, that is, Jesus Christ. This name is also used in the Arab culture and in the noble Qur’an. It is therefore called Masih or the Messiah, anointed one, or even Isa Al-Masih or Jesus the Messiah as designated in the Holy Bible. “Al-Masih” is used eleven times in the Qur’an about Isa. As a result of this Messiah concept, many people understand this term to mean “the anointed one.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Marsh, "Que signifie le terme « Messie » ? Qui est le Messie?" accessed December 10, 2024, <https://jesus-islam.fr/questions/que-signifie-le-terme-messie-qui-est-le-messie/>.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Goodman, “What Does “To Be Anointed” Mean in the Bible? November 19, 2024, accessed January 23, 2025, <https://www.artzabox.com/a/blog/what-does-to-be-anointed-mean-in-the-bible>.

When we look into the grammatical structure of the word “Masih,” it is evident that it means “the most anointed” or “anointed to a high degree, to the point that this anointing is an inherent and permanent quality.”<sup>4</sup> “Al-Masih” is significant when we recognize that Isa Al-Masih is the only one mentioned in the Bible or the Quran as “Al-Masih.” None of the other prophets are mentioned under this title. It refers to the Anointed One (Al-Mamsuh);<sup>5</sup> (Surah Al-Nisa 4:171 and Surah Al-Baqara 2:87). Isa Al-Masih is therefore Jesus the Messiah or the saviour, the awaited deliverer (John 4:25-26), including the Muslims Mandara, a people group in Cameroon.

One thing that often prevents Christian missiologists, pastors, and church members from engaging in conversation with their Muslim friends and relatives is the fundamental difference in views on the divinity of Isa Al-Masih (Jesus Christ). While Christians believe in the trinity, and that Jesus is not only the Messiah, the Saviour promised in Genesis (Genesis 3:15), but also God incarnate, as the Apostle John states in his Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1), Muslims view him as just a messenger of God. Yet in the Qur’an, Jesus is recognized as a righteous prophet (Surah Al-An’am, 6:85), one who performed miracles by Allah’s permission (Surah Al-Ma’idah, 5:110), and a sign for humanity, especially of the Hour of Judgement (Surah Az-Zukhruf, 43:61).

This divergence of understanding makes it difficult for Christians to engage in constructive dialogue with Muslims to convince them of the divinity of Jesus Christ. This is partly because, to date, much missiological research, both in Africa and

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<sup>4</sup> Dreams of Isa, “The Meaning of Al-Masih,” accessed January 23, 2025, <https://dreamsofisa.org/en/the-meaning-of-al-masih/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

elsewhere, including Cameroon, has not sufficiently explored the question of the divinity of Jesus.

Among the world population of 8 billion<sup>6</sup>, (2023) according to Global Frontier Missions, 3.40 billion people live among the unreached people groups in the 10/40 window, with little or no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> Muslims account for around one-fifth of the world's population—or about 1.6 billion people. They represent the majority population in about 50 countries and territories clustered in Asia and Africa.<sup>8</sup> In fact, few visions, missiological strategies, and resources have been devoted to penetrating this region. However, today this area is a priority for the mission, as thousands of people die there without ever having heard of Isa Al-Masih.

There is a notable rise in Islam both in the world and in the Mémé locality, Mayo Sava, in northern Cameroon. The number of Muslim worshippers is increasing, and new mosques are being built on every street corner. The challenge of reaching Muslims is considerable, due to several major obstacles: first, the stereotype that only the Islamic religion leads to paradise; second, the works-based conception of salvation; third, the doctrinal complexity of Islam linked to certain beliefs; fourth, as well as the reality of dual allegiance among some Muslim believers.

According to The Joshua Project about the people groups of the world, the need for the Gospel among these unreached people groups is great, which include the Kanouri, Kotoko, Mousgoum, Arabe Choa, and Mandara.

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<sup>6</sup>United States Census, “World Population Estimated at 8 Billion,” November 09, 2023, accessed January 23, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/11/>.

<sup>7</sup> Global Frontier Missions, “What is a UPG?” accessed January 23, 2025, <https://www.globalfrontiermissions.org/missions-101>.

<sup>8</sup> Allyson C. Lynch, “*Demographic Trends in Muslim Countries*,” April 17, 2013, accessed January 23, 2025, <https://www.prb.org/resources/demographic-trends-in-muslim-countries/>.

It is a matter of fact that billions of people live without any knowledge of what Jesus did to save them. In Cameroon, out of an estimated population of 29.3 million (mid-2022), Muslims make up 20.9% of the total population. Christianity is the dominant religion, accounting for 69.2% of the population.<sup>9</sup> Within this group, Seventh-day Adventists represent only 4.56%, with a membership of 133,529<sup>10</sup> as of June 30, 2023, in the Cameroon Union Mission. Northern Cameroon is a place where Muslims dominate in numbers, with a demographic weight of 18% of the population of Cameroon; they are almost half of the population of the far north. The Adventists in Cameroon are estimated at a membership of 40,032<sup>11</sup>, but in the North Cameroon Conference as of (June 30, 2022), represent 0.0013%.

In the department (Administrative division territory is placed under the authority of a prefect and administered by a General Council)<sup>12</sup> of Mayo Sava on an area of 2,737 km<sup>2</sup>, the population is estimated at 469,424,<sup>13</sup> of which 25.9% are Muslim<sup>14</sup> while Adventists are only 3.69% or 17,345 members.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ambassade des Etats-Unis au Cameroun, “Rapport 2022 Sur La Liberté de Religion dans le Monde – Cameroun.”

<sup>10</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Cameroon Union Mission,” June 30, 2023, accessed May 3, 2024, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=10156>.

<sup>11</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “North Cameroon Conference,” June 30, 2022, accessed April 22, 2024, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=13443>.

<sup>12</sup> Le Robert, “Dico en ligne,” LeDépartement, accessed December 21, 2024, <http://dictionnaire.lerobert.com/definition/Departement#googlevignette>.

<sup>13</sup> Republique du Cameroun, Institut National De La Statistique, eds., *Annuaire Statistique De La Region De L'extreme Nord 2018* (Yaoundé, Cameroon : Institut National De La Statistique, 2019), accessed April 22, 2024. [https://ins-cameroun.cm/wpcontent/uploads/2020/08/annuaire\\_statistique\\_edition\\_2019](https://ins-cameroun.cm/wpcontent/uploads/2020/08/annuaire_statistique_edition_2019).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “North Cameroon Conference,” 2022, accessed May 30, 2024, <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=13443&year=2023>.

Given these statistics, Adventists remain a very small minority in this locality. This shows that Muslims constitute a vast mission field in Northern Cameroon, particularly in Mémé, in the Mayo Sava department. However, a major debate hinders the ministry of the Gospel to Muslims: the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. For Christians, Isa Al-Masih (Jesus Christ) is not only the Messiah but also God incarnate, the Saviour of humanity, as affirmed in the Gospels (John 1:1, 14). On the other hand, for Muslims, Isa is considered an eminent, righteous, and accomplished prophet, but never as God or the Son of God, according to the popular Muslim interpretation following the Quranic vision (Surah 4:171, Surah 5:75). This theological divergence, added to the fear of persecution due to the Muslim conversion and traditional approaches to evangelism that do not include Muslims as priority targets, significantly hinders the expansion of the Gospel among them. In particular, the Mandara ethnic group is often ignored as a mission field. This controversy hinders mutual understanding and the proclamation of the Good News to Muslims, thus limiting the potential for fruitful spiritual dialogue and appropriate Christian witness.

In Cameroon, studies have been carried out on the mission to Muslims, notably on educational approach strategies in Ngaoundéré. Based on this study, the researcher recommended prayer, commitment of members, and love of neighbour as a strategy to reach Muslims in northern Cameroon.<sup>16</sup> This study did not address the deity of Isa, nor the Mandara people, much less the strategies specifically directed towards this ethnic group. In Nanga Eboko, the focus was on encouraging young people to learn about Islam and developing the Cosendai Adventist University into a

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<sup>16</sup> Pascal Alla-Hoki, “Developing a Strategy to Reach Muslims through Adventist Education in Ngaoundere” (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2014), 69.

training center for Islamic studies.<sup>17</sup> In North West Cameroon, the goal was to build friendships and make disciples among Mbororo,<sup>18</sup> known also as Fulbé (also as Peuhl, Fula, or Fulani). Mbororo is a semi-nomadic Islamic pastoralist.<sup>19</sup> All these studies established strategies for reaching Muslims in some specific cities in Cameroon and have left recommendations for further research. In general, Muslims recognize Isa as one of the prophets sent by Allah to humanity, as mentioned in the Quran, and as the son of Mariam. In contrast, the inhabitants of Meme do not know Isa, because no one had spoken to them about him, and no missionary work had been done in this regard, nor his divine nature, much less the work that God accomplished through him for their salvation. Moreover, no study has yet been conducted on the divinity of Isa among these people, not even in the Mayo Sava region, particularly among the Mandara Muslims, which underlines the importance and relevance of this research.

God's promise for the salvation of humanity is that all the nations of the earth, including the sons and daughters of the descendants of Keturah and Hagar, of the patriarch Abraham and other inhabitants of the East, the Arabs, the Ishmaelites, the Africans, the Indians, the Chinese, and many others, especially the Muslims, will return to Him. Ishmaelites will walk in the light and accept Isa as their Messiah, according to the prophetic text of Isaiah 60:1-7. This prophecy was accomplished, just as at the birth of Jesus, when they came to worship him, to (Matthew 2:1-2), they will

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<sup>17</sup> Assamba Onyong, "Developing a Training Program at the University Adventist Cosendai for Adventist Missionaries to Reach Muslims in Cameroon" (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, 2012), 70.

<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel Fuhbang Tanifum, "Toward a Model of Making Disciples of Jesus among Muslims: Case of the Mbororo Muslims of North West Region of Cameroon" (PhD diss., Evangelical University of Cameroon, 2019), 323-329.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR: the UN Refugee Agency. "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Central African Republic: Mbororo," updated March 2018, accessed January 23, 2025, <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/mrgi/2018/en/64966>.

recognize in Him their Allah. And since Allah alone is worthy of worship, they will then understand the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

The majority of the Mandara are Muslim with 96% un-evangelized Sunni Islam, and 4% Ethnic Religions believers<sup>20</sup>, largely due to the progressive Islamization of Northern Cameroon from the past centuries under the influence of the Fulani, who introduced Islam through trade and conquests. From the beginning of the 17th century to the middle of the 18th century, Islam progressed towards the south, among the Mandara where the princes were converted under the May Bukar Aji , 1731-1753 and Mohammadou, 1975: 11.<sup>21</sup> Islam is central to their daily lives, influencing the social practices, customary laws, and religious ceremonies of the Mandara.

The Islamic worldview and Mandara culture, as well as the ignorance or superficial understanding of the divinity of Isa (Jesus) among Mandara Muslims, influenced by their Islamic theological understanding and teachings, constitute major obstacles to the acceptance of Isa as the son of God or divine. Isa is so far perceived as a prophet and not as divine, which creates a significant point of divergence and an obstacle to the acceptance of the Christian faith, Isa is God.

Furthermore, there are obstacles to evangelism and mission. First, the use of inadequate or ill-adapted evangelistic methods, Second, the public evangelistic campaign, where Muslims are not the targets or they cannot attend, Third, the lack of competent dialogue between Muslims and Christians and Fourth, lack of knowledge

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<sup>20</sup> Joshua Project, “Wandala in Cameroun,” accessed 09, October 2024, [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/13487/CM](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/13487/CM).

<sup>21</sup> Christian Seignobo and Abdourhaman Nassourou, “ Religions,” *Atlas de la province Extrême-Nord Cameroun* (Marseille, France: IRD Éditions, 2005), 145-150, accessed 09 October 2024, <https://books.openedition.org/irdeditions/11596?lang=en#anchor-persons>.

of the worldview of each Muslim ethnic group and of the Quran, Fifth combined with a lack of theological contextualization, represents a real problem in facilitating a clear and deep understanding of the divinity of Isa.

Previous studies, conducted in Ngaoundéré for example, are research projects that did not use research methodology, used the surveys, and in the Northwest region of Cameroon, the study adopted a qualitative research approach, and using the phenomenological approach, to analyze the perception of Isa Al-Masih by Adventist believers of Muslim origin (AMBBs) before their acceptance of Isa Al-Masih as Lord and Saviour.

There is no literature on the deity of Isa concerning the Mandara people of Mémé, Mayo Sava, a sub-region of northern Cameroon. In response, this study highlighted the poignant testimonies and lived experiences of AMBBs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, revealing the underlying reasons that led them to accept Isa's message. This inspiring approach also helped us develop more effective strategies for reaching other Mandara Muslims with the gospel message.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The predominantly Muslim Mandara in Meme, Mayo Sava, poses a significant challenge to the Adventist Church Mission. The main problem is that existing approaches to sharing the divine message, particularly the divinity of Jesus Christ (Isa Al-Masih), are ineffective in this context. Specifically, the problems are as follows. First, the lack of contextual understanding by the Adventist mission: Research conducted around the world, in France on the importance of Isa, in Togo on the divinity of Jesus and the researcher in Cameroon on the development of strategies to reach the Muslims have mainly focused on how to reach urban Muslims through education, second, other Muslim groups through friendship and other ways, but not on

the understanding of the divinity of Jesus among Mandara Muslims. This leaves a gap in knowledge about the local perception of Jesus among the Mandara of Meme. Third, insufficient interfaith dialogue: lack of in-depth dialogue and a simplistic approach to Islamic beliefs have led to a lack of understanding and mutual respect; and fourth, theological obstacles: Strict Islamic monotheism (Tawhid) makes it difficult for locals to accept the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, leading to a perception of incompatibility between Christianity and Islam. As a result, the Church in Mayo Sava District is struggling to develop effective missionary strategies to reach the growing Muslim population, which is hampering the spread of the Christian message in this region. The mission of the Adventist Church to the Mandara Muslims should focus on a clear and culturally relevant presentation of the gospel, emphasizing the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. This message should be conveyed in a manner that is understood, appreciated, and accepted, taking care not to offend cultural or theological beliefs, to promote both church growth and the spiritual advancement of the community.

To accomplish this, a contextualized approach is essential: it is beneficial to enhance the understanding of how the Mandara people of Mémé perceive Isa Al-Masih, then encourage respectful and constructive interfaith dialogue; and finally, create mission strategies that are theologically sound and culturally appropriate, presenting the divinity of Isa Al-Masih in a way that resonates with and is acceptable to the local Muslim population.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the understanding of the Mandara Muslims on the divinity of Isa Al-Masih?
2. What is the missiological implication of how Mandara Muslims understand the divinity of Isa Al-Masih?

3. What is the theological implication of how Mandara Muslims understand the divinity of Isa Al-Masih?
4. What is the biblical-theological basis of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih?
5. What strategy can be developed from the divinity of Isa Al-Masih for the mission to Muslims?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to develop a strategy for the Adventist Mission in the department of Mayo Sava, specifically designed to make the divinity of Isa Al-Masih known to Muslims. It also seeks to use the testimonies of converted Muslims to use them as a strategy to reach other people in the locality of Mémé. This study sought to understand Mandara Muslims and their perception of Isa, to translate the Gospel in a way that is relevant to their beliefs. It also sought to integrate the Word of God into their cultural context, to express it in their culture without altering its divine message. This relational approach will allow Mandara Muslims to be reached without offending them or compromising the integrity of the Gospel.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research focused on creating a novel missiological and theological framework for Adventist members and theologians of Mémé, located in Mayo Sava, to more effectively communicate the divinity of Isa Al-Masih to the Mandara Muslim community in this area of Cameroon. It also seeks to forge a robust connection between the Muslim and Adventist groups through meaningful dialogue.

Additionally, this research has enhanced the Church's understanding by deepening its insights into both the Muslim and Adventist realms through discussions

on specific Islamic beliefs rooted in the Mandara context, particularly through examining the teachings found in the Quran and the hadiths.

Furthermore, it has contributed to a clearer comprehension of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih by suggesting a contextualized view of Christian doctrine that respects the Islamic understanding of Tawhid. Moreover, the study has put forward practical strategies for training disciples of Isa Al-Masih within the Mandara Muslim community, offering tangible methods for the Christian message to be embraced without obstacles, emphasizing how the concept of God's oneness, which is central to Islam, can be fulfilled in Isa Al-Masih. Finally, this study has ignited a spiritual revival and commitment within the Adventist Mission framework, serving to invigorate the mission in a setting marked by significant interreligious interactions.

### **Limitation**

This study encountered several limitations. One of the main difficulties was the reluctance of Muslims to open up to Christians due to their Islamic beliefs and traditions or the refusal to sincerely open up or engage in dialogue with a non-Muslim about the Islamic religion, which complicated access to direct information or in-depth interviews with them. In addition, the loyalty of converted Muslims to Adventism is a challenge. Although they accepted Isa Al-Masih, the question of their loyalty in sharing their testimony with transparency and sincerity remains a major concern. Since their testimonies can influence the results in one way or another.

Another important obstacle is related to the limited access to documentary resources. Local libraries do not have specific books or in-depth studies on this subject, which restricts access to relevant sources. Similarly, internet access is sometimes insufficient, limiting the possibilities of online research. Finally, the great

distances between the different churches in the department can make data collection more difficult, adding logistical constraints to the research.

### **Delimitation**

This study focused on the understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih among the Mandara in Mémé, Mayo Sava Division. It examines the effectiveness of evangelistic approaches aimed at Muslims in this region. To do this, five churches were selected where the AMBBs worship to participate in the research process: Gance-Mémé, Ouro Modibo, Ouro Chetima, Tokombere, and Tala Bata. It is important to note that this research does not claim to address the entire spectrum of Islamic beliefs and practices in the region but rather is limited to exploring the specific perceptions of Muslims regarding the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

Furthermore, the study will not address interreligious dynamics in other regions of Cameroon or elsewhere but will focus exclusively on the local context of Mémé and the churches involved. Finally, the results and recommendations of this study are limited to the theological and missiological implications for this study, without claiming to generalize beyond the participants and the people group studied.

### **Reflexivity**

My passion for fact-finding missions among Muslims, especially in Mayo Sava, and specifically in Mémé, stems from my personal experiences, values, and beliefs. I officially began my evangelical ministry as a pastor on June 10, 2010, at the North Cameroon Conference (FNC) after obtaining theological education at the Cosendai Adventist University in Nanga Eboko for three years.

I served as an assistant pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, first as a history/geography, civics, and French teacher at Bergstrom Adventist College in Dogba and at the same time, as group leader of Papata. After a year, I served as group leader of Mayo Moskota in Mozogo, the very first district leader of Mayo Tsanaga North, Mozogo in the Far North of Cameroon, then in North Cameroon in the Benoue East district in Adoumri in 2012, as district leader in the Benoue West district from 2013 to 2014, and returned to Dogba as district leader of Diamare North.

At the same time, I served as the main chaplain for the students of Collège Adventiste Bergström de Dogba, the primary school, and the Adventist dispensary in Dogba, from 2014-2018. In 2015, I was ordained as a pastor of the world church in the North Cameroon Conference. In 2018 and 2021, I served as the senior pastor in the Tokombere Center District in the North Cameroon Conference. Currently, I am the senior pastor of the Mayo Sava South District in Mémé.

In my nearly thirteen years of ministry as a church pastor, chaplain, and district pastor, over 3,500 souls have been led to Christ for the glory of God. However, I can only count about seven souls of these souls as Muslims. This prompts me to reconsider the traditional evangelistic method of using public campaigns that do little to bring Muslims to the saving knowledge of Isa Al-Masih. Therefore, it is worth studying the strategies that work in mission to Muslims.

In my current district, I live in the Muslim quarter and I am surrounded by Muslims. I live with them; I support them when they are in trouble or when there is an unfortunate event like the loss of a loved one, or a happy event, the birth of a child in a Muslim family. They love the Adventist teachings. But I have no idea how it can impact their lives, given the difficulty and a lack of a strategy to reach out to Muslims.

My personal experiences, as listed above, can only equip me more when I interview Muslims about Isa and those who are converted to Adventism in the districts of Mayo Sava, Meme. However, I intend to exercise enough self-control to let them freely disseminate information about their knowledge of Isa Al-Masih. And those who are already converted, how to the faith will also be interviewed on transformed Isa shaped them? This will help me have the best data I need to analyze, draw valuable conclusions, enter their culture, to understand them to better reach other Muslims for Isa Al-Masih.

### **Methodology**

This part of the research briefly presents the methodology of the study. It includes the research approach and design, population and sampling, procedure and subsequent analysis of data collection, and finally, ethical considerations.

#### **Research Approach and Design**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach that “involves the use of a variety of methods and approaches that allow the researcher to explore the social and cultural world to access and understand the unique ways in which individuals and the community inhabit it. It is primarily concerned with the situation and practices.”<sup>22</sup>

This study used the phenomenological research design.

Phenomenology is the study of people's conscious experience of their lifeworld; that is, their everyday life and social action. It is the way into the world as people pre-reflectively experience it. Pre-reflective experience is the ordinary experience in which people live and which they live during most, if not all, of their

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<sup>22</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, UK: SCM Press, 2016), 28.

everyday existence.<sup>23</sup> The phenomenological research involves the researcher describing the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences of several individuals who have experienced the phenomenon.<sup>24</sup>

### **Population and Sampling**

This study was conducted among 23 Seventh-day Adventist Church members with a Muslim background (AMBBs) under the jurisdiction of the North Cameroon Conference, in the districts of Mayo Sava (NCCMS), but only six were selected. The NCCMS, located in the Far North region of Cameroon, covers five districts, particularly in the Mayo Sava division, including Meme.

**Criteria selection.** For the sampling, six participants were selected according to precise criteria in a strict, intentional, and targeted manner to obtain reliable data and ensure the validity of the results. These participants, men and women, were Muslim converts to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in regular standing, faithful and upright, available, and willing to respond faithfully to questions, lived experience, able to describe their experience, with a seniority of at least three years, and aged between 20 and 50 years, because they are steeped in experience. This group served as a basis for an in-depth analysis of their understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih (Jesus Christ), before and after their conversion.

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<sup>23</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 26.

<sup>24</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 14.

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

In this study, data was collected based on the research question to be answered. To answer the research question on the biblical basis for the divinity of Isa Al-Masih, tangible evidence for the nature of Isa was gathered through hermeneutical and exegetical study of the Bible, to have a biblical-theological basis for the divinity of Christ. A similar survey was conducted on the writings of Ellen G. White to gain an additional perspective on the divinity of Jesus. The information thus gathered from previous research on the worldview of Muslims will be brought together to answer the question about the worldview of Muslims. How do they perceive Isa? And how do they become followers of Isa?

**Procedure.** In addition to answering questions on the perspective of the divinity of Jesus or Isa Al-Masih of the targeted AMBBs, interviews were conducted with AMBBs who are still Adventists of Muslim origin. The AMBBs selected in these categories who are not fluent in English or French were interviewed in the Fulfulde or Mandara language spoken in Northern Cameroon. Then, the data collected from them will be transcribed and translated into English. To check the accuracy of the translation, the translation will be back-translated.

More importantly, interviews were conducted to collect data from the AMBBs on their individual experiences of their meeting with Isa under the jurisdiction of the NCCMS. Six participants from six churches distributed in seven Mayo Sava districts were selected.

**Data analysis** is focused on lived experience. This received data will be analyzed and synthesized, categorized into themes, and included under the Relevant Themes. How did they understand Isa? How did they perceive Him? These data gathered are used to discover theological and missiological implications and develop

a strategy and relevant recommendations to share the message of Isa Al-Masih to Mandara Muslims of Mayo Sava, Mémé.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The research sought ethical approval from the Adventist University of Africa Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (AUA-ISERC).<sup>25</sup> It submitted its consent form and data collection tools for review and approval. Once approved, Muslim converts participating in the interviews were required to sign the consent form before the interviews, which were conducted in private. The relationship between Muslims and Christians is based on respect for each other's religious traditions. It is essential to always adopt a peaceful attitude, an attitude of tolerance, confidentiality of interviews, and respectful dialogue with participants. This includes avoiding any speech or behavior that could be perceived as offensive or denigrating to the Christian faith.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

Some key terms need to be defined for a better understanding of this study. These are as follows:

**A faithful orthodox Muslim or practising Muslim** is any person who submits to the will of Allah and follows the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded in the Quran.

**Believers** refers to Christians in the Muslim context, and Muslims who follow Christ.

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<sup>25</sup> Adventist University of Africa, "Ethics and Review Board," accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.aua.ac.ke/ethics-and-review-board/>.

**Community:** “a social, religious, professional, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests.”<sup>26</sup>

**Islam** means “to submit.” The words Islam and Muslim come from the Arabic root meaning “complete submission to the will of God.” Islam means the religion and a Muslim means a person who follows the religion of Islam.

**Muslims mean** “one who submits”.

**Reach:** “To contact, come into contact with, achieve, make contact with, obtain, find, communicate with, get hold of, establish contact with...”<sup>27</sup>

**Strategy** means a plan, an approach, a stratagem, a maneuver, a grand design. Collins Thesaurus A-Z, (Glasgow, UK: Harper Collin Publishers, 2005), 973.

**The divinity of Isa Al-Masih:** In the noble Quran, Isa Al-Masih is God presented as the word and Spirit of Allah (Surah An-Nisa 4:171). In the Bible, Jesus is God incarnate, in whom “dwells bodily all the fullness of the divinity,” the only son of the Father (John 1.1-3,14). He is the Word of God, the “I AM”. The divinity of Jesus means that Isa is the power and has the power to accomplish divine works: the forgiveness of sins, self-resurrection, redemption, and judgment. He possesses divine attributes, pre-existence, power of creation, and existence.<sup>28</sup>

**The Pillars of Islam.** These are the customs and traditions of the Islamic religion that shape the daily lives of Muslims. More specifically, they are the obligatory acts and duties of all Muslims, particularly Mandara Muslims. They include: (Shahada), a confession of faith: there is no other God but Allah, and that

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<sup>26</sup> *Webster’s College Dictionary* (2011), s.v. “community.”

<sup>27</sup> *Collins Thesaurus A-Z* (2005), s.v. “Reach.”

<sup>28</sup> John MacArthur, *La Divinité de Christ* (Trois-Rivières, Canada : Publications Chrétiennes, 2018), 3-8.

Muhammad is the messenger; (Salat), or ritual prayer: Muslims are required to pray five times a day, facing Mecca; (Zakat), or alms. All faithful Muslims are called upon to practice charity and to give alms to the poor voluntarily (sadaqa) and obligatorily (zakat). (Sawm) or fasting: This is an essential spiritual practice that is performed during the holy month of Ramadan in the Islamic calendar. (Hajj): This is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Every Muslim, male or female, who is physically able, must perform it at least once in his or her life if he or she has the financial means.<sup>29</sup>

**The Quran** is the holy book, or scripture, of Muslims. It is considered the literal word of Allah to Muhammad.

**The articles of Islam** are the articles of Faith in Islam. These are the fundamental Islamic beliefs: belief in Allah (Iman bi 'l-Lahi), belief in Angels (Iman bi 'l-Mala'ikah), belief in Books (Iman bi 'l-Kutub), belief in the Prophets (al-Iman bi 'r-Rusul), and belief in the Last Day (Iman bi'l-Yawnu'l-'Aakhir). These fundamental principles form the foundation of the Mandara Muslims' belief system and shape their worldview.

**The words of Muhammad** (i.e. the Quran and Hadith) are cognitive foundations upon which the Islamic worldview is based.

### **Chapter Outline**

The first chapter presented the introduction of the research as it was stated above. The second chapter discusses the biblical basis of this study. The third chapter will successively deal with the literature review, and the fourth chapter will deepen the methodology of this study. The fifth chapter analyzed the data. Finally, the sixth chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

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<sup>29</sup> Carole Hillenbrand. *Introduction to Islam: Beliefs and Practices in Historical Perspective* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 88-112.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Among the multitude of religious thoughts and beliefs in the world, the intersection of Islam and Christianity has long been the subject of intense inquiry and debate. At the heart of these interactions is the nature of Isa Al-Masih, the study of the person of Jesus, and the union in him of the divine and human natures, the unique foundation of the Christian church.<sup>1</sup> In the New Testament, both Jesus' disciples and some ordinary individuals had faith in his death and resurrection. They acknowledged him as the realization of ancient promises, particularly identifying him as the Messiah, Al-Masih in Arabic, meaning the Christ, the Anointed One. Nevertheless, there were other people during Jesus' time who did not share this belief, as they continued to look for a political savior for Israel.

The contemplation of Isa Al-Masih in the New Testament is primarily framed within concepts derived from Jewish belief and the context of the Greco-Roman world.<sup>2</sup> The divinity of Isa Al-Masih is supported by various titles and ideas adopted by the early Church to express its faith: Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man... “These terms indicate that, according to Christian belief, Isa demonstrates his divinity through his humanity in a distinct identity that encompasses both divine and human

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, *Le Grand Dictionnaire de Theologie* (Paris, France: Excelsis, 2021), 681.

<sup>2</sup> Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, “The New Testament: The Greco-Roman Context,” February 22, 2013, accessed October 1, 2025, <https://israelbiblicalstudies.com/blog/category/jewish-studies/the-new-testament-the-greco-roman-context>.

natures.”<sup>3</sup> Isa, who came to live among men, took human form or was incarnated—Isa the Messiah or the liberator of peoples, the Saviour of humanity. However, what is perhaps less explored is how Mandara Muslim believers view his divinity, emphasizing Isa Al-Masih through the prism of their religious tradition. Based on Scripture, this chapter provides a solid and coherent biblical and theological basis for affirming the divinity of Isa Al-Masih, which theologically supports the sharing of the gospel with Muslims. The biblical basis for Isa Al-Masih's divinity is examined through the perspectives of the Old and New Testaments, the perspective of Protestants, and, finally, the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Indeed, his divinity as formulated by Ellen G. White. Thus, this study highlights the divinity of Isa Al-Masih and lays the foundations for a contextual mission to the Muslims of Mandara to Mémé in the department of Mayo Sava.

### **Biblical View of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih**

This section focuses on the examination of the concept of the divinity of Jesus in the Scriptures. The author examines key Bible passages from the Old and New Testaments.

#### **Divinity in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, the study focuses on two types of flagship books, the Pentateuch and the prophetic book of Isaiah. These texts are essential for the basic foundation of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih in the Old Testament. The choice of the Pentateuch, the five books of the prophet Moses, is undeniable. These books shed light on the divinity of Isa. These writings adequately recount the origins of creation,

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Zurcher, *Le Christ Manifesté en Chair* (Paris, France : Collonges Sous-Salève, 1995), 67.

the story of redemption, and, above all, the poignant revelation of Isa—God who manifests Himself to the prophet. Among them, the Book of Genesis 3:15, and the Book of Exodus, revealed the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. Exodus 3:14 is particularly highlighted because it presents tangible proof of Isa's divinity. Furthermore, Isaiah 60:1-7 is also retained in this study, because it constitutes clear proof of the prophecy announcing the coming of Isa Al-Masih, born of the virgin Mary - a prophecy whose fulfillment is clearly manifested in the New Testament.

The Pentateuch focuses primarily on the origins of the Israelites and the covenant between God and the descendants of Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it also presents the Messiah's promise of salvation through Isa Al-Masih (Jesus) to his descendants. When Adam and Eve sinned, God dealt with mankind based on grace, the covenant of grace (Genesis 3:20). As soon as sin entered the world, God promised the coming of a Saviour from sin (Genesis 3:15; more explicitly, in Genesis 12:1-3). This passage from the pre-Gospel refers to Al-Masih in Hebrew as the Messiah or "Yeshua", who is destined to defeat the serpent on Mount Golgotha. Messiah's incarnation is required, to be born in the flesh from a woman, coming from the lineage of Eve. This passage foretells an injury to the heel, a foreshadowing of Isa Al-Masih's crucifixion. God promised to bless Abraham and make him a great nation, and through him, all the families of the earth would be blessed. According to Sherrill G. Stevens, God made a promise that had a universal dimension. Abram's descendants were to become a covenant nation, but God's plan also included all the other nations of the world. The Hebrew nation was to have a special role but not an exclusive relationship with God. The other peoples of the world were also God's

people, and the purpose of God's covenant with Abram was to establish a channel for bringing God's blessing to the people, leading them to have faith in God.<sup>4</sup>

God promised to deliver and save his people from slavery in Egypt in His promise to Abraham. He reveals Himself to the prophet Moses in the book of Exodus 3:13-14: Moses said to God, "I will come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you. But if they ask me what his name is, what shall I tell them?'" God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he added, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, He who is called 'I AM' has sent me to you." The term "I am that I am" in Hebrew is translated, "YHWH" or "Ehyeh asher Ehyeh."<sup>5</sup> In the Septuagint it is translated from the Hebrew phrase "anî hû" (I am, I am) or "ehyeh" (I am) in Exodus. In its context, "I am" denotes the divine name of Yahweh.<sup>6</sup> It is a significant name,<sup>7</sup> and it is a strong statement of the eternal existence and unchangeable nature of God, which is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine. This phrase indicates that God is self-existent, independent of all, and eternal. He is the self-existent God. He is uncreated. He is the same God throughout the ages, faithful and constant.

This statement establishes a profound theological foundation, marking his unique and transcendent nature as God to the pagan deities of surrounding cultures in time and space. This "I am," Isa announces, who by his declaration of himself in the

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<sup>4</sup> Sherrill G. Stevens, *Genesis, Layman's Bible Book Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1978), 1:55.

<sup>5</sup> Via Egeria, "The Divine Name," accessed November 26, 2024, <https://via-egeria.com/le-nom-divin-yhwh/>.

<sup>6</sup> Petite école Biblique, "Je Suis : Jésus révèle son origine et son identité divine dans l'évangile selon saint Jean," accessed November 26, 2024, <https://petiteecolebiblique.fr/pdfpeb/087pebjesus.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Murphy James Gracey, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (New York: I.K. Funk and Company, 1881), 31.

Gospels, affirms his identity: “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58). This echoes God's declaration to Moses in the book of Exodus 3:13-14. Indeed, Isa Al-Masih has existed at all times. This is clear proof of his divinity. The “I am” is the figure of Isa in the Old Testament. There is a connection between YHWH and the I AM. And in the New Testament, Jesus is characterized several times as the I AM, the image of God. I am the bread of life.

In his book, Isaiah 7:14 says: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son and will call his name Immanuel.” This name, Immanuel, itself was to be a wonder, a marvelous being. He would be God manifested as a collective person, and therefore a wonder as a superhuman person. The Messiah was to be Immanuel in the sense that He Himself would be El (God).<sup>8</sup> God who lives among men. Isa is revealed as the God with us. The us refers to the people of Israel, moreover, to the other descendants of Abraham, the Ishmaelites. Micah 5:1-2 resonates with Isaiah and: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the clans of Judah, yet out of you shall come to me one who is to be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, the eternal name of son of God” Isa Al-Masih is incarnate, He took the human form or the promised Emmanuel was to be born of the virgin Mary.

Christians believe in the divine nature of Isa Al-Masih, fully divine and fully human. Thus, in Matthew, Jesus is “God with us”, as God is not in a static presence, but in a saving activity.<sup>9</sup> He is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, and is central to the salvation of humanity and the Mandara Muslims. Conversely, in Islam,

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<sup>8</sup> C. F. Kell and F. Deutsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), 7:220.

<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament, Verse-by-verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 4.

Isa Al-Masih is considered one of the main prophets, born of the Virgin Mary, and a messenger of Allah. He is respected and honored as an important figure in the Islamic tradition. Nevertheless, he is not understood as God in Islam.

### **The Divinity of Isa Al-Masih in the New Testament**

**Divinity in the Gospel.** In this part, this research explored some texts that are relevant to understanding the divinity of Isa Al-Masih in the Bible.

Christians believe in the virgin birth of Christ or his incarnation. This birth is a fundamental doctrine. In highlighting the miraculous nature of this conception, it is pertinent to emphasize that it was effected by the action of the divine word, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in Islam, the conception of the Holy Spirit is not well defined in the Noble Qur'an. Some scholars believe that the Holy Spirit is the Angel Gabriel. Like: Khan, Muhammad Muhsin; Al-Hilali, Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din (2020-06-16). *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Qur'an.* *That's not right, is it?* More importantly, a subtle life comes from Allah who has designed Isa (Sourate al-Anbiya 21:91). However, this virgin birth of Isa can be a dialogue bridge. It is considered as proof of his divine nature. In the Gospel of John 1:1-3, 14, it is said: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. [...] And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." "I am ... the beginning" the word pre-existed. This truth is the definitive proof of the divinity of Christ because only God is eternal.<sup>10</sup> John 1:1. It says: In the beginning was the Word. John then takes this term, "the

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<sup>10</sup> MacArthur, *La divinité de Christ*, 9.

Word,” and—capitalizing it, as it were—replaces it with “God.” But we do not yet know who this word was, and the word was with God.

The word and God preexisted together. In the beginning, they were already there, both of them. “With God” distinguishes the word from God and indicates a close, face-to-face relationship with him. How close is this? And the word was God. So close that the word was identical with God at the same time that it could be distinguished from him.<sup>11</sup>

This simple statement, only four words in both English and Greek (theos ên ho logos), is perhaps the clearest and most direct statement of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ that can be found in all of Scripture.<sup>12</sup> John 6:35, I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:5), the one who is, who was, and who is to come (Revelation 1:4).

But many prophets and apostles performed miracles and wonders at the permission of God. The miracles that Isa performed are clear proof of his divinity. He performed many miracles, including the healing of the sick, the healing of Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52; the Healing of the centurion’s servant in Matthew 8:5-13; the Healing of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19 and the Healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethzatha (or Bethesda) in John 5:1-15, the resurrection of the dead in (John 11:25-26), resurrection of Lazarus and Jairus’ daughter in Mark 5:22-24, 35-43 and the control of nature (Mark 4:39-41, calming of the storm). These miracles are considered signs of his divine authority and mission. These texts are clear evidence of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. Isa is not only the one who operated the miracles of resurrection, but he is himself the resurrection and life. He remains the source of life.

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<sup>11</sup> MacArthur, *La divinité de Christ*, 9, 347.

<sup>12</sup> Idem., 11-12.

Prophet Elisa, who resurrected the child of the woman in Shunem, or the apostle Peter, who resurrected Dorcas, but all these prophets and apostles who performed these miracles had limitations. They are depend on God. In contrast, Jesus is himself God. Furthermore, Islam recognizes the prophetic miracles of Isa. Jesus is recognized as having performed miracles with the permission of Allah, such as the healing of the blind and the lepers, and the resurrection of the dead. These miracles are seen as evidence of his prophetic role, not of his divine nature. Both traditions acknowledge that Jesus performed miracles, although interpretations differ. In both cases, these miracles confirm his special status.

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are central to Christian theology. Christians believe that Jesus' death and resurrection bring salvation, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: "For I delivered to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." New King James Version (NKJV), Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (NKJV). And John 11:25-26 adds: "Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" King James Version (KJV). However, Islam denies this truth of the crucifixion. Islam teaches that Jesus was not crucified but was resurrected by Allah. Qur'an. Surah An-Nisa 4:157, Tafsir Ibn Katheer.

The Quran indicates that Jesus was not killed or crucified but was made to appear as such. Surah An-Nisa 4:157. Instead, Jesus will return at the end of time. Surah Al-Zukhruf 43:61. Although there is significant disagreement over the

crucifixion, both traditions agree on the ultimate significance of Jesus' life and future return. Both see Jesus as having a key role in the eschatological events.

The Bible teaches the Second Coming of Isa Al-Masih and his eschatological role. Christians believe in the second coming of Christ. John 14:3 says, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will receive you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” Acts 1:11 states, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.” And, where Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead and establish the kingdom of God. God's word says in 2 Timothy 4:1, “I charge you before God, and before Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.” Isa Al-Masih will return for the establishment of the kingdom of God. Matthew 25:31-34 states: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, he will sit on the throne of his glory; and before him all the nations will be gathered. [...] Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Islam also believes in the second coming of Jesus, who will return as Isa Al-Masih, the sign of the Day of Judgment. He will restore justice and defeat the false messiah (al-Masih ad-Dajjal). Both traditions anticipate the return of Jesus as an important eschatological event, although their roles and implications of this return differ. Therefore, both give prominence and honor to Isa. Both Christianity and Islam recognize Isa Al-Masih as a highly important and honored figure, with a role that impacts the religious life and eschatological beliefs of followers. This framework highlights both points of convergence and divergence in the views of Jesus in

Christianity and Islam, providing a basis for missiological and theological engagement to reach out to Mandara Muslims in Meme.

### **Protestant Theology of the Divinity of Jesus**

Protestants are a group of churches and Christian communities that emerged from the Reformation of the 16th century, whether these churches were formed at that time by Catholics who then separated from the Roman Church, or whether they arose subsequently within Protestant communions, or whether they developed in mission countries.<sup>13</sup> They have their theological current and their doctrines. The divinity of Jesus is also at the heart of their theology. Thus, certain forms of Protestantism, such as Lutheranism or certain forms of Anglicanism, evangelical churches, and Pentecostal churches, focus primarily on the nature of Jesus Christ and give weight to the Bible as the clear evidence of his divinity.

The subjects such as the incarnation of Jesus, son of God and son of man, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the meaning of Jesus Christ, the return of Jesus, the Christian faith, including the divinity of Jesus, are at the center of Protestant theology. Martin Luther, one of the great reformers, said: “the cross alone is your theology,”<sup>14</sup> addressing his own people. This cross in question is the metaphorical figure of Christ, the one who is the foundation of the history of the redemption of all humanity, including Muslims.

Commenting on the great Protestant theologian Karl Barth, Floris Ennio in the article *Divinity and Humanity of God*, says that Jesus Christ is precisely the true God

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<sup>13</sup> Encyclopedie Larousse. “Les Eglises Protestantes,” accessed November 27, 2024, [https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/divers/%C3%89glises\\_protestantes/117739](https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/divers/%C3%89glises_protestantes/117739). .

<sup>14</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1985), 152; see also, Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflection on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997). 1518.

of man and, like man, the true partner of God. He is both the Lord who lowers to communion with man and the servant raised to communion with God. In Jesus Christ divinity is preserved.<sup>15</sup> More importantly, Jesus' entire ministry was a mark of his divinity. He spoke like God, he acted like God and did works that only God himself can do. His works testify to his divinity.<sup>16</sup> Jesus was God in that he made God known, in that God made himself known in and through him, in that he was God's effective means of addressing his creation and his people. But he was not God in himself. God was more than what he had manifested in and through his incarnate Word.<sup>17</sup>

Christ is described as the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20), it is because the depth of God have been so fully revealed in and through Christ that Christ can be described as the revelation of the true God.<sup>18</sup> Protestants agree on the divinity of Jesus. Theologian John Knox vibrates in tune with other Protestants, defending with the utmost energy the divinity of Jesus. In his book *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ*, he explains this position based on New Testament Christology. The Logos in the book of John 1:1, and the Apostle Paul through the Christocentric message of Isa, as in the Pauline epistles as in Colossians 2:9 and Romans 1:3-4, affirms that Isa, Jesus, the divine pre-existence, his humanity, is the Lord and the Christ. He is the Son of God.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, among these Protestants are the Jehovah's Witnesses, who for

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<sup>15</sup> Floris Ennio, "Divinite et Humanite de Dieu," *Études théologiques et religieuses* 43, no. 3 (1968): 159-177, accessed November 27, 2024, [https://www.persee.fr/doc/ether001422391968\\_num4331861](https://www.persee.fr/doc/ether001422391968_num4331861).

<sup>16</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, "Gospel Classics: Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ." December 2001, accessed November 27, 2024, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2001/12/five-marks-of-the-divinity-of-jesus-christ?lang=eng>.

<sup>17</sup> Jams D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 135.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem.*, 136.

<sup>19</sup> John Knox, *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ: A study of Pattern in Christology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 38-39.

them, Jesus is not God but is only the first of divine creation. His name in heaven is Michael. However, from the Old Testament, we see the God of Israel announcing his own coming to save his people.<sup>20</sup>

### **Adventist Theology of the Divinity of Jesus**

The Adventist Church is a church that was organized in 1863 and took the name of Seventh-day Adventist Church after the great disappointment, 1844. The Adventists, because it wanted to keep alive in its midst the hope of the return of Christ. Seventh-day, because waiting implied in their eyes obedience to the commandments of God, including the fourth which requires rest on the seventh day of the week.<sup>21</sup>

Adventist scholars have a theological similarity with Protestants who draw their beliefs from the great Christian Reformation. In his article, “Revisiting the Trinity: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Reflections – Book Review,” Jason Smith argues for a theology of the Trinity that is faithful to historic Christian teaching, particularly regarding the deity of Jesus, the eternal Son of God. He presents a nuanced position that Jesus is the begotten Son, an idea not generally shared by Adventists. However, Smith strongly affirms the eternal deity of Christ, his unique relationship with the Father, and his uncreated nature. Jesus is not a created being, but rather the Creator himself, existing from all eternity.<sup>22</sup> It is based on the whole holy word of God, the Bible, Scripture, and Scripture alone (Sola scriptura), from which

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<sup>20</sup> Les Témoins de Jéhovah (JW.ORG) et Jésus Christ, “La divinité de Jésus dans l'Ancien Testament ?” March 15, 2023, accessed November 27, 2024, <https://jw-verite.org/jw-org-temoins-de-jehovah-jesus-christ/39-la-divinite-de-jesus-ancien-testament.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Lehmann Richard, *Les Adventistes du septième jour* (Bellgian: Brepols, 1987), 10-27.

<sup>22</sup> Jason Smith, “Revisiting the Trinity: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Reflections- Book Review,” April 11, 2025, accessed May 1, 2025, <https://asitreads.com/revisiting-the-trinity-biblical-theological-and-historical-reflections>.

the fundamental beliefs flow and constitute the basis of the Adventist faith. Jesus is the center of interest and all attention. Because he is identified as the Messiah, the savior of humanity. By his coming, his incarnation, his childhood, his baptism, his ministry, his death, and his resurrection, there is here an irrefutable proof of his messiahship and his divinity. And this, Muslims must know and accepting it by faith is another. We find it in the pages of the fundamental beliefs:

The Son of God, the eternal Son, became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through him all things were created; through him the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished and the world is judged. Eternally and truly God, he also became truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived and was subjected to temptation as a man, but he gave the perfect example of the justice and love of God. His miracles attested to his divinity and confirmed him as the promised Messiah. He willingly suffered and died on the cross for our sins and in our place rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to minister on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. He will return in glory to bring final deliverance to his people and the restoration of all things.<sup>23</sup>

One of the great and remarkable Adventist scholars, Angel Manuel Rodriguez, in his powerful book, *A Christian Lifestyle: Biblical Foundations and Practice*, said that by fully understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ, we understand the heart of the gospel message. By sharing this profoundly transformative love with Muslims, we find points of connection where God's grace can shine and barriers can be overcome. The Adventist Church is not another Christian church, but a latter-day movement of God, inviting all other world religions to faith—Muslims, Jews,

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<sup>23</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine* (Silver Spring, MD: Pacific Press, 2005), 43.

Buddhists, and even Christians. Angel Manuel Rodriguez, *A Christian Lifestyle: Biblical Foundations and Practice*.

Theologian George Steveni, in his book entitled “Discovering Christ,” maintains that Jesus was God before his incarnation, but in Christ God came to live with us. He became a man.<sup>24</sup> Alfred Vaucher, the dean of French-speaking theologians, in his book, “History of Salvation,” responds to this concern about the divinity of Jesus. He emphasized his incarnation. According to him, Christ affirmed his humanity in his temptations.<sup>25</sup> Christ was also human, he was tempted. The only difference with Adam is that he did not sin. This demonstrates, according to these positions, that Isa is God among men; he is God with us. He spoke about his incarnation. In his article “The Trinity,” Roland Meyer explains this position. He relates that the fact of the incarnation of Christ does not imply the loss of his divinity. He has a dual nature. He veils his divinity for the benefit of his humanity.<sup>26</sup> In upholding the doctrine of the Trinity (God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) and emphasizing the oneness of God, theologian Kwabena Donkor in his article, “Eternal Subordination of Jesus? A Theological Analysis and Review,” says that Jesus Christ is just as truly God as God the Father while maintaining that there is only one God.<sup>27</sup> Given the concerns of theologians and members, further and deeper than it should be the official position of the church that breathes life into this search, it bases

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<sup>24</sup> Jean Zucher, *Le Christ Manifeste en Chair* (Paris, France: Collonges-sous-Salève : Faculté Adventiste de Théologie, 2025), 310.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>26</sup> Roland Meyer, “La trinité approche systématique,” 9 October 9, 2022, accessed November 28, 2024, <https://implicationtotale.fr/storage/app/uploads/public/637/520/1ab/6375201ab0b6b703838342.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Kwabena Donkor, *Eternal Subordination of Jesus: A Theological Analysis and Review* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2022), 34.

its beliefs on scripture alone, declares the fundamental belief that Isa Al-Masih, God, the eternal Son, was incarnated in Jesus Christ.

Through him, all things were created; through him, the character of God was revealed, the salvation of humanity was accomplished, and the world was judged. Eternally and truly God, he also became truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and was subjected to temptation as a man, but he gave the perfect example of God's righteousness and love. His miracles demonstrated God's power and confirmed him as the promised Messiah. He suffered and died willingly on the cross for our sins and in our place, he rose from the dead and ascended to minister on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. He will come again in glory to deliver his people once and for all and to restore all things.<sup>28</sup>

### **Ellen G. White's View on Divinity Isa Al-Masih**

Ellen White Harmon was born on November 26, 1827, on a small farm in Gorham, Maine, and died in 1915, was a young woman God chose to help His church. She received her first vision at just 17 years old, and for the rest of her life, she played a huge role in establishing the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She received many visions from God and wrote many books about the Bible, lifestyle, and spirituality.<sup>29</sup> As a Christian theologian, prophet and a prominent figure in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she did not specifically address Islam in her writings, as she focused primarily on Christian theology and the teachings of the Bible.

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<sup>28</sup> Conférence Générale des Adventistes du Septième Jour, "28 croyances fondamentales," 2015, 3-4, accessed November 28, 2024, [https://www.adventist.be/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/28\\_Croyance\\_Fondamentales.pdf](https://www.adventist.be/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/28_Croyance_Fondamentales.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Richard Lehmann, *Les Adventistes du septième jour* (Belgian: Brepols, 1987), 10-27.

However, her writings emphasize the centrality of Jesus or Isa Al-Masih in Christian belief and practice. Ellen G. White encourages a global vision to reach other nations, peoples, and families through a clear understanding of Isa's divinity. She did not have a problem with the divinity of Christ and never ceased to affirm Christ's equality with God and having the same attributes as the Father, as the only begotten Son of God, who was with the Father from eternal ages.<sup>30</sup> She states one final time what has become the official belief of the Adventist Church regarding the divinity of Christ. Christ was essentially and in the highest sense; He was with God from all eternity... a distinct person, yet one with the Father.<sup>31</sup>

In her seminal book, she states that in the beginning, God was manifest in all the works of creation. It was Christ who spread out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and in the burning bush in which Christ showed himself to Moses that made God known. He was nevertheless God incarnate.<sup>32</sup> Ellen G. White safely maintains that Isa Al-Masih by his nature, his identity, his pre-existence, and his incarnation, is God. He is God because no human being can be eternal, can create, can give life, and save humanity from sin, he is at the center of creation and also in its redemptive works.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

### **Summary**

This section of the study explores the biblical foundations of the deity of Isa Al-Masih throughout the Old and New Testaments. It then examines the writings of

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<sup>30</sup> Jean Zurcher, *Le Christ Manifeste en Chair* (Paris, France: Collonges-sous-Salève : Faculté Adventiste de Théologie, 2015), 38.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ellen Gould White, *Jésus-Christ* (Dammarie-Les-Lys, France: Vie et Santé, 2000), 101-132.

Ellen G. White, the positions of the mainline Protestant denominations, and the major contributions of Adventist theologians, arriving at the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## **Conclusion**

The divinity of Isa Al-Masih finds its essence in the foundations of the Bible, rooted in the profound revelations of the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, the biblical writer Ellen G. White, who also received divine revelation in the 19th century, affirmed this truth in her various writings. While the majority of theologians of the Protestant churches rely on the revelation of God's Word to confirm the divinity of Isa, Jehovah's Witnesses, although coming from the same 16th century Reformation, refute it. The latter maintain in fact that Jesus is only the first of the angels created by God. "*Jehovah's Witnesses' Beliefs About Jesus*"

The great Adventist theologians, under divine inspiration, have enriched the understanding of the divinity of Jesus, a subject that remains a constant theological debate. Furthermore, the Adventist Church has incorporated this position into its 28 fundamental beliefs, taken from the Bible, stating that Jesus, also called Isa, is God and the Savior of the world. Finally, this essential truth should be known to Mandara Muslims so that they will return to Him, the true way, the truth, and the life, so that they may be saved.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Jesus, the central figure of Christianity, is a subject of ongoing discussion between Muslim and Christian scholars, religious figures, and faithful Muslim and Christian believers around the world, in Africa such as Mémé, and Mayo Sava in Cameroon. The divinity of Isa Al-Masih has always been a subject of controversy between the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael who claim to be of a monotheistic religion. Over the centuries, his divinity has often been attacked by religious and often skeptical groups, but also by Muslim believers: “Islam challenges the faith that Christians have held for two millennia about Jesus and his divinity.”<sup>1</sup>

While in the early church, the humanity of Jesus was of great importance because of heresies such as Gnosticism and Docetism that denied Jesus’ humanity, in the modern world, the divinity of Jesus is controversial. Those who claim belief in God, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslims, have joined the fourth-century Arians and contemporary atheists in denying Jesus’ divinity.”<sup>2</sup> Two thousand years ago, Jesus asked his disciples the pertinent question—a question about his true identity: “They answered and said, ‘Some say that you are John the Baptist; others, Elijah; others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ And he said to them, ‘Who do you

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<sup>1</sup> Remi Gomez, "La divinité de Christ face à l'islam," November 26, 2020, accessed August 04, 2024, <https://www.amazon.com/divinit%C3%A9-Christ-face-%C3%A0-lislam/dp/2362495000#customerReviews>.

<sup>2</sup> Kelly Reddy, “The Divinity of Jesus” (Research paper, Toronto Baptist Seminary & Bible College, Toronto, Canada, November 2016), 3.

say that I am?’ Matthew 16:14-15 “indicated that some say He is John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. However, Jesus's question prompts a more direct and personal response from Peter, who declares, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”. (King James Version). Yet, in the Muslim world and in some Quranic sources, Jesus, known as Isa, occupies a special place as a revered prophet, but his nature and role often differ from those taught in Christianity.

This chapter explores what Muslims think about the divinity of Isa Al-Masih, the Messiah spoken of in the Holy Quran and other credible Islamic sources. The task of sharing Isa, the Messiah, with Muslims has always been one of the greatest challenges facing the Christian church. Currently, this challenge is even more apparent as political events draw attention to Muslim lands, while a new openness to consider the claim of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih is reported among several Muslims.<sup>3</sup> The challenge of reaching Mandara Muslims in the Mayo Sava Division, particularly in Meme, is daunting. It requires a thoughtful approach that takes into account their perspective of understanding the divinity of Isa Al-Masih and the appropriate means to reach them. This mission requires a thorough and contextual analysis.

This chapter first examines the historical context of Mayo Sava, located in northern Cameroon, as well as the expansion of Islam in this region, particularly in Meme. It then presents the Mandara worldview regarding the divinity of Isa Al-Masih, while exploring approaches based on the Noble Quran, ahadith, and Sunnah relating to Isa.

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth J. Collins. *The Theology of John Wesley, Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 246.

Finally, this chapter discusses the pillars and untouchable elements of Islam, Islamic teachings regarding the divinity of Isa, and the bridges and challenges that arise in the dialogue between Muslims and Adventists. Particular attention is paid to exploring the studies conducted by scholars in Cameroon within the general framework of this study, particularly in Mayo Sava and Meme. The missiological and theological implications are studied to enrich this literary interaction and promote the relevance of this study.

### **Historical Background of Mayo Sava, Northern Cameroon**

Mayo-Sava is a local government in the Far North region of Cameroon, with the city of Mora as its capital. It was created in 1982 by presidential decree, decree No. 82-455 of September 20, 1982, establishing municipalities, local divisions, and subdivisions. Amended by decree No.82/557 of November 5, 1982, the division has an area of 2,736 km<sup>2</sup><sup>4</sup> and an estimated population of 469,424 inhabitants<sup>5</sup> where the locality or canton of Mémé is located. Mayo-Sava was formed from the former division of Margui-Wandala, whose capital was Mokolo. Mayo-Sava plays an important role in cultural mixing because it is full of a multitude of ethnic groups, including the Muyang people, Mada, Ouldime, Podoko, Hourza, Kanouri, Houassa, Muktele, Mandara and other ethnic groups.

The locality of Mora is also characterized by economic activities, such as trade, and agriculture, specifically the cultivation of millet, sorghum, corn, cotton, and

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<sup>4</sup> Ahmadou Ahidjo, "Le président de la République, décret n°82-455 du 20 septembre 1982 portant création de communes," accessed October 31, 2024, <https://www.google.com/search?q=Mora>.

<sup>5</sup> République du Cameroun, Institut National De La Statistique, eds., *Annuaire Statistique De La Region De L'extreme Nord 2018* (Yaoundé, Cameroun: Institut National De La Statistique, 2019), accessed April 22, 2024, [https://ins-cameroun.cm/wpcontent/uploads/2020/08/annuaire\\_statistique\\_edition\\_2019](https://ins-cameroun.cm/wpcontent/uploads/2020/08/annuaire_statistique_edition_2019).

market gardening. On the religious level, we practice the traditional African religion, Christianity, and Islam which is strongly represented. Because, on every street corner we can see mosques and Quranic educational centers.

### **Expansion of Islam**

Islam was introduced to the region by Muslim traders and missionaries in past centuries, probably as early as the 17th century. Further, the jihad of the Fulani empire, led by Ousmane dan Fodio in the early 19th century, consolidated Islam in the region and resulted in the formation of the Sokoto Emirate<sup>6</sup>, which had a significant influence on northern Cameroon, particularly Mayo Sava. Islam grew from a small number of followers to a significant number in Mayo Sava, northern Cameroon.

Over the years, the new religion has taken off through the Islamization of the Kanouri populations, the Mandara, and the Choa Arabs by the Fulani pastoral groups, during and after colonization, and until today. This expansion of Islam is a great threat to social life and impacts the advancement of the evangelical mission in this locality. Thus, this expansion influenced the Adventist missionary work. Hence the great challenge of the evangelical mission in this community is the multiplication in the number of Muslim faithful.

### **The Beginnings of Islam in Mayo Sava, Far North Cameroon**

Islam appeared in the Mayo Sava department in the pre-colonial period. It's spread was facilitated by the region's geographical position, close to the north of

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<sup>6</sup> Christian Seignobos and Olivier Iyébi-Mandjek, eds., *Atlas de la province Extrême-Nord Cameroun*, (Marseille, France: IRD Éditions, 2017), accessed July 16, 2024, <https://books.openedition.org/irdeditions/11596?lang=en#anchor-toc-1-1>.

Nigeria, which was then Islamized and linked to eastern Cameroon, thus favoring the penetration of this religion.

### **The Arrival of Islam in Mandara land, Mémé**

From the beginning of the 17th century to the middle of the 18th century, Islam progressed towards the south, among the Mandara where the princes converted under the reign of May Bukar Aji (1731-1753) and under the reign of (Mohammadou). In South of Wandala, warrior merchants from Borno, an Islamized people from northern Nigeria, began, through the conquest and expansion of Islam, to Islamize the peoples of Cameroon north and to establish the first mosques along the caravan trails.<sup>7</sup>

The mobility of the Fulani, already Islamized, favored the spread of Islam among the Mandara population. Cultural interactions and; intercommunity marriages; reinforced the establishment of Islam among the local population. Today, the Mandara are estimated to be 96% Sunni Islam<sup>8</sup>. Nowadays, these people, unreached by the message of the Gospel, continue to become Islamized.

### **The Worldview of the Mandara People**

Worldview is the way people see or perceive the world, the way they “know” it. Claude Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist and ethnologist, one of the most influential intellectuals of the 20th century in the field of humanities and social

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<sup>7</sup> Christian Seignobos and Olivier Iyébi-Mandjek, eds., *Atlas de la province Extrême-Nord Cameroun*, (Marseille, France: IRD Éditions, 2017), accessed July 16, 2024, <https://books.openedition.org/irdeditions/11596?lang=en#anchor-toc-1-1>

<sup>8</sup> Joshua Project, “Wandala in Cameroun,” accessed November 02, 2024, [https://www.joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/13487/CM](https://www.joshuaproject.net/people_groups/13487/CM).

sciences, has argued for the importance of knowing the worldview. He proposes that it should not be destroyed and that special attention should be paid to it.<sup>9</sup>

Worldview is the root and deepest level of any culture, as the culturally structured assumptions, values, commitments, and allegiances that underlie a people's perception of reality and their response to these perceptions. From it arise beliefs, values, cultural customs, and practices or material or immaterial cultural forms. All societies or cultural groups are built on worldview. More importantly, worldview therefore forms the basis of cultural identity. According to Hiebert, worldview is the basic assumptions about reality which lie behind the beliefs and behavior of a culture.<sup>10</sup>

Worldview is the way individuals see themselves and others, as well as their place in the world. It then defines the capacity for adaptation, truth, and the path of all life or even social cohesion. Understanding the worldview allows the researcher to lead these people to undergo a progressive transformation of the worldview to change their allegiance. The Mandara worldview is based on faith in Allah, shaped by Islam. Formerly pagan, before the arrival of Islam, the Mandara people called the supreme being "Dada Miya", meaning "my father" or God, who lives in heaven.

The Mandara are also rooted in mystical practices to do harm or to enrich themselves. And today they highlight folk Islam or the mystical side of Islam. The religious transformation has deeply influenced their traditional and cultural values, leading to a change in culture and worldview, particularly in their conception of God and the spiritual world. The Mandara adhere to Islamic beliefs and traditions, which

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<sup>9</sup> Emmanuel Terray, "La vision du monde de Claude Lévi-Strauss," *L'homme* 193 (2010): 23-44, accessed November 5, 2024, <https://journals.openedition.org/lhomme/24346?lang=en>.

<sup>10</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 45.

include praying five times a day, fasting for prescribed periods, and giving alms to the poor. Their religion is a religion of works based on belief in one God, Allah, and the teachings of his prophet, Muhammad.<sup>11</sup>

Belief in Allah is central to their lives and structures their new understanding of the universe. Interactions dictated by Islamic law punctuate their social and religious lives. Although the Muslim Mandara have adopted Islam, they retain aspects of their traditional heritage in certain rites, marriage, family relations, and mystical power, forming a worldview where Islamic faith and Mandara cultural identity coexist harmoniously. The lamido is the spiritual and political leader trusted by the population. He is a leader of their society.

These people practice polygamy, in a male-dominated or patriarchal society. When a young person gets married, he stays in the patriarchal, that is to say, patrilocal house. Mandara Muslims follow a mystical practice of Islam, influenced by popular beliefs. They believe in witchcraft, the evil eye, and protect themselves and their children with gris-gris or amulets made by marabouts. They also consider that luck plays an important role in life: if you stumble with your left foot, it brings bad luck, while with the right foot, it is a sign of good luck. To ensure the success of their commercial activities, they place the plant called "*Gadal*" in Fulfulde in their goods, in order to promote a quick sale.

### **The Pillars of Islam**

To address Muslims, it is essential to know the customs and traditions of this religion. Islam is a purely monotheistic religion. Followers believe in and worship one God and Allah, the founder and prophet. Shortly after the prophet's death, certain

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<sup>11</sup> Terray, "La vision du monde de Claude Lévi-Strauss," 24.

aspects of his religious life were highlighted, including the (Ibadats), the duties of devotion or the five pillars of Islam (Arkan):

### **Shahada**

This is a confession of faith or belief. Muslims must confess that “Ashadu La ilaha illa Muhammad rasul Allah”, which means that there is no other God but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger (rasul Allah) of Allah. This is the first and most important pillar of Islam.

### **Salat or ritual prayer**

Muslims are required to pray five times a day, facing Mecca. These prayers are a form of direct communication with God and are performed at specific times of the day: dawn, noon, afternoon, dusk and, evening. A hadith states that “prayer in the mosque is superior to individual prayer.” It is reported that “the reward of prayer performed by a person in congregation is twenty-seven times greater than that of prayer performed at home or in the market”<sup>12</sup> hadith narrated by Abdullah bin Umar, Volume 1, Book 11, Number 618.

### **Zakat (alms).**

All faithful Muslims are called upon to practice charity and to give alms to the poor voluntarily (sadaqa) and obligatorily (zakat). When a Muslim possesses 85 grams of gold or its equivalent in silver, he must pay 2.5% annually. It is also due on all other goods. It is intended for the needy.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Abdullah bin Umar, Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 11, Hadith 618.

<sup>13</sup> Saleh Bin Muhammad Al-Fawzan, “How to Calculate the Zakat of Your Money,” accessed November 21, 2024, <https://islamicfoundation.ie/site/assets/files/1086/>.

## **Sawm, fasting**

This is a very important spiritual practice that is performed during the holy month of Ramadan in the Islamic calendar. Every good Muslim must abstain from all sensual pleasures such as eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, smoking, listening to music. This must be observed throughout the month from dawn to sunset. See, Carole Hillenbrand.<sup>14</sup>

## **Hajj**

This is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Every Muslim, male or female, who is physically able, must perform it at least once in his or her life if he or she has the financial means. The pilgrimage takes place at the beginning of the new moon, during the month of Dhu'l Hijjah, the twelfth day of the month, according to the Muslim calendar year. It is believed that this has its roots in the story in the Quran where God revealed the direction of the Ka'bah to Abraham so that he could build a sacred house for Allah.<sup>15</sup>

## **The Untouchables in Islam**

The untouchables in Islam are articles of faith. They are six in number. They are as follows:

### **Belief in Allah (Iman bi 'l-Lahi);**

It requires the Muslim to believe in the existence of Allah, Surah Qaf 50:38, in His Oneness, as well as in His attributes. Islam teaches and Muslims believe that

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<sup>14</sup> Hillenbrand, *Introduction to Islam*, 88-112.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Allah is “one and only one who has no partner or helper”. This is Tawhid which refers to the oneness, uniqueness, and incomparability of Allah.

### **Belief in Angels (Iman bi ‘I-Mala’ikah).**

A Muslim is expected to believe in the existence of angels and jinn. It is believed that angels were created from light,<sup>16</sup> while jinn were created from fire; and that they neither eat nor drink nor sleep, but that they are honorable devotees of Allah who never defy His command. The jinn are not like the angels because the jinn are capable of disobedience while the angels are always obedient. According to Surah Fatir 35:1, the angels are the messengers of Allah, and they have wings, some have two, three, or four. Here are some of the most notable angels: Jibril (Gabriel) is considered the leader of the angelic world. His duty was to communicate the orders and revelations of Allah to the prophets.

Djibril is also known as the Holy Spirit (Ruh al-Qudus) or the Faithful Spirit (Ar-Ruh al-Amin). Israfil is an angel who is charged with the responsibility of taking the lives of all of Allah’s creatures. Angel Israfil will sound the trumpet that will announce the end of life on the one hand, and the advent of the Day of Judgment (Yawmu’l Qiyamah) on the other hand. Mika’il plays the role of foreman in the angelic world. He is believed to be responsible for rain and the provision of daily bread for all living beings.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> David Goldmann, *Islam and the Bible, Why Two Faiths Collide* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 57.

<sup>17</sup> Islam, “Duties of Angels,” accessed November 21, 2024, <https://www.islam.org.uk/beliefs-overview/angels/duties-of-angels/>.

### **Belief in Books (Iman bi 'l-Kutub)**

Muslims are supposed to believe in all the books or scriptures revealed by Allah through all His prophets, including those who came before Muhammad (SAW).

Among these revealed books are:

The Tawrah (Pentateuch) which was sent by the prophet Musa (Moses), Surah Al Baqarah 2:87.

The Zabur (Psalms) which was sent by Allah to the prophet Da'ud (David), Surah An-Nisa 4:163.

The Injil (Gospel) which was sent by Allah to the prophet Isa (Jesus), Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:46-48.

The Quran which was sent by Allah to the prophet Muhammad (SAW),

The Suhuf which was sent by Allah to the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), Surah Ibrahim 14:1.

### **Belief in the Prophets (al-Iman bi 'r-Rusul)**

In Islam, a prophet is “one who is very close to God through complete submission of his entire being to Him and who has received revelations from Him that constitute a source of guidance for mankind.”<sup>18</sup> Although it is believed that there are many such prophets in whom a Muslim should believe, 25 of them are specifically mentioned by name in the Qur'an. The names of the prophets mentioned are Adam, Salih, Lut (Lot), Hud, Ya'qub (Jacob), Ibrahim (Abraham), Yunus (Jonah), Musa (Moses), Daud (David), Al-Ya'sa (Elisha), Zakariya (Zechariah), Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel), Isa (Jesus), Nuhu (Noah), Shu'aib, Ismai'il (Ishmael), Yusuf (Joseph), Ishaq (Isaac), Harun (Aaron), Sulaiman (Solomon), Yahya (John the Baptist), Ayyub (Job), Ilyas

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<sup>18</sup> T. M. Salisu, *General Introduction to Islam* (Abuja, Nigeria: National Open University of Nigeria, 2020), 41-45.

(Elijah), Idris, Muhammad (peace be upon them all).<sup>19</sup> The Quran only mentions these 25 prophets, but Muslims must believe even in those who are not mentioned in the Holy Quran, in Surah An Nisa 4:164.

### **Belief in the Last Day (Iman bi'l-Yawnu'l-'Aakhir)**

This article teaches Muslims to understand that man is on this earth for only a time and that he will give an account of his life to God on the Last Day. This day is called by many names. These names include “Yawm al-Hisāb (Day of Judgement), Yawm al-Ba’th (Day of Resurrection), Yawm al-Dīn (Day of Retribution) and al-Sa’ah (Day of the Last Hour)”<sup>20</sup> among others. Interestingly, Muslim tradition tells us that the majority of the inhabitants of Hell are women.<sup>21</sup>

### **Belief in Destiny (Iman bi 'l-Qadar)**

This article of faith teaches Muslims that everything concerning their lives is already predetermined. Nothing happens by chance, as every event has been decreed by Allah. Misfortunes come from Allah and are often the consequence of human actions.

## **Islamic Teachings on the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih**

If you ask Muslims about Jesus, they will tell you without hesitation that they believe in Jesus and all the prophets. They have their own conception of Isa within themselves. And what they think of Jesus is crucial in this research. In the Qur’an and

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<sup>19</sup> Badru D. Kateregga and David W Shenk, *Islam and Christianity, A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* (Nairobi, Kenya: Uzuma Press, 2004), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Oluseyi Adebukunola Agbabiaka, Syllabus for ISLM 677: Christian – Muslim Dialogue, at Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2024, 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Ron Rhodes, *The 10 Things You Need to Know about Islam* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), 86-88.

in Muslim traditions, there are a multitude of images of Jesus. Jesus is one of God's creatures. He is also known as Isa Al-Masih, presented as a peerless and incomparable figure who receives considerable attention.

References to Isa Al-Masih in the Qur'an are always respectful, describing him as a major prophet, albeit one of lesser rank than Muhammad. Theologian Colin Chapman highlights the Islamic view in his book, *Cross and Crescent*, that Muslims hold that Jesus was born of a virgin, Mary and that this birth was announced by an angel (Surah 3:45-49). In his mission to the nations, he performed many miracles (Surah 5:110). However, to elevate Jesus to the status of God is blasphemy (Surah 5:17).

Although Jesus is a prophet, he is unique among God's prophets and was given titles in the Qur'an such as "Word" and "Spirit" that are not given to any other human being (Surah 4:171-172). In the absence of a thorough exegetical reading, Islam generally maintains, based on this text, that Jesus was not crucified (Surah 4:157-159). Jesus was not killed, but taken to heaven. It was Jesus who announced the coming of Muhammad (Surah 61:6).<sup>22</sup>

### **The Figure of Isa Al-Masih in the Quran**

To address the question of the divinity of Jesus, it is essential to look at what the Quran, the primary source and sacred text of Islam, says about him. Although the Quran recognizes Isa as a prophet and messenger of Allah, Muslims consider him first and foremost a man and a servant of Allah. However, some Quranic statements about Jesus invite a deeper reflection on his nature and his unique role among the prophets. Let us follow in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad who received the last

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<sup>22</sup> Colin Chapman, *Cross and Crescent, Responding to the Challenge of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: InterVasty Press, 2007), 251-254.

revelation from Allah for humanity. Faithful Muslims believe in the 25 prophets sent by Allah who are mentioned in the Quran, including Isa<sup>23</sup>, or Jesus, son of Mary. 74 verses out of 6236 in the Quran mention him – and of these, 42 are indirect references.<sup>24</sup>

However, Muhammad is mentioned only 4 times. They consider him as one of the greatest prophets of Allah and who speaks and acts like a Muslim. He is the messenger of Allah and the continuation of the divine message (Surah Al-Baqara 2:87) and he is a prophet from Allah to guide. This Surah is mainly revealed in Medina and deals with various issues related to law, ethics, and divine guidance for the believers.

Surah Al-Baqara 2:87 in particular is addressed to the Children of Israel (the Jews who lived in Medina at the time of the Prophet Muhammad), recalling their history and interactions with the prophets sent by God. It implies that Isa is the Messiah sent only to the people of Israel. On the other hand, according to Ibn Khatir, a Muslim theologian, exegete and historian who became one of the main intellectual figures of Syria in the 14th century, says that Isa is the prophet of Allah sent in the same way as Muhammad.<sup>25</sup>

However, Surah Al-Baqara Aya 87 is also addressed to Muslim believers. Unlike Muhammad who confesses his sins, Isa is without sin (Surah Maryam 19:19), pure and supported by the Holy Spirit, and brought the truth for his time. Then in Surah Maryam 19:30, Isa is the servant or apostle of Allah to whom Allah gave the

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<sup>23</sup> Kateregga and Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 35.

<sup>24</sup> Ron Rhodes, *The 10 things you Need to Know about Islam* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2007), 111.

<sup>25</sup> L'imam Ibn Kathir, "Tafsir de la Sourate 2: Al Baqara," accessed November 1, 2024, [https://www.academia.edu/11592055/Tafsir\\_de\\_la\\_Sourate\\_2\\_Al\\_Baqara](https://www.academia.edu/11592055/Tafsir_de_la_Sourate_2_Al_Baqara).

book, certainly the Injil. The prophet reports that the newborn, Isa, a prophet like no other, because of his miraculous birth, born of a virgin and he speaks in his cradle.

More importantly, Isa has another name in the noble Qur'an, Surah Ali 'Imran 3:45.

His name should be called the Messiah, honored and closer to Allah. Quranic translations such as Sahih International, Abul Ala Maududi, and Ala-Maududi attest to the title Messiah of Isa. In their theological understanding which also confirms the original Arabic version (الْمَسِيحُ عَيْسَى), the Messiah is Isa or Isa Al-Masih. This means Jesus is divine, he is considered the Messiah or the anointed of Allah.

In another Quranic text, Isa is presented as the one who performs miracles. Surah Al Ma'idah 5:110. With the permission of Allah, Isa created the bird from clay, he gave life. He healed the sick, he opened the eyes of the blind, he raised the dead. According to the Quran, this identifies Jesus as the one with divine power and authority. However, the divine nature, his incarnation, his crucifixion and his resurrection are less emphasized in the Holy Quran, moreover a subject of controversy, of debate against Christianity. He is Christ in Greek or Al-Masih in Arabic. Therefore, the Quran presents a rich image of Isa.

### **Concept of Divinity, Allah**

God has a name in the different cultures of the world. The Arabs call him Allah, the All-Merciful "Al-Rahman" Surah Al-Fatiha 1:1. Allah is mentioned 2812 times in the Holy Quran, a book that Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Jibril, in whom Muslims believe. The 99 Asmaa al Husna, which means "the most beautiful names of Allah".<sup>26</sup> Hence the unparalleled place granted to

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<sup>26</sup> Asma al-Husna, "The Most Beautiful Names of Allah," accessed November 21, 2024, <https://sufism.org/ninety-nine-names/the-most-beautiful-names-of-allah-2>.

him in the Islamic religion. The Arabs call him God (al-ilah)<sup>27</sup>, the one who must be worshiped, from whom Allah flows.

The name of God is the suggested Islamic creed, Muslims believe in one God, not Trinitarian or three persons, but the sole creator of all things, “Allah, there is no god but He, the Living, the Eternal” Surah Ali 'Imran 3:2-3 and further, it is said “He is Allah, the One, Allah, the Absolute, He does not beget, and He was not begotten and there is nothing comparable to Him” Surah Al Ikhlas 112:1-4. The author of the Islamic religion.

Allah is an absolute God, close to his people and attentive to them Surah Al Baqarah 2:186, he is the guide of the believers and the just judge Surah An Nisa 4:58. The most remarkable attributes of Allah are for example, Al-Khaliq, that is to say the Creator. The one who holds the absolute power of creation. From His hands came forth the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He is not only the creator, but Al-Muhyi, Surah Al-A'raf 7:158, Imam Ahmad also reported from Abu Huraira (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim) interpreting this Aya that Allah is the giver of Life and the giver of death.

He is therefore good and bad at the same time. Because, according to the Qur'an, death is not a consequence of sin, but the deliberate will of Allah. Then, in Surah An-Nahl, Allah is also Al-'Adl, the Just or Intrinsically and Absolutely Just. The concept of `Adl implies justice and fairness in everything that Allah says or does. Yasin T. Al Jibouri, writer and author of several Islamic work comments on this text and states: “Adl means moderation; Al-'adl is above oppression or injustice towards anyone in His decrees and acts.” Sourate An-Nahl 16:90.

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<sup>27</sup> Brother Andrew, “The pre-Islamic origin of "Allah,” accessed November 21, 2024, <https://www.bible.ca/islam/islam-allah-pre-islamic-origin.htm>.

Allah gives to each his due, He restores everything to its place, and nothing comes from Him except justice. He does what He wills, and His decree concerning His servants is carried out.”<sup>28</sup> In Surah 6:14, Allah is Al-Hakam, that is, the Impartial Judge. The word Hakam comes from the Arabic root hâ'-kâf-mîm. Allah's name, Al-Hakam, therefore refers to the immensity of His power to judge and arbitrate with justice. Imam al-Ghazali writes: “He is the arbitrator and the avenging judge, whose decision none annuls and whose decree none corrects.”<sup>29</sup> He is beyond the judgment and arbitration of any created being.

### **Isa, the Son of Mary**

In the Holy Quran, the birth and name of Isa Al-Masih are prophesied. The angel Gabriel announced to the virgin Mary the miraculous conception of Isa, as reported in Surah Mariyam 19:19-21. Mary indeed occupies a special place in the Noble Quran, so much so that an entire Surah, Surah Mariyam, is dedicated to her. According to Ibn 'Abbas, she is counted among the women of Paradise.<sup>30</sup> In Surah At-Tahrim 66:12, it is revealed to Prophet Mohammad that Isa was conceived by the Spirit of Allah, thus being born in special circumstances, without a father. In Surah Ali 'Imran 3:45-47, Isa is referred to as the “son of Mary” (Ibn Miryam) and described as a “pure boy” in Surah Mariyam 19:19.

Furthermore, Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:75 specifies that he is a messenger of Allah. Unlike the Jewish tradition, which follows a patrilineal system where the child is

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<sup>28</sup> Yasin T. Aljibouri, “The Ninety-nine Attributes of Allah,” accessed November 3, 2024, <https://www.al-islam.org/ninety-nine-attributes-allah-yasin-t-al-jibouri/30-al>.

<sup>29</sup> My Islam, “Al-Hakam Signification - 99 Noms d'Allah,” accessed November 3, 2024, <https://myislam.org/fr/99-noms-dallah/al-hakam/>.

<sup>30</sup> Islamic Library, “'Abdoulâh Ibn 'Abbas [245 / 1160 Hadiths],” accessed November 3rd, 2024, <https://bibliotheque-islamique.fr/hadith/ibn-abbas/>.

named after his father (such as “son of Abraham” or “son of Isaac”), Isa is specifically mentioned as “son of Maryam”, emphasizing his unique and miraculous birth. It is true that the Qur'an, as well as the commentators of this noble book, affirm that Isa is the son of Maryam. This lineage is well established in the Qur'an. In the Arabic context, lineage is usually patrilineal, as in the Jewish tradition<sup>31</sup>, because matronymies are not commonly used in Arabic: the child is named after the father.

This means that the word “son” (Ibn)<sup>32</sup> usually recognizes the identity of the child’s father. For example in the Quranic sources, humans are called “Ibn Adam” (sons of Adam), as in Surah Al-A'raf (7:26), meaning “descendants of Adam.” It is important to note that the Arabic term “Ibn” is often translated as “son” by association, but this translation does not only denote biological lineage. In Surah Ash-Shura (42:7) according to the Yusuf Ali translation, the Quran is referred to as the “mother of books” by the prophet, an expression that does not imply biological motherhood but rather indicates the importance and fundamental origin of the Quran in relation to other scriptures.

More importantly, this hadith reported by Yahya, from Sufyan Al-Thawri, from Firas, from Al-Sha’abi, from Masrooq, from Aisha, the second wife of the Prophet Muhammad, who never had children states: A woman addressed Aisha saying: “O mother!” Aisha replied: “I am not your mother, but rather the mother of your men.”<sup>33</sup> Aisha, the young wife of the Prophet Muhammad, who never gave birth

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph Méléze, "Père ou mère ? Aux origines de la matrilinearité juive," April 2023, accessed November 21, 2024, [https://www.clio.fr/bibliotheque/bibliothequeenligne/pere\\_ou\\_mere\\_aux\\_origines\\_de\\_la\\_matrilinearite](https://www.clio.fr/bibliotheque/bibliothequeenligne/pere_ou_mere_aux_origines_de_la_matrilinearite).

<sup>32</sup> Larousse, s.v. "Ibn," accessed November 21, 2024, <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/ibn/41333>.

<sup>33</sup> Stack Exchange, “Why the title 'Mothers of the Believers' for the wives of the Prophet SAW,” accessed November 21, 2024, <https://islam.stackexchange.com/questions/34889/>.

to a child, is considered here as “the mother of all believers.” Thus, in this Islamic logic and perspective, Isa son of Mariyam conceived by the Spirit of God, is the son of God by association, because, he comes from God.

### **Some Attributes of Isa in the Qur’an**

The Prophet Isa occupies a particularly important place in the noble Qur'an, where several of his attributes are emphasized. An attribute is that which is proper, characteristic, and also a symbol attached to a title.<sup>34</sup> Isa is called the holy in Surah Maryam (19:19) because he is described as a “very pure boy.” The Islamic theologian Yusuf Ali translates this passage as “a holy son,” thus emphasizing the purity of his nature. Holiness or purity is an integral part of his being. According to the Noble Qur'an, all the prophets, from Adam (Surah 7:23) to Abraham (Surah 26:82), Moses (Surah 28:16), David (Surah 38:24) and Muhammad (Surah 47:19), all did committed sins, except Isa Al-Masih, who never sinned.<sup>35</sup>

Isa has power over evil and is endowed with a unique ability to perform miracles: he heals the sick and resurrects the dead, as mentioned in the Quran, Surah Al 'Imran (3:49). And (he will be) an apostle to the Children of Israel (with this message): “I come to you with a sign from your Lord: I fashion for you clay in the form of a bird, then I blow into it, and by Allah's permission it becomes a bird. I heal those who are born blind and lepers, and I raise the dead, by Allah's permission. And I

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<sup>34</sup> Encyclopaedia Universalis, s.v. "attribute," accessed November 4th, 2024. <https://www.universalis.fr/dictionnaire/attribut/>.

<sup>35</sup> Abraham Sarker, *Understanding My Muslim People* (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2004), 124.

inform you of what you eat and what you hide in your houses. Surely, there is a sign in that for you, if you are believers.”<sup>36</sup>

Isa has the power to create, he fashions a bird from dust, blows on it, and the bird becomes alive and flies away. Similarly, he provides for the needs of humans, such as bread for their sustenance. We are reminded of the angels who are untouchable in Islam, *Mika'il*, who is the angel, master of seasons, and who gives daily bread to humans. Indeed, Isa has attributes and titles similar to those of Allah. For no human being on this earth can possess such attributes, unless he comes from Allah or is God Himself.

### **Isa, the Mercy and Sign of Allah**

Al-Faliyah 1:1. “BismAllah-ir Rahman-ir Raheem” – “In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Most Merciful” – are special names of Allah. Every Surah of the Holy Quran begins with this phrase, except number 9 which does not begin with this phrase and this is for another reason (Surah 9:109. And usually, Muslims recite it before undertaking most of their actions to bless their outcome. Out of the 114 chapters of the Noble Quran, 113 chapters bear the name of Allah, *Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Raheem*, and two names of God in each chapter (Noble Quran’s structure).

There are indeed 99 names of God in the Quran. *Rahmaanir*: He is the Gracious One and whose mercy is accessible but with limits. On the other hand, *Ar-Raheem* is the One whose mercy is accessible and without limits. He removes the pain of someone. Every name of God is the personal name of God. It is this name that is the object of our attention. When Adam came out of the hands of Allah the Creator,

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<sup>36</sup> My Islam, “Surah Al-Imran Ayat 49 (3:49 Quran) With Tafsir,” accessed November 21, 2024, <https://myislam.org/surah-imran/ayat-49/>.

Allah instructed them and said: Surah 7:20-23 “O Adam! Dwell in Paradise, you and your wife; eat from it, both of you as you please; and do not approach this tree, lest you be of the wrongdoers.”

So, He caused them to fall by deception. Then when they tasted of the tree, their nakedness became visible to them; and they both began to attach leaves from Paradise to it. And their Lord called to them: “Did I not forbid you this tree? And did I not tell you that Satan is an open enemy to you?” They both said: “Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves.” And if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will surely be among the losers. “Raheem”. Surah Al-A`raf 7 Aya 24.

Allah sends them back from the Garden of Eden but grants them His grace by temporarily forgiving them. Adam and Hawa implore Allah's favor, Raheem or the Merciful. Isa is that mercy that Adam needed to regain his kingship, paving the way for humanity to return to the Garden of Eden and restore justice. Allah gives humanity a holy son, Isa. He will therefore be the mercy of Allah. Surah Mariyam 19:21: "So it will be! It is easy for Me, says your Lord! And We will make it a sign for mankind and a mercy from Us," the permanent and final solution to the problem of sin.

This is Allah's plan. Surah Al-Imran 3:55. A mercy in the future. Surah Al-Araaf 7:26. The garment of righteousness, Isa Al-Masih. Furthermore, it is the sign of Allah that all the prophets announced from Adam to Dawood. Confirmed by the Prophet Muhammad. Surah Mariyam 19:21, “He said: Thus, says your Lord: “It is easy for me. We will make it a sign for mankind and a mercy from Us.” “It is a predetermined matter,” a prophecy of the sign and mercy, Isa Al-Masih.

### **Isa, the Word and Spirit of Allah**

Surah An-Nisa 4:171: Jesus is more than a prophet; he is the word or (kalimatullah) and the Spirit of Allah (ruh) of Allah. Allah gave his word to Mary.

This word became flesh. Allah gives you good news of a word from him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary is honored in this world, illustrious here below and in the hereafter, and one of the close ones (of Allah), Surah Ali 'Imran 3:45. This word is considered eternal. Isa the prophet, plus word plus spirit equal to Isa is divine. Muslims understand from the Quran that Jesus is the word, but this word becomes spirit, which is life. This word became man by an indirect prophet and has the power to create and give life. No human can create and give it except the one who has the divine attributes of Allah.

Allah says: "You formed from clay the body of a bird and breathed into it so that by My will it became a bird. By My will, you always healed the blind and the leper." Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:110. Is not the power to create tangible proof of his divinity? This Quranic conception of the divinity of Isa rhymes with the original biblical notion of the divinity of Isa, the word that created everything.

### **The Concept of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih in the Ahadith and the Sunnah**

The term hadith (pl. ahadith) means to report what happened. Therefore, the hadith is a collection of biographical reports, that concern the acts, and the words of the prophet Muhammad and his companions; they also reflect on what Muhammad prescribed or ordered and tolerated in his presence or prohibited. The hadith is the second source of Islam and allows not only to complete and give an exegesis of what is found in the Qur'an but also to allow a faithful Muslim to read and imitate the words, manners, and acts of Muhammad.

On the other hand, the term Sunna (pl. Sunan) is used to designate the customs or the way of life of Muhammad, what he did, in general, his lifestyle and habits.

They are valued within the framework of Islamic teachings and practices.<sup>37</sup> These practices and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, together with the Quran, form the basis of Islamic law and morality, including Sharia.

In Hadith Volume 4, Book 54, Number 506: Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said: “When a human being is born, Satan touches him on both sides of the body with his two fingers, except Jesus, the son of Mary, whom Satan tried to touch but failed because he touched the placenta.”<sup>38</sup> According to this hadith, Isa was narrowly saved from the touch of Iblis. He was born holy and righteous by his nature. Therefore, all prophets were born in sin and committed sins, except Isa, who is considered in Islam to have been born pure and free from fault.

His miraculous birth without a human father, as well as his role and actions, distinguish him from all other prophets. This purity and exceptionality support the perception of Jesus as a sinless prophet in the Islamic tradition. Furthermore, he adds, Isa will descend among the Muslims as a righteous leader.<sup>39</sup> He attests to what the Noble Qur’an states that Isa ascended to heaven, and remains at the right hand of Allah and will descend to judge. But in the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad cited in the Book of Stories of the Prophet by Sahih Bukhari, Jesus will judge people according to the law of the Qur’an.

Regarding the current position of Isa, In the hadith reported by Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet said: “By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, the descent of the son of Mary

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<sup>37</sup> Samuel D. Lumwe, class notes for *ISLM 625 Islamic Theology and Tradition*, Adventist University of Africa, October 2024.

<sup>38</sup> “Translation of Sahih Bukhari, Book 54: Beginning of Creation,” accessed November 21, 2024, [https://www.iium.edu.my/deed/hadith/bukhari/054\\_sbt.html](https://www.iium.edu.my/deed/hadith/bukhari/054_sbt.html).

<sup>39</sup> Bukharis Sahih, “Hadith on Jesus, Mary, and Jerusalem,” accessed November 1, 2024, <https://facweb.furman.edu/~ateipen/islam/BukhariJesusetc.html#>.

is imminent; he will be for you a just arbiter. He will break the crosses, kill the pigs and cancel the poll tax” (Bukhari and Muslim). Muslims believe that he is alive in heaven and that he was raised after the conspiracy of the Jews and the Romans to kill him. But he did not die, he changed face with another disciple. Isa has a privileged place with Allah, and his return is imminent. He will return as a just judge.

### **The Muslim Perception of the Bible**

For the popular Muslim opinion, the Bible is indeed a book, but Christians have falsified it. The scriptures are corrupted, and therefore, it is not credible. And therefore, the Christian religion is false. They find that the books that exist today are not original scriptures, which have been lost, changed, and over-translated to the point of losing the original message. They are accused of misinterpretation and going out of context, Surah Al-Ma'ida 5:13.

They are shocked by the Christian lifestyle, as described in Surah Al-Ma'ida 5:68, and consequently engage in practices forbidden by the Bible, emulating the Western lifestyle of Christians. Everything that is held to be true in the Bible is questioned by Muslim believers living in different countries as well as those of Mémé in Mayo Sava. Since for them the Qur'an is the last revelation given to the last prophet, Mohammad to guide humanity. But yet how can a book revealed by Allah be altered? Can Allah not take care of His word, especially the books revealed previously? Is He fallible to the point of allowing a group of believers to falsify His word? Surah Al-An'am 6:34, 6:115.

### **The Death and Resurrection of Jesus**

The death and resurrection of Jesus constitute a major obstacle to dialogue with Muslims. Indeed, historically, they maintain that Jesus was neither crucified nor

killed by men, but that another was crucified in his place, while Allah raised him to paradise (Surah An-Nisa 4:157-158). For them, he was a messenger of unparalleled importance. Fakhr ad-Dîn ar-Râzî, a Persian theologian and philosopher, finds this irrational. He goes on to say that Jesus was not killed by the Jews, but rather that they killed someone whom God had made to resemble Jesus.<sup>40</sup>

According to a prominent French scholar, this interpretation began to appear in Sunni commentaries in the second Islamic century, after some extremist views of Shiite Muslims were retrospectively applied to Jesus. The author also cites several Muslim theologians and philosophers who believed that when Jesus' body died, his divine soul ascended to God. These Muslims include Ikhwan al-Safiya, Abu Hatim al-Rasi, Mu'uyyad al-Shirazi, and Ghazali.<sup>41</sup>

From a moral and social perspective, Isa is considered superior to all prophets: a good, holy, and just man. Theologically, Muslims believe that Allah forgives by His will and mercy alone, without the need for any intermediary means (Surah Az-Zumar 39:53; Surah An-Nisa 4:110). It is Allah's grace that takes precedence for the repentant sinner. However, it is essential to demonstrate the importance of the cross in the process of salvation.

Without the atoning sacrifice of Christ, there is no forgiveness or salvation possible for humanity (1 Peter 2:24; Romans 5:8-9; 1 John 2:2). To enlighten Muslims, it is possible to start from the Qur'an (Surah Ali 'Imran 3:54-55) to show that not only did Christ die, but that he also rose again (Matthew 28:5-7; Luke 24:5-6;

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<sup>40</sup> Roland Poupin, "Exégèses anciennes de la sourate 4/156-157 et christologie coranique," *Études théologiques et religieuses* 71, no. 1(1996) : 55-66, accessed November 6, 2024, [https://www.persee.fr/doc/ether\\_0014-2239\\_1996\\_num\\_71\\_1\\_3395](https://www.persee.fr/doc/ether_0014-2239_1996_num_71_1_3395).

<sup>41</sup> Chawkat Mourarry, *The Prophet and the Messiah: An Arab Christian's Perspective on Islam and Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 133-143

1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Salvation does not rest on our own works, but on the grace of Allah through Isa Al-Masih.

### **Key Studies of the Context of Cameroon**

In the Cameroonian context, recent work has been carried out in the context of academic research and publications, including dissertations and books. Some studies deserve particular attention:

An innovative doctoral research project was conducted by Tanifum Fuhbang Emmanuel under the title “Toward a Model of Making Disciples of Jesus among Muslims: Case of the Mbororo Muslims of North West Region of Cameroon”. This study examined mission among Mbororo Muslims in the North-West Region through friendship and personal testimony. Using a qualitative methodology based on Grounded Theory, the author revealed that conventional contextualization approaches among the Fulani and Muslims in general do not work effectively among the Mbororo, due to their cultural specificities. The result is a holistic transformation model, deemed to be the most suitable for making disciples of Jesus in this particular context.<sup>42</sup>

A notable contribution is that of researcher Allah-Hoki Pascal, through his study entitled “*Developing a Strategy to Reach Muslims Through Adventist Education in Ngaoundere.*” This study led to the establishment of an Adventist chaplaincy, aimed at reaching Muslims through Adventist education. It illustrates the potential of denominational education to initiate a dialogue of faith in a sensitive context. This initiative aimed to reach Muslim students and, through them, their families. The study

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<sup>42</sup> Emmanuel Fuhbang Tanifum, “Toward a Model of making Disciples of Jesus among Muslims: case of the Mbororo Muslims of North West Region of Cameroon” (PhD diss., Cameroon Faculty of Evangelical Theology, 2019), 322.

examines how a secondary school can become an effective tool for establishing links with the local Muslim community.<sup>43</sup>

In the same vein, researcher Assamba Onyong, in his research project entitled *“Developing a Training Program at the Cosendai Adventist University for Adventist Missionaries to Reach Muslims in Cameroon,”* conducted an in-depth study of the Muslim religion in Cameroon and proposed the creation of a training center within universities. This project fostered competent dialogue between Christians and Muslims. The conclusive results of this research led to the recommendation to launch a degree in missiology, with a specialization in Islamic studies, at the Cosendai Adventist University.<sup>44</sup>

All these studies offered valuable knowledge, strategies, and insights into possible approaches to reach Muslims in Cameroon. However, a gap remains: very few studies, if any, have been devoted to the divinity of Isa Al-Masih in the Cameroonian context, particularly in the locality of Mayo Sava, precisely in Mémé. The strategies mentioned above, although useful, have not been sufficient to deeply reach the Mandara Muslims of this region. Furthermore, although other parallel studies may exist, they are often inaccessible, either because they are not available online or in libraries, or because they remain unknown. In addition, no specific research has been carried out on the mission to the Muslims of the Far North, and even less on the Mandara in Mayo Sava, particularly in Mémé. These studies have also not addressed the central question of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih, nor attempted

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<sup>43</sup> Alla-Hoki Pascal, “Developing a Strategy to Reach Muslims Through Adventist Education in Ngaoundere” (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya 2014), 73.

<sup>44</sup> Onyong Assamba, “Developing a Training Program at the University Adventist Cosendai for Adventist Missionaries to Reach Muslims in Cameroon” (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2012), 45-59.

to immerse themselves in the multidimensional culture of the Muslims of this region, particularly in the departments of Mora and in the locality of Mémé.

Thus, a significant gap is felt in this area. This is why this research finds its relevance, by offering a unique opportunity to reach Muslims in the locality of Mémé, by adapting to their cultural context, and by addressing profound theological questions such as the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

### **Missiological and Theological Implications**

#### **Missiological Implications**

To effectively reach the Mandara Muslims with the message of Isa's divinity, it is essential to understand their culture, their worldview, and to undertake a thorough phenomenological study. This approach must be driven by a strong faith and supported by prayer, which is an essential key to a fruitful mission to these people.

**Importance of Prayer.** Prayer plays a fundamental role in this mission. It can be carried out by the researcher himself, as well as by selected members of the churches present in the territory studied. These prayers, performed in favor of the Mandara Muslims or the “sons of peace” (Luke 10:5-6),<sup>45</sup> must be done in strict secrecy. A period of prayer of one to three months during the fast of Ramadan is particularly appropriate. Ramadan is a sacred time for Muslims, marked by prayer, recitation, meditation, and fasting. According to Islamic tradition, it is during this month that the Prophet Muhammad received the revelation of the sacred books: Tawrad (6<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan was revealed to prophet Moses), Injil (12<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan was revealed to the prophet Isa), Zabur (On 18<sup>th</sup> was revealed to prophet David) and Qur’an (the night of 27<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan, AD 610 was revealed to the prophet

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<sup>45</sup> Luke 10:5-6 (KJV) “And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.”

Muhammad).<sup>46</sup> This period constitutes a unique opportunity for the mission. By fasting with them and praying for them, we implore that Isa Al-Masih reveals himself to them.

**Missiological approaches.** Positive actions and community service. The second step is to engage in concrete and positive actions for six months. These activities, including community service and charitable acts, are essential to impact the “sons of peace”. It is recommended that the imams of two or three mosques be approached to understand better the needs of the needy among the Mandara Muslims. Then, it is appropriate to provide them with products necessary for Ramadan (such as dates, sugar, flour, peanuts, etc.). This process of integration and understanding allows for finding points of connection between their culture and biblical teachings, particularly by drawing on the example of Isa.

**House churches adapted to the Mandara.** For the Mandara who have accepted Isa, the researcher must set up house churches. These must respect Muslim language as well as cultural and Islamic forms compatible with the Bible. For example: Use of rugs or mats for prayer, Inclusion of the Qur’an at the beginning of discussions, and adopting their style of dress. Emphasize biblical studies and teachings, rather than traditional worship. These meetings must be held in the homes of selected members to ensure discretion and protect new converts from possible persecution.

### **Theological Implications**

The belief of Mandara Muslims in one God (Tawhid), the Creator, includes a recognition of Isa as a prophet. This point of convergence with the Bible can be used

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<sup>46</sup> Samuel D. Lumwe, class notes for ISLM 625 Islamic Theology and Tradition.

to build bridges between their traditional beliefs and Christian teachings. This study aims to deepen these connections, using references from the Qur'an to present Isa not only as a prophet, but also as the Messiah, the Savior of humanity, and, most importantly, as God or the Son of God. Isa is the One through whom alone one can enter Allah's paradise. By illuminating these truths through contextualized biblical teaching, this mission contributes to a deeper understanding and acceptance of the Christian message by Mandara Muslims.

Paul Hiebert states: "We must understand people and their way of thinking to translate the gospel into their thought patterns, we must also understand the Scriptures in their cultural context so that we can translate them into the local culture without losing their divine message"<sup>47</sup>

### **Dialogue**

Dialogue is a conversation in which each party is serious in their approach to both the subject and the other person, and desires to listen and learn as well as to speak and instruct.<sup>48</sup> It involves respect for the rules of usage, of civility. It can also be defined as a conversation between two people.<sup>49</sup> It is aimed at exploring a particular subject or resolving a problem.<sup>50</sup> Dialogue between Christians and other religions is carried out with respect for freedom, openness, listening to get to know

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<sup>47</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Academic, 1985), 97.

<sup>48</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1975), 219.

<sup>49</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary, s.v. "Dialogue," accessed November 22, 2024. <https://www.merriamwebster.com/thesaurus/dialogue>.

<sup>50</sup> Oluseyi Adebukunola Agbabiaka, Syllabus for *ISLM 677 Christian – Muslim Dialogue*, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2024.

each other, to appreciate both our differences and the common values that bind us to each other.<sup>51</sup>

This involves building relational bridges between Christians and Muslims. God being the author of dialogue, he began with Adam and Eve after their fall, “where are you”, Genesis 3:9-13 and continued this dialogue with the children of Israel. Isaiah 1:18 and Surah Al-Nahl 16:43, call the two great religions of the world, Christianity and Islam to dialogue and make dialogue their priority. In the modern world, the initiative for dialogue comes from Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal, of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan of the Muslim community, in response to the conference of Pope Benedict XVI, on September 12, 2006<sup>52</sup>, on the accusation made on the Islamic religion. The letter suggested by Muslims to promote interreligious dialogue is entitled “A Common Word Between Us and You”.<sup>53</sup>

This letter, published in 2007, calls for peace and mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians based on the common principles of love of God and love of neighbor. It is necessary to take into account Islamic theology which has been influenced by the Greek philosophical current, in particular, reason, logic, metaphysics or surnatural, and many others. For a smooth flow of dialogue, it must be kept in mind that the Muslim man is very sensitive about several beliefs in the Bible, it is necessary to have a more friendly and delicate approach to reach him. The research offers some salient points that will allow an effective and efficient dialogue.

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<sup>51</sup> Eglise Catholique de la France, "Dialogues interreligieux," accessed November 7, 2024, <https://eglise.catholique.fr/glossaire/dialogue-interreligieux/>.

<sup>52</sup> Anne-Bénédicte Hoffner, “LaCroix,” October 12, 2016, accessed November 7, 2024, <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Pape/Il-eclatait-controverse-Ratisbonne>.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Colwell, “*Above Us and Between Us: An Introduction and Resource on the letter ...A Common Word between Us and You... signed by 138 Muslim Scholars*,” accessed November 22, 2024, <https://ctbi.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/ctbi>.

## **Needs of Dialogue**

Without peace and integrity between the People of the Book and Muslims, there can be no true peace in the world. Without peace and brotherhood, there is no dialogue, no dialogue, no mission. There is a need for dialogue because the future of the world depends on peaceful coexistence and social cohesion between Muslims and Christians, the two great religions of the world that claim to be monotheistic and share the same ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael. To develop an effective dialogue with Muslims, it is essential to be credible and honest in one's life and language. A single misstep in conversation can lead to rejection or even endanger one's life or death.

Dialogue therefore lays the foundations of the evangelical mission and builds the bridge between the two religions, removing them from any fear of the other, from prejudices and establishing trust between the two believers. It facilitates the understanding of the worldviews of the Mandara people and allows for the proper contextualization of the Gospel message which consists in making the Gospel culturally relevant to this particular group of people. A respectful dialogue therefore consists in responding with tact and wisdom, without offending the Prophet Muhammad, the Quran and Islam, which are considered untouchable in Islam.

A critical contextualization, based on the Holy Scriptures, or an inclusive dialogue, avoids us from an exclusivist and pluralistic dialogue, which rejects everything from Islam or accepts everything from Islam, which would lead to a syncretism painting Christianity with a veneer of paganism. Otherwise, it would amount to accepting Islam in its entirety, as a Muslim would. As people are more likely to be open to listening when they feel respected and understood.

This allows us to be open and consider other parameters of Muslim cultural values, namely shame and honor. Stott also notes that there has been an honourable succession of learned and devoted Christian missionaries to the Muslims. One has only to mention the names of Henry Martyn, Samuel Zwemer, and Temple Gairdner to realize that great men of God have devoted their minds and lives to the task of communicating Christ to the followers of Mohammed.<sup>54</sup>

### **Common Points**

Muslims and Christians unite around “love of God and love of neighbor.” These points of convergence are relevant to facilitate and spark possibilities for conversation. Islam, like Christianity, believes in the oneness of God (tawhid), Allah, creator of the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them, as illustrated in Torah and Isaiah 45:5-6, as well as Surah 112 (Al-Ikhlâs). Believers of both religions recognize Isa (Jesus) as the Messiah and the righteous judge, who will return to reward the righteous, punish the wicked, and resurrect the dead (Injil, John 14:1-6, and Surah Al-Zukhruf 43:61).

According to a hadith reported by Abu Huraira, it is said: “Surely, Isa son of Maryam will descend among you and judge mankind justly as a just judge...”<sup>55</sup> Islam and Christianity also share the same patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael (Torah, Genesis 12:1-3, and Surah Al-Baqarah 2:136). Thus, these two religions agree and teach that Isa Al-Masih is the sign, the mercy, the straight path, the Word and the Spirit of Allah (Injil, John 1:1, John 14:6, Gen.1:2. Surah Al-Fâtihah 1:6-7, Surah Al-‘Imran 3:55, Surah An-Nisa 4:171).

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<sup>54</sup> John R. W Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1975), 277.

<sup>55</sup> Fateh Al Bari, 302. Vol 7, Sahih Al-Buhari, vol.4, Book 55, number 657.

## **Challenges of Dialogue**

Sharing the divinity of Isa Al-Masih with the Mandara Muslims is a major challenge. The researcher identifies three major obstacles that hinder dialogue between Christians and Muslims. However, these challenges can also be transformed into opportunities for missions to the Mandara Muslims.

### **Christian Identity**

The Islamic world has a strong image of Christianity. Christians are often seen as having altered and corrupted the Bible, twisting the Scriptures and taking them out of context (Surah Al Imran 3:78). They are blamed for bringing colonization with the Bible in hand, tarnishing the image of Christianity over the ages through acts perceived as barbaric: the Crusades, the persecutions of those who followed the truth, such as John Hus, the Waldensians, and Martin Luther, and the change of the Sabbath to Sunday by the famous Roman Emperor Constantine in 322 AD.

Christians are also criticized for starting to eat pork, drink alcohol, and promote sexual immorality, which some believe deviates from the teachings of Scripture. Faced with this challenge, an Adventist must present himself to a Mandara Muslim as belonging to the “remnant people,” a concept found in the Holy Quran. This true people of God, mentioned in the Quran, are those who believe in the four revealed books, mentioned in Surah 5:44, 17:55, 5:46, 4:163, 21:105, 10:94, and Surah 2:44, 3:3: the Tawrat, the Zabur and the Injil.

The Quran also indicates that the Sabbath is not only the day of rest for the remnant people (Surah Al Ma’ida 5:13), but also a sign from Allah, as well as the only covenant in the Quran (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:65-66). In addition, Surah Al-Ma’ida 4:48 calls on Muslims to guard the Bible so that it is not corrupted. According to Yusuf Ali’s Qur’an translation: “We have sent down to you the Book in truth,

confirming the Book before it, and preserving it.” So judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their desires, departing from the truth that has come to you...(Sourate Al-Ma'idah 47-59).

To succeed in a dialogue, it is therefore important to present oneself to the Mandara Muslims as the People of the Book. This people, or “the remnant,” lives in harmony with the principles of the revealed books, does not eat pork, does not drink alcohol, observes the Sabbath, and remains faithful to the sacred books. As Surah Al-A'raf 7:181 indicates, “Of those whom We have created is a community who guide (the others) to truth and, by it, exercise justice.” These people faithfully interpret the Scriptures, following Surah An-Nisa 4:46. Finally, Allah revealed to Muhammad to tell the Muslims to continue to believe in the books revealed before them and in the prophets, among whom was Isa Al-Masih (Surah An-Nisa 4:136, Surah Al-Baqarah 2:136).

### **Strategies**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has implemented four main mission strategies: education, publishing ministry, health (Adventist Health), and church organization. A key element of this mission is the collaboration with ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) to support the ministry effectively.

Education plays a central role as a mission platform. This is reflected in the establishment of schools—primary, secondary, and university—that are designed to convey the message of Isa (Jesus). Teachers, trained as missionaries, are essential vehicles for this mission. The publishing ministry shares the message of Jesus through various printed media, such as newspapers, tracts, illustrated books, and contextualized writings, specifically designed to be accessible to Mandara Muslims. Health centers also serve as a means of mission. By strictly adhering to Islamic

traditions—with separate areas for the treatment of women and men—these centers provide accessible care and a warm welcome to patients. Through loving care and sometimes miracles of healing, recipients are led to know and accept Isa Al-Masih as their Lord and Savior. The organization of the Church, from local churches to the General Conference, is oriented toward functional missionary evangelism. Every member is fully involved in the mission, contributing to its outreach throughout the world.

### **Contextualization**

The researcher must immerse himself in the culture for effective contextualization requires a thoughtful and respectful approach. He must ascend into greatness to unlearn and learn in order to contextualize.

Contextualization is therefore the attempt to communicate the gospel in word and deed and to establish the church in ways that are meaningful to people in their local cultural context, presenting Christianity in a way that meets people's deepest needs and penetrates their worldview, thus enabling them to follow Christ and remain in their own culture.<sup>56</sup> And David Hesselgrave, 1991 defines as follows, the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, word and will of God in a way that is faithful to God's revelation, especially as presented in the teachings of Holy Scripture, and that is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Paul G. Hiebert identified three forms of contextualization: under-contextualization, over-contextualization, and critical contextualization. The

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<sup>56</sup> Darrell L. Whiteman, "Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21, no. 1 (1997): 2-7.

<sup>57</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 141-144.

question addressed in these forms of contextualization is what people should do with their past customs when they become Christians. According to Hiebert, this question was answered differently at different times with under-contextualization and over-contextualization. However, he developed critical contextualization to answer this question.

**Non-contextualization** (under contextualization 1800-1950): When the missionary refuses to modify his evangelical ministry and missionary approaches to meet the specific needs of the societies he evangelizes. Converts to Christianity should learn to abandon their old customs. While this contextualization may maintain the exclusivity of Christ and the unity of humanity, it has led to a covert syncretism whereby new converts can keep their old customs secret.<sup>58</sup> With the risk of syncretism.<sup>59</sup> Often, the dual allegiance.

**Non-critical Contextualization** (Over-contextualization). Non-critical contextualization sees the good in all cultures of the world and debunks the idea of the superiority of Western cultural forms. It affirms the priesthood of all believers and allowed Christians in different countries with specific cultures and people groups to decide how the gospel could be adapted to their unique cultural context. This form failed to consider the pervasiveness of sin and how it defiled all cultures. To contextualize the gospel in local cultures, they watered down certain aspects of the gospel, hence syncretism, the paganism portrayed under the veneer of Christianity.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, "Missions and the Understanding of Culture in The Church," in *Mission: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to J.B. Toews*. ed. A. J. Klassen (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, 1997), 251-265.

<sup>59</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Issues in Contextualisation* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016), 53.

<sup>60</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *Missiology: An International Review* 11, no. 3 (1987): 104-112.

### **Critical Contextualization** or Healthy Contextualization or the Ideal.

According to Hiebert, critical contextualization has four steps:

Exegesis of culture is the first step. Here, a missionary identifies cultural challenges and gathers information about them. Here, the missionary studies these customs with the local population to understand them.

The next step is an exegesis of the Scriptures regarding these customs to see how the Bible addresses the customs under examination. The missionary plays a key role in this step to enlighten the communities on the correct understanding of the appropriate biblical texts that speak to these customs. Critical response is the third step. In this step, local Christians evaluate their customs in light of their biblical understanding gained in the second step.

The last step is to accept the old practices, reject them, or create a new contextualized cultural practice to meet the same needs as the old one. The missionary and local Christians will develop the new contextualized practice based on their assessment in the previous steps.<sup>61</sup> To avoid the risks of syncretism, double allegiance through under and over contextualization, the difficult process, and the time or place of the Holy Spirit in the conversion process often ignored by the missionary in contextualization, the research opts for the critical or faithful contextualization of the official position of the church. For the church is faced with a constant threat of distortion and compromise of the truth. Seventh-day Adventist contextualization is motivated by the serious responsibility of fulfilling the mission of the gospel in a very diverse world. It is based on the authority of Scripture and the guidance of the Spirit and aims to communicate biblical truth in a culturally relevant way. In this task,

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<sup>61</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Academic, 1985), 97.

contextualization must be faithful to Scripture and meaningful to the new host culture, remembering that all cultures are judged by the gospel.<sup>62</sup>

### Summary

In this study section, our objective is to clarify the Islamic perception of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. This chapter first explains the arrival of Islam in northern Cameroon, then its expansion in the Mayo Sava region, and finally its spread among the Mandara people in Mémé. This process has profoundly transformed the worldview of the Mandara, by modifying their beliefs, practices, and cultural values. To do this, we first examined what the noble Qur'an says about it, then we analyzed the Ahadith and the Sunnah of the prophet Muhammad as well as some Islamic theologians, to clarify the Islamic perspective on his divinity.

The research identified common points between Christian and Muslim beliefs, to establish a missiological and theological bridge. This research shows that the Quran provides elements to approach the divinity of Isa. Indeed, Isa is described as the Spirit and the Word of Allah; He was raised to heaven and will return to judge the righteous and the disbelievers. Moreover, Isa Al-Masih revealed himself to the prophets mentioned in the Noble Qur'an and His role is affirmed in the fulfillment of Quranic prophecies, as in Surah Az-Zukhruf 43:63: "And when Jesus brought clear signs, He said: "I have come to you with wisdom and to explain to you some of the things about which you used to differ. So fear Allah and obey Me." At the same time, Allah states in the Zabur (Psalm 32:8): "I will guide you to the best path for your life. I will advise you and protect you." According to this study, Isa is not only the Messiah and the savior, but also the straight path on which Allah wants to lead Muslims, the one that

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<sup>62</sup> General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Communication Department, *Statements, Guidelines, and Other Documents* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2010), 150.

Adam and Eve sought after losing justice, kingship and the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Through Isa Al-Masih, the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael can be restored to the right path (John 14:6), and the lost Garden of Eden (Revelation 21:4, I Cor. 15:22)

This research highlights that in order to share the divinity of Jesus with the Mandara Muslims of Mayo Sava, it is essential to do so sensitively, respecting their cultural context. It will also allow us to reach Muslims in general more effectively, and more importantly, by presenting Isa Al-Masih in a way that is inclusive of their worldview and resonates with their beliefs. Surah Ali'Imran 3:55 makes a powerful statement, saying: For God has said: O Jesus, I will end your life, and I will raise you up to myself, and I will purify you from those who disbelieve, and I will set those who followed you above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Allah tells Isa that He will place him in the grave and bring him out of that state. Moreover, those who follow Isa will be given a privileged place, that is, they will be saved. Then to Me is your return, all of you, so I will judge between you concerning that in which you disputed. Allah will place those who follow Isa above those who reject him or do not believe in him or who have a privileged place now until the return of Isa, will be saved and will be raised to heaven with Allah. We need more than just strategies and critical or faithful contextualization to communicate the message of Isa Al-Masih's divinity in a relevant manner under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the Methodology of this study, the geographical, demographic, and religious context of the Meme, in Mayo Sava, Far North Department of Cameroon, where this study took place. It also takes into account the approach and design of the research, the population, and sampling, the procedure for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, the question of reliability, and finally, the annexes, the informed consent form, and the interview questions for a relevant missiological and theological implications.

#### **Research Setting**

This framework presents the places and localities where the research takes place.

#### **The Geographical Boundaries of Cameroon**

Cameroon is a country in Central Africa. It occupies a geographically strategic place in Africa. Cameroon is the beating heart of Africa, a wild and sensual mosaic of active volcanoes, white sand beaches, thick rainforests, and beautiful parched landscapes broken by the spectacular rock formations of the Sahel.<sup>1</sup> With both French and English-speaking regions, not to mention some 300 local languages, the country is a vast ethnic and linguistic jigsaw puzzle, but unlike so many of its neighbors, it

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<sup>1</sup> CamerounWeb, "*Qu'est-ce qu'il y a, qu'est-ce qu'il y a, qu'est-ce qui se passe...*," accessed November 24, 2024, <https://www.camerounweb.com/CameroonHomePage/tourism/fun.php#>.

enjoys great stability. Often referred to as “Africa in miniature,”<sup>2</sup> Cameroon is everything you would expect from the African continent, this means that Cameroon offers a summary of the natural, human, and cultural riches of the African continent, a land of seduction and eclecticism. Cameroon is the 53rd largest country in the world with 472,442 km<sup>2</sup><sup>3</sup> barely smaller than France with its 551,695 km<sup>2</sup> and is located in Central and West Africa on the golf of Biafra. Cameroon is triangular in shape and is bordered by Nigeria to the northwest, Chad to the northeast, the Central African Republic to the east, the Republic of Congo to the southeast, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest.<sup>4</sup> It has two important capitals, Yaoundé the political capital and Douala for its economic part. Cameroon has ten administrative regions which are headed by governors, 58 departments under the direction of prefects, and 360 districts led by sub-prefects.

The North is divided into three regions: the Far North, the North and Adamaoua. Then comes the Center and the East. The Southern Province is located on the Gulf of Guinea and on the southern border. The Western Region is divided into four smaller regions: the Littoral and Southwestern Regions are on the coast, and the Northwestern and Western Regions are in the Western Zones. Cameroon is divided into five geographical zones distinguished by dominant physical, climatic and plant characteristics, namely: the coastal plain, the Southern Cameroon Plateau, the Western Highlands, the Southern Plateau, and the Northern Lowlands. The climate

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<sup>2</sup> Sylvia Keng Dasi, “Africa In Miniature,” accessed November 24, 2024, <https://www.kengskitchen.com/kengs-kitchen-blog/cameroon-africa-in-miniature>.

<sup>3</sup> Africanewroom, “All About Cameroon,” published February 21, 2019, accessed November 24, 2024, <https://www.africa.com/heres-what-you-need-to-know-about-cameroon/>.

<sup>4</sup> Small World, “Guide complet sur la géographie du Cameroun, ou ‘l’Afrique en miniature’,” February 24, 2021, accessed August 16, 2024, <https://www.smallworldfs.com/fr/blog/guide-complet-sur-la-geographie-du-cameroun-ou-lafrique-en-miniature>.

varies according to the relief, from tropical along the coast, to semi-arid and hot in the North.

### **Upper Mayo Sava Department**

By Decree No. 81/521 of December 11, 1981, on the administrative reorganization of the Northern Province, MAYO-SAVA was born from the breakup of the former department of Margui-Wandala (of the then Northern Province) whose capital was Mokolo. The department of Mayo-Sava covers an area of 2,736 km<sup>2</sup>. It has three districts: Mora, Kolofata, and Tokombere.<sup>5</sup> The population of Mayo-Sava of 469,424 inhabitants in 2017,<sup>6</sup> is made up of various ethnic groups, including the Mandara, the Peuls, the Muyangs, the Mada, the Zoulgo, the Podoko, the Moktele, the Molko and the Kanuri. The vegetation is dominated by savannah, composed mainly of tall grasses and a few scattered trees, such as acacias and baobabs. However, vegetation can be denser along waterways. The department has a strong presence of Islam, which deeply influences local culture and lifestyles. The department is also marked by security challenges related to its proximity to the Nigerian border and the activities of armed groups, notably Boko Haram.

### **The Geographical Setting of Meme**

Mémé is a locality of Cameroon located in the Far North region, the department of Mayo-Sava, and the district of Mora, near the border with Nigeria. To the east, it is bordered by the district of Pette, to the west by the locality of Warba,

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<sup>5</sup> Osidimbea, "Le Memoire du Cameroun," accessed August 16, 2024, <https://www.osidimbea.cm/collectivites/extreme-nord/mayo-sava/>.

<sup>6</sup> Cameroun Portail de Données, "*Population De La Region De L'extreme-Nord*," accessed August 18, 2024, <https://cameroon.opendataforafrica.org/kzjwpqb/population-de-la-region-de-l-extreme-nord>.

and to the north by the city of Mora, Aissa Harde, Djoundé and to the south by the canton of Palbara, district of Tokombere and the district of Maroua II. Mémé has a cosmopolitan population. It is home to several ethnic groups, including the Mouyang, the Ouldime, the Ourza, the Mada, the Kanouri, the Hausa, the Fulani, and the Mandara majority.<sup>7</sup>

The canton has a total population of 30,307 inhabitants, with a distribution of 15,009 men and 15,298 women.<sup>8</sup> The population in this region is growing rapidly, with the practice of polygamy and the arrival of internally displaced persons from the surroundings of Mora, Banki (Nigeria and Cameroon), and the department of Logone-et-Chari, as well as refugees from northern Nigeria, all victims of the atrocities of Boko Haram, an Islamic sect.

The population practices agricultural activities, in particular the cultivation of millet, cotton, sorghum, corn, as well as market gardening crops such as onions and legumes. Trade is very developed in this canton; young people and people of all ages run shops and stores there selling various items, often supplied by the market of Banki or Moubi in Nigeria. On the religious level, there are followers of traditional African religion, Christianity and Islam. Islam is the dominant religion in this locality, and Mandara Muslims practice their faith according to the pillars and articles of Islam. They also celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad on the 12th of *Rabī' al-Awwal*, the third month of the Muslim lunar calendar, with traditional dances accompanied by musical instruments such as the tam-tam, the *algaita*, or the trumpet.

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<sup>7</sup> District de Mayo Sava Sud, *Recherche sur la situation géographique de Mémé*, Novembre 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Anuol Recherche, "*Canton d(e) Meme, Canton de departement de Mayo Sava, Region de l'Extreme Nord*," accessed November 11, 2024, <https://www.villages.cm/chefferie-details/meme>.

## Religious Demography in Cameroon

Religious demographics in Cameroon are marked by great diversity, reflecting the country's complex history and its various cultural and colonial influences.

Christianity is the dominant religion with a large range. Islam is the second most practiced religion in Cameroon. According to United States government estimates, the country's population was approximately 29.3 million in 2022. The most recent census conducted in 2005 revealed that 69.2% of the population identified as Christian, 20.9% as Muslim, 5.6% as animist, 1.0% as other denominations, and 3.2% as no specific religion. Among Christians, 55.5% are Catholic, 38% are Protestant, and 6.5% as other Christian denominations, including Jehovah's Witnesses and Orthodox.<sup>9</sup>

The 2020 Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project estimates that 38.3% of Christians are Catholic, and 31.4% are Protestant, including the Adventist Church. The number of Christian revivalist churches is growing significantly. Christians are concentrated primarily in the southern and western regions of the country. The Northwest and Southwest regions are predominantly Protestant, while the South, Center, East, Littoral, and West regions are dominated by Catholics. The Mbororo and other ethnic communities, who are predominantly Muslim, are largely found in the North, Far North (where the research is located), Northwest, Adamawa, and East regions, which also have the highest proportion of Muslims. The Bamoun ethnic group, located in the West region, is also predominantly Muslim. Furthermore, many individuals, whether Muslim, Christian, or of other faiths, continue to practice certain aspects of traditional beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ambassade des Etats-Unis au Cameroun, "Rapport 2022 Sur La Liberté de Religion dans le Monde – Cameroun," *Résumé Analytique*, Juillet 13, 2023, accessed August 19, 2024, <https://cm.usembassy.gov/fr/rapport-2022-sur-la-liberte-de-religion-dans-le-monde-cameroun/>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Islam is spreading day by day in Cameroon, particularly in the north, and more specifically in Mémé. If nothing is done, Christianity risks being absorbed and stifled. Jesus says in Matthew 24:14: “This good news of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come.” This is reinforced by Revelation 14:6: “And I saw another angel flying amid heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” This message is also addressed to Muslim peoples, sons, and daughters of peace, such as the Mandara. Hence the missiological implication.

### **Research Approach and Design**

This study is part of a qualitative approach aimed at capturing the social and cultural specificities of each individual and community.<sup>11</sup> It allows for a constant exchange with the data and allows the researcher to better understand the subject and discover new perspectives on the social phenomena being studied. Doing qualitative research is a way of looking at the social or cultural reality of a given people. Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem.<sup>12</sup> Qualitative research is a valuable methodology that allows for a better analysis of human experience in the social and cultural environment, understanding human behavior, lived experiences, and social phenomena.<sup>13</sup> This study aimed to study the perceptions of Mandara Muslims towards the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. Qualitative research is a valuable

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<sup>11</sup> N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011), 1–32.

<sup>12</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, 2018), 13.

<sup>13</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 28.

methodology that allows for a better analysis of human experience in the social and cultural environment, understanding human behavior, lived experiences, and social phenomena.<sup>14</sup> This study aimed to study the perceptions of Mandara Muslims towards the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study.

### **Research Approach**

The study used the qualitative approach, focusing on phenomenological methods allows us to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and beliefs of the Mandara people regarding the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

### **Research Design**

The study used the phenomenological design of inquiry, coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences of several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon.<sup>15</sup> The researcher must set aside any preconceived notions they may have regarding the experience or phenomenon when using a phenomenological research design.<sup>16</sup> Social scientists distinguish the following three types: Existential phenomenology focuses on understanding the audience's experiences through their perspective. Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on creating meaning from experiences through the audience's perspective. Transcendental phenomenology focuses on how the phenomenon appears in one

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<sup>14</sup> Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Chinyere N. Ugwu, "Qualitative Research," January 2023, accessed December 17, 2024, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367221023\\_Qualitative\\_Research](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367221023_Qualitative_Research).

consciousness on a broader, scientific scale.<sup>17</sup> This study adopted the hermeneutical phenomenology because it allows us to understand and interpret human social experiences, to gain an in-depth understanding of how participants perceive their experiences of Isa Al-Masih's divinity, to better grasp what they have experienced, and to interpret them. This fosters a privileged relationship between the researcher and the participants.

### **Population and Sampling**

In research, a population is a complete set of people with specific characteristics. There are two types of populations in research: the target population and the accessible population. The target population refers to individuals with specific characteristics in a given geographical area. On the other hand, the accessible population, which is a subset of the target population, includes those people that the researcher seeks to reach out to conduct the study.<sup>18</sup> Since the target population is too large in Mémé, the Mandara population for this study, the study focused on an accessible sample of the population, representing the entire Mandara Muslim population, particularly the AMBBs.

Sampling criteria. There are two types of sampling: purposive sampling and random or chance sampling. Purposive sampling is more commonly used in qualitative studies than random or chance sampling. This means that the researcher selects individuals and study sites because they can preferably shed light on

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<sup>17</sup> "What is phenomenology in qualitative research?" published February 7, 2023, accessed December 17, 2024, <https://dovetail.com/research/phenomenology-qualitative-research/>.

<sup>18</sup> Leroy R. Thacker II, "What Is the Big Deal About Populations in Research?" *Progress in Transplantation* 30, no. 1 (2020): 3, 10.1177/1526924819893795.

understanding the research problem and the phenomenon central to the study,<sup>19</sup> the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. In homogeneous sampling, the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on their membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics. To use this procedure, the researcher must identify the characteristics and find individuals or sites that possess them.<sup>20</sup> This study used purposive sampling to select AMBBs, 23 Seventh-day Adventists of Muslim Origin in the Mayo Sava department, and the five churches in the districts of this ecclesiastical unit. Through local source research, these people are well educated and capable of understanding the research problem and answering the questions when the time comes. For this sampling in the 23 AMBBs, six participants were selected according to precise criteria, in a strict, targeted manner, to ensure homogeneity. These participants, men and women, were Muslims converted to the Church, in a regular situation, with at least three years of seniority, and aged between 20 and 50 years. This group served as the basis for an in-depth analysis of their understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih (Jesus Christ), before and after their conversion. Finally, those who master the Fulfulde or Mandara language

### **Sample Size**

Sample size refers to the number of individuals one selects to participate in a study. Sample size plays a critical role in generalizing findings to a larger population. An appropriate sample ensures representative and reliable findings. On the other

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<sup>19</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), 125.

<sup>20</sup> John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2002), 208.

hand, a sample that is too large can result in unnecessary logistical costs and delays in reporting results, while a sample that is too small may produce insignificant results, making the findings unreliable.

A well-chosen sample size enhances the credibility of the research and the quality of the findings.<sup>21</sup> Most commonly, sample sizes for a phenomenological study are 3 to 10 participants<sup>22</sup> or 5 to 25 participants<sup>23</sup>, a narrower range 3 to 10 is suitable for in-depth and focused studies, while a broader range 5 to 25 favors a broader exploration and a more nuanced understanding of a phenomenon. Following this recommendation and for an adequate and objective result, the sample size of AMBBs was six, rigorously selected. They come from the target population of Mémé. This study was conducted among Seventh-day Adventists of Muslim Origin (AMBB) under the jurisdiction of the North Cameroon Conference, in the districts of Mayo Sava (NCCMS). The NCCMS, located in the Far North region of Cameroon, covers five districts, including the Mayo Sava department, including Mémé.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The dynamics of phenomenological research lie in the fact that the researcher immerses and lives in the old and new worldview of Mandara Muslims and interacts with the selected participants so that the understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih can be reliably collected. Therefore, in-depth interviews are conducted to collect data.

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<sup>21</sup> Le Sphinx, "Quelle est la taille d'échantillon nécessaire pour obtenir des résultats significatifs?" accessed November 12, 2024, <https://www.lesphinx-developpement.fr/blog/taille-echantillon-necessaire-pour-resultats-significatifs/>.

<sup>22</sup> S. Dukes, "Phenomenological Methodology in the Human Sciences," *Journal of Religion and Health* 23, no. 3 (1984): 197-203.

<sup>23</sup> D. E. Polkinghorne, "Phenomenological research methods," *Existential-phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology*, eds., S. Valle and S. Halling (New York: Plenum Press, 1989), 4160.

Thus, to avoid the bias, the researcher does not influence the participants in any way to have a reliable result. The phenomenological interview is designed to capture lived experience.<sup>24</sup> The interview locations are chosen for more confidentiality so that they can also express themselves freely. The one-on-one interview is a data collection process in which the researcher uses in this research and asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time. Qualitative research may use several one-on-one interviews. One-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably. In addition, a focus group is used. A focus group interview is the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, usually four to six. The researcher asks the same questions to four people and obtains answers from all members of the group. Focus groups provide the best information.<sup>25</sup> To facilitate the interview, the researcher uses the sophisticated Digital Voice Recorder to avoid interruption of recording and loss of the participant's line of ideas, failing that the Android phone. The questions are asked to the participants in their local language, Mandara, and in Fulfulde for those who speak in Fulfulde, the recording will be transcribed and translated into French and English for analysis. The interview would last one hour with the participant's consent. To obtain reliable results, the researcher must take into account the simplicity of the questions to the participants. He asks open and clear questions, without jargon, he must be understanding and show empathy, let the user speak without interrupting him, and not

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<sup>24</sup> République Française, "L'entretien phénoménologique : une technique centrée sur l'expérience vécue," June 13, 2023, accessed December 18, 2024 <https://afpro.eu/news/lentretien-phenomenologique-une-technique-centree-sur-l Experience-vecue/>.

<sup>25</sup> Creswell, *Educational Research*, 218.

influence his answers.<sup>26</sup> The researcher must facilitate an understanding of the expected results of participants. The researcher then transcribes and types the data into analysis.<sup>27</sup>

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research goes hand in hand with other parts of qualitative study design, namely data collection and writing up the findings.<sup>28</sup> Hermeneutic phenomenology emphasizes that data analysis is not a linear or sequential process, but a circular and dynamic one. Data analysis involves a constant dialogue between the researcher, participants, data, and literature, in which meanings and ideas emerge and evolve. The data analysis process involves four steps: naive reading, structural analysis, comprehensive understanding, and critical reflection. Naive reading involves gaining insight into the data as a whole and identifying preliminary themes or patterns. Structural analysis involves examining the data in detail and identifying sub-themes or variations. Comprehensive understanding involves synthesizing themes and sub-themes into a coherent and holistic interpretation of the phenomena. Critical reflection involves evaluating the interpretation in relation to the research question, the literature, and the implications of the study.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-François Nogier, "Étude ethnographique, est-ce le secret pour comprendre vos utilisateurs?" LinkedIn, 18 Septembre 2023, accessed Novembre 8, 2024, <https://fr.linkedin.com/pulse/%C3%A9tude-ethnographique-est-ce-le-secret-pour-comprendre-nogier#>.

<sup>27</sup> Creswell, *Educational Research*, 217.

<sup>28</sup> Creswell J. W., and Creswell J.D., *Research Design*, 314.

<sup>29</sup> Anders Lindseth, "A Phenomenological Hermeneutical Method for Researching Lived Experience," *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences* 18, no. 2 (2004): 145-153, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1471-6712.2004.00258.x>.

The research question is particularly relevant to capture the concepts and ideas as they are perceived within the Mandara Muslim people being studied. Using this approach, the researcher was able to identify major themes around the understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih according to Islamic and cultural interpretations. The researcher coded interview transcripts, observation notes, and focus group discussions to categorize key themes related to the Mandara Muslims' view of the divinity of Isa. The researcher used quality computer coding and decoding software to help exclude interruptions, pauses, stuttering, and correcting the grammatical structure of the data. Then, the qualitative computer data analysis program will be used to help analyze the data. This analysis was done step by step. First, the researcher organizes and prepares the data for analysis, second, reads and visualizes all the data collected, and finally codes and organizes the data into segments of information that emerge from the participants' responses. The themes were grouped according to their similarities based on the questions posed to the participants. The data analyzed and synthesized were used to develop relevant and effective missiological strategies to reach Mandara Muslims.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The research sought ethical approval from the Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (AUA-ISERC) of the Adventist University of Africa. It will submit its consent form and data collection tools for review and approval.<sup>30</sup> Once approved, all Mandara Muslim participants in the interviews are required to sign the consent form before the interviews, which will be conducted privately.

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<sup>30</sup> Adventist University of Africa, "Ethics and Review Board," accessed April 10, 2024, <https://www.aua.ac.ke/ethics-and-review-board/>.

Therefore, the study was conducted with strict respect for the rights of individuals by maintaining the anonymity of the participants and confidentiality. It is therefore necessary to maintain trust and proximity with the participants, to be cordial and attentive to avoid superficial responses. The data collected, they will be secured and systematically destroyed after this defense and approval.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, the researcher must provide evidence of the four main criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of the study results: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility, that is, the data collected are accurate. Credibility of qualitative data can be ensured by multiple perspectives throughout data collection to ensure that the data are appropriate.<sup>31</sup> It also allows for the interpretation of data to be accurate. Credibility can be enhanced by triangulation, which involves using multiple data sources, methods, or researchers to cross-check and corroborate findings.<sup>32</sup>

Transferability: This is the extent to which research findings can be applied or generalized to other contexts or groups. Transferability can be enhanced by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and methods so that readers can judge the similarity and relevance of the findings to their own situation.<sup>33</sup> It allows the researcher to have access to the raw data.

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<sup>31</sup> National University, "Trustworthiness of the Data," accessed November 13, 2024, <https://resources.nu.edu/c.php?g=1013606&p=8394398>.

<sup>32</sup> Faster Capital, "Fiabilite comment etablir la qualite et la credibilite de votre recherche qualitative," 15 June 2024, accessed November 13, 2024, <https://fastercapital.com/fr/contenu/Fiabilite--comment-etablir-la-qualite-et-la-credibilite-de-votre-recherche-qualitative.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Dependability is a thorough description of the study procedures and analysis to allow for replication of the study.<sup>34</sup> In qualitative research, it ensures that the research findings are consistent, stable, and credible. These findings fall under the supervisor's responsibility to scrutinize the data collected and interpretations, and then recommendations.

Confirmability is the step to ensure that the data and findings are not due to participant or researcher bias. Confirmability of qualitative data is ensured when data are checked and rechecked throughout data collection and analysis to ensure that the findings would likely be reproducible by others. Confirmability can be documented by a clear coding scheme that identifies codes and patterns identified in the analyses.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, triangulation was used. Research triangulation is the process of examining a research topic or phenomenon from multiple perspectives, data sources, or methods. This improves the validity, reliability, and comprehensiveness of research findings.<sup>36</sup> The four types of triangulations are theoretical triangulation, data or method triangulation, researcher triangulation, and source triangulation.

Theoretical triangulation requires researchers to draw on multiple theoretical frameworks, or even multiple disciplinary perspectives, to analyze and interpret their research findings. Some researchers use researcher triangulation to involve multiple researchers using multiple approaches. Method triangulation involves implementing research designs that combine two or more data collection methods with a view to seeking complementarity and corroboration. Source triangulation involves collecting

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<sup>34</sup> National University, "Trustworthiness of the Data."

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Jessica Abbadia, "Qu'est-ce que la triangulation dans la recherche? La voie vers des résultats fiables," accessed September 29, 2025, <https://mindthegraph.com/blog/fr/quest-ce-que-la-triangulation-dans-la-recherche>.

data from multiple sources. It is the diversity of viewpoints that is sought to provide a richer vision of a theme.<sup>37</sup> To ensure validity and reliability in this study, the researcher used source triangulation to collect data from participants.

This allowed for ensure the validity of the results and enriching them.<sup>38</sup> In this study, it allowed for a more nuanced and comprehensive overview of the results of the understanding of Isa's divinity. By using triangulation, the researcher also attempted to reduce the gaps and biases present in all methods or single data sources.<sup>39</sup>

### Summary

This study used qualitative research under the ethnographic cover based on the understanding of the Mandara Muslims of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih in Mémé in Mayo Sava through the semi-structured interviews of seven Mandara resource persons. The data collected will be analyzed and synthesized. The emerging and similar themes helped to set up missiological strategies to reach Muslims. It also highlights the ethical criteria that will allow the research results to be coherent, reliable, stable, and credible.

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<sup>37</sup> Honorine Pegdwendé Sawadogo, “Saturation, triangulation et catégorisation des données collectées,” accessed September 29, 2025, <https://scienceetbiencommun.pressbooks.pub>.

<sup>38</sup> Rosine Horincq Detournay, François Guillemette and Jason Luckerhoff, “Clarification conceptuelle de la méthode de triangulation en recherche qualitative.” *Enjeux et Société* 10, no. 2 (2024) : 75–92, accessed September 29, 2025, <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1110574ar>.

<sup>39</sup> Jessica Abbadia, “Qu'est-ce que la triangulation dans la recherche ? La voie vers des résultats fiables,” accessed Sept 29, 2025, <https://mindthegraph.com/blog/fr/quest-ce-que-la-triangulation-dans-la-recherche>.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The study opens with an interview question to the participants, followed by the transcription and translation of interviews and focus groups into English, along with the processes of coding the data. Examining the emerging themes and their differences allows for cohesive and profound interpretations of the observed phenomena. The synthesis and conclusions are based on responses to the research question related to the perception of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. The analysis is structured around several fundamental areas, with the participants' experience lived Isa and their implications. It then explores their experiences and teachings about Isa, highlighting the missiological and theological challenges inherent in presenting him within a Muslim context. Special focus is placed on the doctrinal distinctions regarding tawhid (strict monotheism) and their influence on the mission of the Mandara. The study also assesses changes in the understanding of the divinity of Isa before and after the conversion of the AMBBs. Lastly, it examines the theological and missiological repercussions of these changes before proposing contextualized strategies for effectively and respectfully communicating the divinity of Isa Al-Masih in a comprehensible manner.

### **Description of the participants**

Participants were selected from the six districts of Mayo Sava. All signed a consent form that was translated into French and Fulfulde, and they freely participated in the interviews and focus groups while agreeing to remain anonymous.

Among them was a 50-year-old man, the father of a family, a Muslim who converted to the Adventist Church 41 years ago. His testimony and experiences are particularly relevant, as he has faced theological discussions and preaching about the figure of Isa Al-Masih.

Another participant is a 51-year-old man who grew up in a Muslim environment and possesses deep knowledge of Islamic teachings. He reads the Qur'an fluently in Arabic and can translate it into Fulfulde, the widely spoken language in the locality of Mémé. His testimony and experiences provide rich insights concerning the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

The third participant is a 27-year-old man, a former teacher at a Quranic school (Marabout), who converted to the Adventist Church and is currently studying theology at a local Adventist university. His educational background, along with his Islamic and Quranic knowledge, enables him to offer in-depth insights into the understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

The fourth participant is a 47-year-old man, a former Muslim convert with solid knowledge of Islamic teachings.

The fifth participant is a 20-year-old man who has converted to the Adventist Church and is studying at a local university. He reads the Qur'an fluently and has a strong command of Islamic traditions and teachings. His personal experiences with Isa greatly enrich this study on the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

Finally, the sixth participant is a 22-year-old woman who has converted to the Adventist Church. She is knowledgeable about Islamic teachings, and her personal experiences are significant for this study.

All participants are former Sunni Muslims who converted to the Adventist Church. They possessed knowledge of Islamic teachings, and some of them read and mastered the Qur'an, as will be demonstrated in the analyses. To maintain their anonymity, participants are designated by the codes PP1, PP2, PP3, PP4, PP5, and PP6, while the focus group is identified by the abbreviation FCGP. The focus group allows us to gather certain details that participants forgot to say or to consolidate their comments. A focus group was used with the same participants.

## **Findings and Discussions**

### **The First Research Question**

What is the understanding of the Mandara Muslims on the divinity of Isa Al-Masih?

The understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih by the AMBBs.

A theme on Isa as a messenger of Allah emerged. For instance, PP2 had this to report: Isa is Rasul Ullah, meaning that Isa is a messenger of Allah. As PP1 stated: "According to my past experience, Isa is a messenger of Allah; he served his time like the other prophets, Ibrahim, Musa, but after Allah sent the Prophet Muhammad." This statement reflects a common position in the Muslim world, Muslims do not worship Jesus, do not consider him divine. But He is a special messenger. He is the messenger of Allah and the continuation of the divine message (Surah Al-Baqara 2:87), and to accept him as a prophet from Allah to guide. Most important, and according to Imam Ibn Khatir, a Muslim theologian, exegete, and historian who became one of the main intellectual figures of Syria in the 14th century, says that Isa is the prophet of Allah

sent in the same way as Mohammad.<sup>1</sup> Here the notion of the identity of Isa is taught in Islamic theology.

A theme on belief in Isa as the son of Mariam emerged. Muslims consider Isa Al-Masih the son of Mariam. PP4 stated: "Isa is the son of Mariam. If we sum up, Isa is the one who is very honored in this world and beyond." FCGP comments by saying: "Isa Al-Masih was born from a woman called Mariam who did not have a husband. His birth for me is miraculous." This statement is supported by the Quran in (Surah 3:45-49). If Isa is Mariam's son, this implies an extraordinary, out-of-the-ordinary birth made possible by a supernatural power. In Arabic, the term "Ibn," often translated as "son," generally denotes a lineage by association or belonging, and not necessarily biological. In contrast, "Walad" specifically refers to a son born through a biological relationship. In Surah Mariam 19:19, the angel Jibril, sent by Allah, declares: "I am only the messenger of your Lord, to give you good news of a pure son." This "pure" boy, mentioned here, cannot be the result of a human union, which rules out any direct biological lineage. Thus, Isa is not a "Walad" of Mariam, but an "Ibn," that is, a son in a spiritual and exceptional sense, born of a divine act and not a natural process. He is pure, which means not sin. All prophets were born in sin, including Prophet Mohammad, except Isa Ibn Mariam. Allah is without sin. Therefore, Isa is divine.

**Believes in Isa as the Kalimatullah** means "the Word of God." According to PP5, Isa is the word of Allah according to Surah 4:171, which joins together certain Quranic interpretations. This perception has a significant influence on the Quranic teaching on the vision of Isa in the Muslim community. For Muslims, Isa as

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<sup>1</sup> L'imam Ibn Kathir, "Tafsir de la Sourate 2: Al Baqara," accessed November 1, 2024, [https://www.academia.edu/11592055/Tafsir\\_de\\_la\\_Sourate\\_2\\_Al\\_Baqara](https://www.academia.edu/11592055/Tafsir_de_la_Sourate_2_Al_Baqara).

Kalimatullah represents that he was brought into being by a direct command from God, lacking a biological father, facilitated by the breath of the Spirit. This bestows upon him a unique status, but this does not suggest his divine nature within Islamic beliefs. This emphasizes his special status. Conversely, for Christians, the title Word of God means, by extension, the incarnation of Jesus, serving as the ultimate expression of God to humanity.

Speaking of Christ's pre-existence, here are some aspects of His pre-existence: The most important is His position over creation (John 1:1-12). He is the very reason for creation, that is, the most important: No one takes His place, and that is why God says, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6). He is the revelation of the invisible God. By His position over creation, He declares, shows, and reveals who God is, because God is invisible. For us, God became visible, in Christ, to show who God is: His creative power; His providence that controls all things; His presence in the Old Testament; and His preeminence over all things.<sup>2</sup>

This approach sufficiently demonstrates that Jesus, as the Son of God, always existed before His incarnation. More importantly, in his article "What Jesus Received from God," Étienne Omnès quotes the renowned theologian Thomas Aquinas, asserting that the term "Logos" used by John (John 1:1) is sufficient to establish the pre-existence and divinity of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> This statement is all the more relevant in a context where Muslim beliefs and traditions faithful to the absolute oneness of God (tawhid) contest his pre-existence and, consequently, the divinity of Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> Living Word Ministry, "The Pre-existence of Christ – Part 1," accessed August 6, 2025, <https://donatoanzalone.org/the-pre-existence-of-christ-part-1/>.

<sup>3</sup> Étienne Omnès, "Ce que Jésus a reçu de Dieu – Thomas d'Aquin," September 2, 2019, accessed August 07, 2025, <https://parlafoi.fr/2019/09/21/ce-que-jesus-a-recu-de-dieu-thomas-daquin-2/>.

**Missiological implications.** The perception can be a bridge for a competent dialogue between Adventists and Mandara Muslims on the understanding his role as a prophet, but the prophet is different from being God in the salvation of this unreached group. On the one hand.

On the other hand, his virgin birth, Mariam is an important connection point between Muslims and Christians to arrive at the correct understanding of the incarnation and even the divinity of Isa to reach this people better.

**Following their encounter with Isa Al-Masih.** Participants have a new understanding of Isa Al-Masih

**They Believe in the divinity of Isa.** Based on his experience, PP1, a convert to Adventism, reported: Isa is the son of Allah; he is in heaven. This statement illustrates the theological perception that shapes the understanding after conversion. PP4 reported:

Son of God does not mean that Allah gave birth to him, but Allah said with his mouth that you are my son, so like the one who comes from Allah, for example I come from Mémé, we say that he is a Méméen or from Mora, Moraen. Today, we say that we are the children of Adam because we come from Adam, it is not Adam who married our mothers to beget us. This new perception of the nature of Isa allows the people to understand Isa's divinity. And therefore, its implications for reaching other Muslims.

He is the son of God not only because he comes from Allah but because Isa Al-Masih is the word that created everything and the one by whom we are saved, declares PP3. PP4 comments by saying: “For me, Isa Al-Masih is God who took human form, who suffered atrociously, and who died and who was resurrected “Surah 3:55”.” which PP2 confirms Isa Ruhullah, that is to say, Isa is the Spirit of Allah.

**Belief in Isa as a messenger and sign of Allah.** According to PP2, Isa is Aya tulah which means the sign of Allah. Isa is more than a prophet, but a sign of Allah. This statement is based on the Islamic belief inscribed in the covenant of Allah made with man that he must not break under any circumstances otherwise he will be misled far away or simply lost, Surah 7:36,37, 40. To add to this, Surah 19:21 reports the decision of Allah that he predestines Isa to be a sign of humanity and mercy from Allah. This is the landmark when Adam and Eve had sinned. They needed this mercy to find the sign that Allah sent them.

**Belief in Isa as Savior and unique way to Allah.** According to the FCGP, Isa is the savior, through him Allah will accept us in his kingdom and the one by whom we will go to heaven, the only right way revealed by Allah. This new perception of the person of Isa. The true path, Sirat al-Mustaqeem. The Quran also emphasizes the importance of following Isa, as it is considered the straight path to righteousness. Indeed, Isa is not only a prophet: he is also the right path. This statement highlights his divine nature, because only God can be the true way that leads to life, here below and in the hereafter. By consulting Surah Imran 3:55, it corresponds with the statement of Jesus in the Gospel of John 14:6. In the Quran, Jesus is represented as a sign of the coming Judgment. In the FCGP participants commented that through Isa Allah will accept us, will accept us in his kingdom. Thus, believers who accept Isa as a sign from Allah do not have to fear the Judgment. Following Jesus is important for believers to avoid the wrath of Allah and to receive a positive reward in Paradise. PP6 affirms this statement: Isa is the savior; through him alone can we have life, the kingdom. He therefore plays a crucial role in the future of humanity, including the Muslims. For his position demonstrates his divine nature. He was in heaven before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, and he continues to live after two thousand years.

So, who is this human who can live long after having tasted death like Lazarus who himself resurrected and moreover he is with Allah, he also has the privilege of living with him. We would not be wrong in declaring that He is the son of God.

**Missiological and Theological Implications.** First, Isa's divine sonship is not limited to his coming from Allah. It also encompasses his creative and salvific nature. This conception is consistent with the Christian theology of Isa's pre-existence, incarnation, and divinity (John 1:1-3). Furthermore, the use of Surah 3:55, which speaks of Isa's elevation to Allah, can serve as a point of support for engaging in a dialogue on the resurrection.

Second, Mandara Muslims need this sign and mercy in order to be saved. This reality underscores the importance of a good understanding of the teachings of the Qur'an and the Bible in order to better reach them. Thus, relying on certain elements present in the Qur'an can be an effective strategy for gradually introducing Isa's divinity.

Finally, the importance of personal testimony of faith in Isa Al-Masih should not be overlooked. In mission to Muslims, personal experience of transformation by Christ can have a profound impact, thus underscoring the crucial role of witness in the Mission process.

### **The Second Research Question**

What is the biblical-theological basis of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih? This question was answered in Chapter 2 on the Biblical Basis of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih. It aims to explore theological questions that emerge from this perspective to enrich interreligious exchanges and Christian teaching. The chapter constitutes a bridge for competent and respectful dialogue between Christians and Muslims. The salient points have elucidated this question to present his identity, nature and divinity.

According to the Old and New Testaments, Isa Al-Masih is the equivalent of the name Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament (Genesis 3:15; more explicitly, in Genesis 12:1–3), Isa is presented as the one who exists since all time “the word” and the “I am” (Exodus 3:13-14), the son of God. In the New Testament, Isa is described as the God who took the form of man or was incarnated, dwelt among men to save them.

**Implications.** Both the Old and New Testaments present evidence of Isaiah's pre-existence. For “I AM”, “YHWH”, or “Yeshua” are names for Isa in the Bible. They affirm and confirm, without fear of error, that he is God. There is only one God, hence the oneness of God, which emphasizes Tawhid in the noble Qur'an.

The clear evidence of the identity of Isa Al-Masih the Word is demonstrated in both the Old and New Testaments. They are the following:

1- Isa is the Messiah promised to fallen humanity by the blessing and promise of alliance granted to the patriarch Abraham. All the peoples of the earth will come to the light—this light is Isa, foretold by the prophets. Already, Isaiah proclaimed: “The nations will walk by your light, and kings by the brightness of your dawn” (Isaiah 60:3). And John affirms: “The true light, that which enlightens every man, was coming into the world” (John 1:9). Isa is this divine light, destined to enlighten every human being and precisely the Mandara Muslims.

2- Isa is the one who appeared to the prophet Moses in the desert and identified himself as the, “I am” which designates the divine name of Yahweh or God. Exodus 3:13-14. Indeed, Isa Al-Masih has existed at all times. This is clear proof of his divinity. The “I am” is the figure of Isa in the Old Testament.

3- Isa, Emmanuel, “God with us”, promised in the book of Isaiah, was born to save the descendants of Abraham. Isa Al-Masih is incarnate, he took the human form and

the promised Emmanuel was to be born of the virgin Mary. Jesus is a significant figure in Christianity; one believes in his divinity and humanity.

4- The virgin birth of Isa or his divine incarnation. This conception by the Holy Spirit is considered clear proof of his divine nature. Isaiah 7:14 and John 1:1-3, 14. Matthew 1:22-23, Luke 1:35.

5- Miracles as signs of his divinity. But they are not mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith. Isa performed many miracles, including healing the sick, resurrecting the dead, feeding five thousand people and a sign of his authority and his divine mission. He performed many miracles, including the healing of the sick, the healing of Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52; the Healing of the centurion's servant in Matthew 8:5-13; the resurrection of the dead in (John 11:25-26), resurrection of Lazarus and Jairus' daughter in Mark 5:22-24, 35-43 and the control of nature (Mark 4:39-41, calming of the storm).

6- The crucifixion and resurrection of Isa Al-Masih are the other proofs of his divinity. Isa's death and resurrection are a clear proof of his divinity. For only God holds the keys to the realm of the dead and to life. As it is written: "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever. I have the keys of death and of the realm of the dead" (Revelation 1:17-18). By triumphing over death, John demonstrates that Jesus is more than a prophet: he is the Lord of life, the eternal Living One. Such power belongs only to God.

7- Isa is the God who will reign eternally over the new earth and new heavens. Matthew 25:31-34. Also, Islam believes in the second coming of Jesus, who will return as Isa Al-Masih being the sign of the Day of Judgment.

## **The challenges of understanding Isa Al-Masih**

1. Tawhid, the conception of the oneness of God. Strict Islamic monotheism (Tawhid) constitutes a real theological obstacle, making it difficult for Mandara Muslims to accept the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Consequently, the Church adopts relevant and informed dialogue as a missionary strategy to effectively reach them.
2. The death and resurrection of Isa. According to Islamic teachings, God does not die. The death and resurrection of Jesus constitute a major obstacle to dialogue with Muslims. Indeed, historically, they maintain that Jesus was neither crucified nor killed by men, but that another was crucified in his place, while Allah raised him to paradise. So, his crucifixion is an illusion (Surah An-Nisa 4:157-158). For them, he was a messenger of unparalleled importance. Fakhr ad-Dîn ar-Râzî, a Persian theologian and philosopher, finds this irrational.<sup>4</sup> He goes on to say that Jesus was not killed by the Jews, but rather that they killed someone whom God had made to resemble Jesus. According to a French scholar, this interpretation began to appear in Sunni commentaries in the second Islamic century, after some extremist views of Shiite Muslims were retrospectively applied to Jesus. The author also cites several Muslim theologians and philosophers who believed that when Jesus' body died, his divine soul ascended to God. These Muslims include Ikhwan al-Safiya, scholar (Brethren of Purity, 10<sup>th</sup> century), Abu Hatim al-Rasi (Persian Ismaili philosopher of the 10th century), Mu'uyyad al-Shirazi (11th-century

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<sup>4</sup> Poupin, "Exégèses anciennes de la sourate 4/156-157 et christologie coranique," 55-66.

Isma'ili scholar, philosopher-poet, preacher, and theologian of Persian origin), and Ghazali. (Shafi'i, Sunni Muslim scholar and polymath, 6<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>5</sup>

From a moral and social perspective, Isa is considered superior to all prophets: a good, holy, and just man. Theologically, Muslims believe that only Allah forgives by His will and mercy alone (Surah Az-Zumar 39:53; Surah An-Nisa 4:110). It is Allah's grace that takes precedence for the repentant sinner. However, it is essential to demonstrate the importance of the cross in the process of salvation.

Without the atoning sacrifice of Christ, there is no forgiveness or salvation possible for humanity (1 Peter 2:24; Romans 5:8-9; 1 John 2:2). Salvation does not rest on our own works, but on the grace of Allah through Isa Al-Masih.

3. The identity of the Christian. Muslims often have a negative image of Christians. In light of certain historical facts, they associate them with colonization and the slave trade. Or, the trans-Saharan slave route and trade were mostly done by Muslim Arabs. Furthermore, they perceive Christians as people who drink alcohol, consume forbidden foods such as pork (haram), promote sexual immorality, and live by norms they consider pagan. Some also believe that Christians have corrupted the Scriptures, as suggested in Surah Al-Imran 3:78.

Furthermore, for them, Muhammad is the last prophet sent by Allah to guide humanity, not Isa (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:40). This perception fuels a deep divide between them and any attempt at Christian Mission.

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<sup>5</sup> Mourarry, *The Prophet and the Messiah*, 133-143

However, Muslims recognize Christians as “People of the Book.” Therefore, in a missionary context, an Adventist addressing a Muslim would benefit from presenting himself as part of the “remnant people,” a concept echoed in the Holy Quran. These true people of God, according to Surahs 5:44 and 17:55, are those who believe in the four revealed Books and remain faithful to the divine covenant. In particular, those who observe the Sabbath, as the Quran recalls in Surah Al-Ma’ida 5:13, are considered loyal to the Covenant of Allah.

4. The authenticity of the Bible. In the popular Muslim opinion, the Bible is indeed a book, but Christians have corrupted it. The scriptures are corrupted, and therefore, it is not credible. And therefore, the Christian religion is false. They find that the books that exist today are not original scriptures, which have been lost, changed, and translated excessively to the point of losing the original message. They are accused of misinterpretation and going out of context, Surah Al-Ma’ida 5:13.

They are shocked by the Christian lifestyle, Surah Al-Ma’ida 5:68, and therefore practice what is forbidden by the Bible, because Christians live in step with the Western lifestyle. Everything that is held to be true in the Bible is questioned by Muslim believers living in different localities, as well as those of Mémé in Mayo Sava. The Qur'an is one of the four books that are untouchable in Islam. And whoever does not believe in it is a disbeliever doomed to perdition. It is a book worthy of belief, just like the Bible (Torah, Zabur, and Injil). Since for them the Qur'an is the last revelation given to the last prophet, Mohammad, to guide humanity. But how can a book revealed by Allah be altered? Can Allah not take care of His word, especially the books

revealed previously? Is He fallible to the point of allowing a group of believers to corrupt His word? Surah Al-An'am 6:34, 6:115.

### **The Third Research Question**

What is the theological implication of how AMBBs understand the divinity of Isa Al-Masih? This question aimed to establish the teachings about Isa before and after the participant's conversion and its theological implications.

Before their encounter with the Gospel, the AMBBs already had a certain perception of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

**They believe that Isa is a prophet.** According to PP1, Islam has not taught me much about Isa. I know that he is a prophet. This is a popular teaching that Muslims believe in. PP2 emphasizes the aspect that his time is over by saying:

But it is also said that his era has passed like the era of Prophet Ibrahim, and Prophet Musa. And now it is the era of Prophet Mohammad. Those who followed Prophet Isa in his time would certainly have been valued, but his era has passed. He who follows Prophet Mohammad finds favor in the eyes of God. But he who follows prophet Isa is misguided. These teachings are received in their religion. Many believe in these teachings that Isa has indeed come; he was sent from Allah, but his time has ended. Now it is the time of the Prophet Mohammad.

In reality, this means that his earthly ministry has come to an end. But his work did not end there: He inaugurated a heavenly ministry. From now on, it is He who decides the destiny of humanity as a just judge, and it is still He who will announce the end of the world. Hence, the mystery of His dual nature, human and divine.

**They believe that Isa is a miracle.** According to PP1, Isa performed many miracles, and he raised Lazarus from the dead, who died four days later; Isa

performed many other miracles. Among the various prophets in whom Muslims believe, none performed miracles except the Prophet Isa. For example, the resurrection of the dead, the creation of a bird. These are the marks of his divinity. He is a prophet like no other. The Prophet Muhammad attested to this. He is a prophet of distinction.

The Qur'an specifically calls him Michael. This name refers to Isa, the one who defeated Iblis in the revealed book, Injil (Revelation 12:7). He is eternal. He is God. In Surah Al-Baqara 2:98, it is said: "Whoever is an enemy to Allah, His angels, His messengers, Gabriel, and Michael, Allah is indeed the enemy of the disbelievers." Therefore, every Muslim must love Isa, that is, obey him in all the revelations that the Prophet Muhammad received from Allah. One can only obey Allah alone. Whoever does not believe in Him is considered an infidel.

**Isa is the son of Mariam and has a high position.** According to PP2, in Islam, Islamic scholars teach that Isa Al-Masih is the son of Mariam and sent from Allah. He is near Allah. In addition to his role, for every faithful Muslim, Isa is currently in heaven. PP4, says that Muhammad is under the earth.

Following the discussion, the basis for their view of Isa as the Messenger of Allah (Surah An-Nisā' 4:157) emerges; some consider him a prophet superior to all others, including the Prophet Muhammad (Surah Āl 'Imrān 3:45). His birth itself is unique: the authentic hadith (Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 4, book 54, no. 506, reported by Abou Hourayra) reports that, at the birth of every human being, Satan touches him on both sides of the body with his fingers. Only Jesus, son of Mary, escaped this contact: Satan tried to touch him, but only succeeded in reaching the placenta. Moreover, he is a miraculous prophet (Surah Āl 'Imrān 3:49).

He is the son of Maryam, the chosen woman of all (Surah Āl ‘Imrān 3:45), and holds a high position in the sight of Allah: “They did not kill him, nor crucify him... but Allah raised him up to Himself “ (Surah An-Nisā’ 4:157-158).

This privileged position is intimately linked to his unique nature as described in the Quran: “The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is the Word of God delivered to Mary and a Spirit from Him” (Surah An-Nisā’ 4:171). His birth is unique and has disrupted the world order of the procreation system. It is therefore a mysterious and supernatural birth. In Arabic, the terms “tağassud” (literally, to take flesh) or “ta’annus” (to become man)<sup>6</sup>. Who was He before becoming a man? A clue not to be overlooked in the argument about the divine side of Isa.

**Theological and missiological implications.** The Prophet Isa is unique in his miraculous birth, the work he accomplished, and his current position in heaven. These truths are known to Muslim theologians, but rarely conveyed to the faithful, as is the divinity of Isa. Hence, the importance of this mission lies in establishing a bridge of theological dialogue and organizing Quran study groups with theologians and imams, before reaching the rest of the Mandara Muslim community.

**Theological implications.** The lack of clear teachings on Prophet Isa and his true role as a messenger of Allah by Islamic preachers and scholars poses a major challenge. Indeed, the teachings of Islamic experts are limited only to the pillars of Islam and the family, and not to the divinity of Isa Al-Masih and his redemptive role for humanity. For example, Ali Merad, an Islamologist and university professor, said: The term “son of Mary” expresses the desire to recall Jesus' human filiation, which

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<sup>6</sup> Emmanuel Pisani, *Le dialogue islamo-chrétien à l'épreuve* (Paris, France: L’Hermattan, 2014), 54.

ipso facto excludes the term “son of God.”<sup>7</sup> El G. argues: In the term “Ihyā,” he maintains that Jesus never claimed to be God, but that it was the Christians who attributed this identity to him.<sup>8</sup> However, his miraculous birth can serve as a connecting point for meaningful interfaith dialogue leading to an understanding of his divinity as a prophet of exceptional miracles. More importantly, his current place in heaven presents an opportunity to teach, from the Qur’an, the reality of his death and resurrection, thereby bridging the gap to a deeper understanding of his divine identity.

**After their encounter with the Gospel,** the AMBBs had a new vision of Isa.

**A new understanding of the nature of Isa.** PP5 expressed it in these terms: “Isa is the Son of God, the Saviour, the only way to God. He brought us to the light.”

This Gospel, which they received, shaped their vision of Christ and was reinforced by the response of the focus group (FCGP), where all the participants unanimously affirmed:

“His works are divine. What man on earth can accomplish what Isa did? No one can.”

The gospel allowed them to truly know Isa. They discovered more than his miraculous works, but also his true nature. And gradually, through their participation in biblical teachings, they strengthened their belief with a new experience of Christ. His divinity. Now, they believed in his divinity.

**They also recognize Isa as the Saviour.** PP6 expressed it by stating: “Isa came to die for us, he is the Saviour, the way of salvation.” Outside of Isa, there is no salvation. He who does not have Isa will not feel salvation.

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<sup>7</sup> Ali Merad, "Le Christ selon le Coran," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 5 (1968): 79-94, accessed August 09, 2025, [https://www.persee.fr/doc/remmm\\_0035-1474\\_1968\\_num\\_5\\_1\\_983](https://www.persee.fr/doc/remmm_0035-1474_1968_num_5_1_983).

<sup>8</sup> Pisani, *Le dialogue islamo-chrétien à l'épreuve*.

**Implications.** Each discussion with the various participants revealed how, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel has shaped their lives. They have a clear vision of Isa. May they now know Christ in his fullness. Thus, the AMBBs' lived experiences and their new understanding of Isa, particularly their conviction in his divinity after their conversion to Adventism, may later constitute a key strategy for reaching other Muslims. Their renewed motivation is a valuable source for reaching other Mandara Muslims with the message of Isa's divinity, guided by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, it is only through skillful missiological work, involving total immersion in this new belief and emphasizing an appropriate contextualization of the faith that we can hope to profoundly impact this community.

#### **Fourth Research Question**

What is the biblical-theological basis of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih? Or how do you understand the concept of divinity of Isa Al-Masih?

**Missiological implication.** Before their conversion, the participants did not know about the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. They were never taught about his true identity and nature. However, they believed in his miraculous works. They did not receive from the Imams or other scholars that Isa is God.

**They believe in Tawhid.** According to PP3, I knew that Allah was one. To say that Isa is God is to go against Islamic teachings which advocate the oneness of God. One of the main obstacles to the acceptance of the divinity of Isa among the Mandara lies in their understanding of strict monotheism. This position is common in the Muslim world, where the notion of the Trinity is often perceived as pure polytheism or simply idolatry. PP1 confirms, I never understood that Isa is Allah.

Islam did not teach me about the fact that Isa is a creator, Isa is Allah. But Isa performed many miracles. He raised the dead; He performed many other miracles.

In this community, Isa is also seen as the one who performed miracles. But they do not know that he is a divine being. It is this theology that shapes the local understanding of Isa's identity. However, some express openness to the role of Isa, suggesting that Christian teachings could be better received if presented in a contextualized and culturally relevant way.

Accepting that Isa is God does not mean that one believes in several gods. Or even that Christians worship several gods. It demonstrates that there is only one God. There are three uncreated persons in God, as the Qur'an attests, the true meaning of Tawhid (Allah, Word, Spirit).

**Difference of Teachings on Tawhid.** There is a clear difference between Islamic monotheism and Christian monotheism. Christian monotheism is trinitarian, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is to say, there is only one God, while the one taught in the Qur'an is unitary, Allah is unique and without associates.

**They believe Isa is a prophet.** As expressed by PP4: "For me, Isa is a prophet, but his divinity remains difficult to my knowledge." This perception suggests a significant influence of the Quranic teaching about the nature of Christ in these people. They know Isa is a prophet who is limited in the time and space of his mission. In Islamic philosophy, Isa is a prophet, a servant of Allah, and this means that he has only a temporary mission. This is what PP2 attests: But it is also said that his era has passed like the era of the prophet Ibrahim, and the prophet Musa. And now it is the era of the prophet Mohammad. Those who followed Prophet Isa in his time would certainly have been valued, but his era has passed.

**Theological Differences Between Christianity and Islam Regarding the Person of Isa (Jesus).** Christianity and Islam share a fundamental conviction: there is only one God. However, their conception of this oneness—Tawhid—differs profoundly.

In Islam, although the Quran recognizes Isa as the Messiah and a blessing for the Israelites (Surah 4:171), the Israelites failed in their mission to present Jesus to other peoples, giving way to the ministry of the Prophet Muhammad. The Islamic-Christian debate centers precisely on this point: is Isa merely a prophet, or is he divine?

While the Quran does not explicitly deny the divinity of Jesus, a problem of interpretation and exegesis remains within the Islamic tradition. Some Muslim theologians, according to their academic background, such as the Islamic scholar Ali Merad, present Isa as a being created in the image of Adam, a prophet only<sup>9</sup> destined to die (Surahs Al-Imran 3:59, 185). Furthermore, the angel Gabriel (Jibril) is sometimes identified with the Holy Spirit, and the Quran then condemns the Trinity (Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:73). Clearly, some Quranic texts about Isa are concerned with consistency. On the one hand, Isa did not taste death; on the other hand, he is human; he is called to taste death.

From this perspective, Allah is all-powerful and merciful, Isa is merely a creature and a messenger, and Gabriel is both an angel and the Holy Spirit (Surahs Al-Baqarah 2:97; An-Nahl 16:102). This vision differs radically from that of the Bible, which attributes divine titles and attributes to Jesus:

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<sup>9</sup> Merad, "Le Christ selon le Coran," 79-94.

Word (Kalima) of God and Spirit (Rûh) from God (Surah An-Nisa' 4:171), creator and resurrector of the dead (Surah Al-Imran 3:49), present in heaven and just judge of the Last Judgment (Surah Al-Zukhruf 43:57-62), announcer of the end of the world and guide of the straight ways (Surah Al-Fatiha 1:6).

These Quranic statements raise a central question: Can Allah contradict Himself by revealing to Muhammad both the human and divine natures of Jesus? Thus, Isa appears alternately as Messiah, super-messenger, extraordinary prophet, Word of God, and Spirit of God. This tension between the texts creates a theological gray area, where exegetical confusion and an apparent lack of coherence intertwine. However, Eastern culture values the logical mind as an intellectual principle. In light of a comprehensive exegetical analysis of the original Arabic text of the Quran, it emerges that the preceding verses indeed support the divinity of Isa Al-Masih, confirming the Christian perspective.

#### **Missiological and Theological Implication.**

Theological Implications. The dominant perception among participants shows that Isa's divinity is difficult to accept due to the influence of local Islamic theology, particularly the concept of Tawhid. This reveals a doctrinal challenge: how to present Isa's divinity while taking into account the Mandara Muslims' understanding of Tawhid. The aim is therefore to clarify the true meaning of Tawhid and demonstrate its compatibility with the biblical revelation about Isa Al-Masih.

**Missiological Implications.** The fact that Mandara Muslims recognize Isa as capable of performing miracles opens the door to authentic interreligious dialogue. This recognition can serve as a point of contact to introduce, with respect and gentleness, a progressive teaching on the person and divinity of Isa. Contextualization, therefore, becomes essential: using the writings of the Quran as a

starting point while guiding the reader toward the full biblical understanding of Christ.

What the participants now conceive of Isa.

**They believe in the Trinity.** PP1 comments:

“When I became a Christian, I understood that Isa, the Holy Spirit, and God form one person, thus the trinity. I know that the world is going to end and that Isa Al-Masih is going to save humanity. That is why, I became a Christian, I know that Isa is the son of God, he is a person of the trinity.”

This new concept after the conversion of the participants, brings a change in the understanding of Tawhid, which leads the AMBBs to believe in true monotheism.

**They believe in the divinity of Isa.** PP2 said:

I understand the divinity of Isa by his divine acts. The works of Allah accomplished in him. Prophet Isa resurrected the dead. One day also, he also made a bird from clay and breathed a breath of life like Allah breathed a breath of life to Adam and became a living being. One day also. He asked Allah to send down food from the sky to feed five thousand people. No one can do these works except Allah.

All participants in the FCGP confirmed Isa Al-Masih is Allah because, he has the creative power:

By his divine works, no one can do what he has done, order the wind to stop and the wind stops, the dead are resurrected, who can create as Isa created, in the Qur'an he created the bird in the way that Allah created Adam and the bird flew away. A work that no one can do. He is Allah because he has the creative power.

**A divine attribute.** Allah has the power to create, Isa demonstrates this quality, and consequently he is Allah. And the Qur'an attests to it. PP4 attests to this fact when he says: As an ex-Muslim, the Qur'an proves to me that Isa is the Messiah

who should save humanity according to Surah 4:157, by faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I understand that Christ has done things that a normal man cannot do. Which shows the relevance of this new conception? Isa is a supreme and incomparable being, by his life and his redemptive works. He is Allah. The results of the studies allow us to broaden the knowledge of how the Muslims converted AMBBs to the Adventist church and understand the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. The AMBBs believe that Isa Al-Masih is truly Allah because he performed divine acts, he is the son of God.

**They believe in the worship of Isa.** According to PP5, Isa is the truth, He is God, He is the son of God, He is the same person, because we worship Him. This assertion is another dimension of the nature of Isa; He is worthy of being worshipped, because worship is a divine attribute and is due only to God alone (Deuteronomy 10:20, Luke 4:8).

### **The Fifth Research Question**

What strategy can be developed from the divinity of Isa Al-Masih for the mission to Muslims? To suggest contextualized missionary strategies that take into account the context, founded on the scriptural truth of Isa's divinity, tailored to align with Mandara Muslim sensibilities and culture.

**Missiological and theological implications.** Can you share any personal experiences or encounters that have shaped your understanding of Isa Al-Masih? This question aimed to draw out the missiological and theological implications of this study. These strategies stem from the participants' responses.

The experiences of AMBBs after their conversion constitute relevant testimonies for reaching other Mandara Muslims with the concept of the divinity of

Isa Al-Masih. The training of the church in the field of Mission to Muslims must be taken into account. Muslims can be reached through personal testimony.

**Isa Al-Masih Movie Nights.** First, initiatives such as the Isa movie in the local language are opportunities where a Muslim passing by can stop and watch. The church can use this moment to invite Muslim friends to come and watch the key episodes of Isa's life.

Secondly, a phase must be set up to explain the movie.

A third phase of a dialectical cross-talk, or a phase of question-and-answer games related to Isa.

Fourth, a final phase of awarding rewards to those who answered the questions well. One is able through the Holy Spirit to touch the heart. God can touch the heart when we often cannot expect a result. PP4 rightly says that he first encountered Isa at a film screening about Jesus. As a prelude to this program, young people can offer a concert. Further, for good visibility of the church, we can often opt for a market without money or free where we put food products. Housewives come to fill their baskets with food without spending a penny. These gestures can sell the image of the church in the target locality. The food pantry is a strategy for the mission.

**The evangelical mission.** This mission requires a first phase of preparation, prayer. Initiatives such as fasting during the month of Ramadan. This is an opportunity that must be taken advantage of to intercede on behalf of the Mandara Muslims. Hand them over to the Lord.

Second, then, it is necessary to set up by the Adventist health service, a mobile caravan for voluntary screening of diabetes, hypertension and other diseases that can prevent these Muslims from fulfilling this pillar of Islam and helping them to know

their state of health before starting the fast of the month of Ramadan without risk of illness.

Third, moreover, perform acts of kindness. It is necessary to study the needs of Muslims through contact with local Imams. Offer them dates, sugar, rice, fresh water. During the hours of breaking the fast, the church can invite local Muslims, in a public place well equipped by the church to offer them hot donuts cooked by Muslim and Adventist women, fresh natural juice. Consequently, these acts can impact them and open an interreligious dialogue.

God can also use other channels of revelation such as dreams, visions, as PP3 affirms. Isa revealed himself to me at night when I was in the Protestant dormitory. He called me three times by name and told me the religion you are following is not the right one, you must follow me. This is how we can make Mandara Muslims disciples of Isa. Because, all the participants wish to go to their Muslim brothers and sisters to share the message of the gospel of Isa despite the risk of persecution. This study makes it possible to make available to the church the important tips for the mission to them.

**The Method of the Apostle Paul.** The method of Jesus that the Apostle Paul dwells on proves to be more than effective and perfect to share the divinity of Isa to the Mandara Muslims. In Acts 17:16-34, the Apostle Paul seems as a model of cultural anthropology, who immersed himself in the culture, the knowledge of the Greek beliefs to tell them about what they know as divinity, and to introduce them to the true God. This method of the Apostle Paul facilitates a holistic or global approach to the study of man, and helps to understand and improve the effectiveness of missionary work in various cultural contexts. More importantly, it helps the missionary to study the context personally, the worldview of this people, to

understand the culture and to communicate appropriately. This method allows the church to speak of the strict monotheism or oneness of Allah to arrive at the divinity of Isa to the Mandara Muslims or as Messiah or prophet in order to go to the deep truth, the divinity of Isa, the savior they need.

**Personal Testimony.** Personal testimony is an effective means of mission. It invites the church to a total involvement of the members in sharing what Isa has done for them and can do for others. AMBBs can be powerful instruments to say something significant about Isa to the sons and daughters of peace (Muslims). Hence the invitation to share one's personal experiences as a lever for an effective mission of testimony. The Bible declares: “You are my witnesses, - declaration of the LORD - my servant, the one I have chosen” (Isaiah 43.10). More importantly, it can be done through relationships of redemptive friendship and through the social network. So say like Andrew who went to tell his brother Simon, in John 1.37-42, that he had found the Messiah. Transformed lives can make all the difference. But above all, we always need spiritual preparation so that the Holy Spirit can use us more powerfully.

**Competency dialogue.** The need for inclusive dialogue is essential in this delicate mission with the Mandara. The church needs to know their vision of the world, and what they already know as a point of connection for a respectful dialogue. Then make a faithful contextualization of the scriptures to make the gospel relevant to this culture.

Dialogue can be understood as a process of verbal communication, gestures and actions that allow people to exchange on a well-defined subject for an expected objective. It implies respect for the rules of use, civility. Dialogue can be done by exchanging words, actions, SMS, e-mail, WhatsApp, phone call or other social networks. For a good fluidity of dialogue, we must keep in mind that the Muslim man

is very sensitive to a number of beliefs of the Bible, we must have a friendlier and tactful approach to reach him. The research offers some highlights that will allow an effective and efficient dialogue.

**Studies of the Quran and the Bible.** House churches are essential centers of study of the scriptures in the retention and monitoring, the security of AMBBs and those who will convert later. Thus, training them at the beginning by the study of the Quran and after some time the study of the Bible is essential. During the interviews two AMBBs testified that they were persecuted, abandoned by their parents, one was even locked up for a month in a room and was fed poison every day. His father was overwhelmed to see that he did not die after eating poison for a month. He still relates after several years his conversion and says: When my parents disowned me for 10 years, I found myself without reference point, counting on Jesus Christ and having experienced a deeper intimacy with him in prayer and manifested his presence in my life never let me down. AMBBs PP3 and PP4 were converted to the Adventist church thanks to the study of the Bible about the day of rest, the Sabbath. These points of doctrine can be gradually used after Quranic studies on simple topics in house churches, leading to the culminating doctrinal points such as baptism and the Sabbath.

**The importance of Adventist chaplaincy service in public and private schools.** In this mission to the Mandara Muslims, education appears to be a center of missionary influence and teachers are missionaries. In this locality, the church does not have a primary or secondary education center. This is an opportunity to create the Adventist chaplaincy service to be a pole of evangelical mission to reach not only learners through Adventist teaching, but also teachers. PP3 and PP4 testified that it was through contact with a teacher in a non-Adventist establishment that they truly knew the divinity of Isa and the truth of the Sabbath.

## **Strategy to Reach Mandara Muslims in Meme**

According to the findings, the research suggests a specific approach to engage with Muslims while considering their context and eliminating obstacles that hinder the acceptance of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

### **Creation/Establishment of the AMR Department**

Create and implement the AMR Department in Adventist Mission in local churches, at the district level, and at the top of the Conference. The study led to the creation of the department within the North East Cameroon Union Mission, as well as its implementation at the conference, district, and local church levels. It also resulted in the appointment of leaders at each level of the organizational structure.

Establishment of the department: The establishment in essence consists of carrying out intentional planned activities that aim to transform evidence and ideas into good management and practices that work for people and the real world. Hence, the establishment of this department will take into account the following points: meetings with the conference administrators, Documentation (AMR Books to enhance the director at the conference level), the department's budget, and the leader's training.

God of all time has a plan for lost humanity and more particularly, Muslims. That is why He inspired His church for the mission, to equip itself with the power of the Holy Spirit, in order to descend on the different ecclesiastical fields to reach the Muslims under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This study aims to propose a strategy. Isaiah 60:1-6. God has a plan for the return to the fold of the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael scattered in the East or elsewhere, especially the Mandara Muslims. The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to call all peoples to become disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the everlasting gospel through the messages of

the three angels (Revelation 14:6-12), and to prepare the world for the soon return of Christ.

### **Knowing the History of Islam**

Knowing Islam establishes a communication of trust with the Mandara Muslims. Thus, to bear witness to Christ to Muslims, you have to know and learn the history of Prophet Muhammad, his revelation, the beliefs taught in the Quran and the Hadith. In fact, you have to use a lot of tact so as not to hurt their sensibilities. If the members of the church are well equipped with a good knowledge of Islam, Muslims can respect them and will take them seriously.

In addition, when a member wants to approach a Muslim, you must avoid criticizing Prophet Muhammad, the Quran or if someone does it at the beginning of the conversation, you will have hindered what will follow. Thus, there is a need to translate AMR books into French, Fulfulde and Mandara with the collaboration of the Publications Department, another strategy, to facilitate accessibility to AMR literature and to guide church members through AMR texts to better understand Islamic beliefs in order to make them competent for the Adventist mission.

### **Full Involvement of Departments**

Sit down with the leaders of the North Cameroon conference, the head of religious liberty, Sabbath school, evangelism and personal ministry to share the new vision of the mission, that's what they think, bring out the strategies, the overall vision of the mission. In collaboration with the Publications Department, set up the translation committee for documents in French, Fulfulde and Mandara and facilitate the printing of mission documents for Muslims. And hold training seminars for church members, elders, pastors, leaders of the federation on AMR.

## **Intercessory Prayer and Fasting during the Fasting Month of Ramadan and the Feast of Aïd el-Kebir**

**Prayer and fasting:** it is an invitation to the church to pray every Friday and during Ramadan. To begin this ministry to Muslims in the context of the great cosmic conflict, good preparation is necessary. Reaching Muslims depends on one thing, prayer. Prayer is the keystone that can open the eyes and spiritual hearts of Muslims to the voice of the Spirit of God, to the Savior and Lord Jesus Christ:

“If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14. God’s people, pastors, and church leaders are called to humble themselves and seek God’s guidance. This should be done in local groups and with discretion. We can also create a prayer network that will consist of praying for one another. The church must thus involve fasting and prayer. The perfect example comes from the Lord Jesus himself; before beginning his ministry, he withdrew from public activities to be refreshed with the Father. He fasted for 40 days. Matthew 4:1-2. It must be remembered that Muslims are very religious; they wish every day to know the path (Surah Al-Fatiha 1:6), so they need salvation. We must pray and fast for those around us, for the protection of the prayer team and the community, and to pray for God to act and to reveal his plan for Muslims. Fast at least once a month, during the six months of prayer. The initiative of a redemptive friendship to witness to Isa more effectively.

### **Creating a Redemptive Friendship**

In this context, we must use the method of Christ: mingling with the Mandara Muslims. Traditionally, Muslims practice among them: sociability, solidarity, proximity, hospitality, and fraternity. We must therefore build and develop a sincere

friendship with them to witness more effectively. Also, one would say, hospitality greatly opens the doors of dialogue and bears the fruits of the gospel (Romans 12:13).

The mission can adapt the method of community service to share the love of Christ with Muslims. Indeed, we are in a world of suffering, a desperate world, and showing the love of Christ to others impacts their lives. The study is intended to inspire actions that are both impressive and reflective of the love of Christ. Also involving the organization of Adventist men. Doing good to them through charitable acts by responding to their needs, visiting them at the right time. Charity is part of the beliefs of Muslims (*Zakat*): bringing small gifts to the sons and daughters of peace before the holidays: during the fasting month of Ramadan, food collections must be set up for low-income families, during Tabaski; during the blessing of a child, marriage and other events in the locality. And also, in difficult and sad times: illness, accident, death. Let this be an integral part of the members' lives and not an event. These actions towards them, consolidate relationships of trust, and open the door to testimony. However, the church cannot solve all the problems of the needy in the world. Evil is there. But the Church is called to be a signpost, a reference, a sign of the kingdom of God. Do the essential things around us. Because our good deeds testify in favor of the gospel. The purpose of the church is to build the bridge for a more effective mission.

### **Develop and Implement House Churches**

**House churches.** Muslims have challenges with the model, the fear of being unmasked and of integrating directly into the Christian community. In the context of northern Cameroon, where Muslims live in large numbers and have economic influence. The house can be an ideal place to introduce them to Isa Al-Masih. Indeed, it will be difficult for them to participate in public evangelistic campaigns. The house

promotes more trust, security and friendship. It can be initially a place of exchange with Muslims, and the final objective is to create house churches for Muslims who will convert to Isa. House churches are private spaces, where Islamic terms (carpets, mats, greeting) and clothing are used, there are no rituals, symbols, specific buildings, without ostentation, just a time set aside to gather around Jesus in the cities or in the countryside (Acts 20:20-21). There, they can ask their questions in all sincerity. Time will be allocated to the studies of the Quran and the Bible, to prayer. This will protect from persecution the Muslims who want to begin the studies of the Quran or those who will convert to Christ. This research takes advantage of the importance of house churches, a framework that can meet the need of the hour and the way of the future in the mission to Muslims. A method that can be easy to implement on the ground with the complicity of trusted members who can open their door to others. The apostle Paul speaks of such a church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor.16:19; Rom.16:3,5). Baptism will take place in a pool in a private and discreet place for the safety of the convert and the pastor. The purpose of house churches is to make disciples. Establish the Sabbath School Annex with the help of the Sabbath School Department at the conference level, at the local church level and also the district. Finally, organize several house churches in the name of each church in predominantly Muslim localities. Strengthen hospitality and fellowship by always preparing refreshments for Muslims after the meeting. Involve the Adventist Women's Ministry at the conference level, the churches and the diaconal service of the churches. Without forgetting the important place of the Family Ministry to organize the churches well, the women apart, and the men also apart. The emphasis of the meetings will be on prayer and the study of the themes of the Qur'an which are found in the Bible. And

after baptism, the doctrines must be taught to the new converts and they will in turn convert other Muslims to Isa. Everything is done in the strictest discretion.

### **The Creation of Centers of Influence Such as Schools, Adventist Restaurants, and Adventist Clinics**

**The creation of centers of influence.** such as schools, Adventist restaurants, Adventist dispensaries, and to launch one or more programs that meet the needs of the community. This study also proposes the creation of anonymous Adventist bakeries and restaurants in strategic places in cities and villages for the Mission through health with healthy foods recommended by the Qur'an: goat meat, mutton, beef, chicken, fish and others, under the direction of the Christian management department of the conference as well as local churches. Hygiene and cleanliness must also be advocated all around the buildings. The financing of the project will be done by the members of the churches of good will, from the conference. Organize frequent gastronomic fairs in the city or in remote places of the city with the images of Muslims for marketing or advertising. Involve the Adventist Youth Ministries (AYM) department for missionary activities at each fair exit to distribute tracts to Muslim and other participants. Organize every Sabbath the free distribution of food to customers or passers-by in order to avoid even the desecration of the Sabbath by working on Saturday. Make the Sabbath the day of charity.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih by the Mandara Muslims in the Mayo Sava department, North Cameroon Conference. Then, each chapter will be summarized. Finally, the conclusion of chapter 5 will consist of the understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih before and after the conversion of the AMBBs, the reasons that pushed them to accept Isa, the teachings they received before and after their conversion, the theological and missiological implications that result from it as well as the strategies proposed, the conclusion and recommendations of the chapter also to reach the Mandara Muslims in the locality of Mémé.

#### **Summary**

This study examined the understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih among the Muslim Mandara of Mémé, Mayo Sava, in order to propose contextualized missionary strategies to overcome obstacles to the proclamation of the Gospel. It highlights the difficulties linked to strict monotheism, the absence of meaningful dialogue, and the use of inappropriate evangelistic methods, which hinder the acceptance of Isa's divinity. Biblically, the study anchors Isa's divinity in the revelations of the Old and New Testaments, while highlighting its theological and missiological implications. Finally, the literature review reveals a significant gap: no previous research has specifically addressed the divinity of Isa Al-Masih in Mémé,

thus justifying the relevance of this work, in chapters 1, 2, and 3. Chapter 4 presented the qualitative research methodology using a phenomenological approach. This chapter discusses the experiences of the phenomenon as deeply experienced by AMBBs. For data collection, six participants were selected based on well-defined criteria, interviews, and a focus group with four participants. The data were collected using a sophisticated audio recorder, then transcribed and coded. Emerging themes from the data are analyzed and interpreted. The results are presented in Chapter 5. In the previous chapter, it was a question of analyzing the data collected from the participants, discussing them and looking into the literature available on the issue to find convincing results or conclusions for this study on the divinity of Isa Al-Masih and formulating a work for a strategy for an effective mission to the Mandara Muslims.

#### **The Understanding of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih before Accepting Isa by the AMBBs**

Before turning to Isa, the AMBBs believed that Isa is *Rasul lullah* or he is sent from Allah. According to Islamic teachings, he is *Ibn Mariyam* or the son of Mariam. More importantly, they believe that Isa is the *Kalimatullah*, that is, the Word of Allah. Indeed, a trend observed before their conversion is that Isa is a great prophet respected in the Mandara Muslim community for his miraculous works and his fame.

#### **The Understanding of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih after their Accepting Him**

Based on their experience when they met Isa, the participants have a new understanding of Isa Al-Masih. After their encounter with Christ, they believe in the divinity of Isa. They attest that Isa is *Isa Ruhu Lah* or Isa Spirit of Allah. More importantly, Isa is more than a prophet, but He is *Aya Tulah* or a sign of Allah. This

conception corresponds with this new belief. It should also be noted that after their conversion, the AMBBs believe in Isa as Savior and the Only Way to Allah. For, his works attest that he is extraordinary, he is divine, he is the son of Allah, and he comes from Him. This assertion is another dimension of the divinity of Isa, is worthy of being worshipped, because worship is an attribute of Allah and is due only to Allah. This brings a change in the understanding of Tawhid; it leads the AMBBs to believe in true monotheism, or the Trinity. The other extreme of belief clarifies the divinity of Isa, for he has the power to create. An attribute that only Allah possesses in his being.

### **Theological Implications**

Initiatives such as Isa's film in the local language are opportunities for a Muslim passing by to stop and watch. The church can take advantage of this moment to invite Muslim friends to come and watch the key episodes of Isa's life. The need for inclusive dialogue is essential in this delicate mission with the Mandara. The church needs to understand their worldview, what they already know as a connecting point for respectful dialogue based on the Quran and the Bible. The method of Jesus, on which the apostle Paul dwelt, proves more than effective and perfect for sharing Isa's divinity with Mandara Muslims. In Acts 17:16-34, the apostle Paul, like a model of cultural anthropology, immersed himself in the culture, learning about Greek beliefs to tell them about what they know as divinity, and to introduce them to the true God. This method allows the church to speak of the strict monotheism or oneness of Allah to arrive at the divinity of Isa to the Mandara Muslims or as Messiah or prophet in order to go to the deep truth, the divinity of Isa, the savior they need.

## **Missiological Implications**

This mission requires an initial phase of preparation, prayer. Initiatives such as fasting during the month of Ramadan are also important. This is an opportunity that must be used to intercede on behalf of the Mandara Muslims. Their experiences are part of a strategy for Adventist mission. It invites the church to fully involve its members in sharing what Isa has done for them and for others. House churches are essential centers for scriptural study in the retention, follow-up, and security of AMBBs and those who will later convert. Thus, they are initially trained through the study of the Quran and, after a while, the study of the Bible. In this mission to the Mandara Muslims, education appears to be a center of missionary influence, and Adventist teachers become missionaries.

## **Proposal for a strategy for effective Mission**

### **Missiological Strategy**

#### **1. Community Engagement**

The Adventist Mission's participation in local projects must be seen as an embodiment of the presence of the divine Isa among people, particularly Muslims. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We have beheld his glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14).

Social action becomes a living testimony to the love of Isa, who is both Messiah and God.

#### **2. Interreligious Dialogue and Mutual Respect**

In the encounter with Mandara Muslims, the aim is to highlight the attributes of Jesus already recognized in the Quran (miraculous birth, prophet, pure prophet, messenger of God, Word of God), and then to gradually open up to the mystery of his

divinity. The Christians believe that the word is powerful, can change something (Hebrew 4:12).

Dialogue assumes that the Holy Spirit can bring conviction (John 16:7-11) to all people in different and mysterious ways (John 3:8). Dialogue partners from the world religions have spiritual journeys to make that start at different places, but the Spirit moves on the hearts of all people as it draws them to Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Teaching Tawhid focuses on the Quran to unveil the oneness supported by this revealed book in order to arrive at the oneness of God. Gradually, this study has linked this conception to speaking of the divinity of Isa to Mandara Muslims. Revelation 14:6, Matthew 24:14. “The great objective for the Mission is to bring them to Christ and eternal salvation.”<sup>2</sup>

### 3. AMR Training

Seminars must equip the Adventist Mission not only to understand Islam, but also to present the divinity of Isa Al-Masih in a Quranically grounded and culturally sensitive manner.

Seminars on the Quran reveal and contextualize Isa as the eternal Word, the Creator, God, in respectful contrast to the Isa of popular Islam.

### 4. Redemptive Friendship

Friendship relationships help show that the divinity of Jesus is not a cold theory but a lived truth: Isa is Emmanuel, God with us. Acts of kindness embody his lordship and lend credibility to the proclamation of his divine nature. Lesslie Newbigin suggests that the mission includes not only preaching but also living out the

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon R. Doss, *Introduction to Adventist Mission* (Silver Spring, MD: Institute of World Mission, 2018), 287.

<sup>2</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missio* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 519.

implications of the gospel in addressing social injustices (the proclamation of the gospel is intrinsically connected to action for justice and peace), indicating that both elements reinforce one another in the Church's witness.<sup>3</sup> Adventist Mission encouraged members' involvement in social action and mission.

#### 5. House Churches

Homes are suitable places to teach the divinity of Isa progressively and safely, allowing AMBBs to journey toward a deeper understanding without social pressure. Contextualizing the church involves adapting it to become an accessible and familiar place of study for believers from a Muslim background (AMBBs). From this perspective, houses can be set up as a learning space similar to a mosque, where participants begin by studying the Qur'an before being gradually introduced to reading and understanding the Bible from the perspective of the divinity of Isa.

To foster this approach, it is not necessary to install prayer rugs, but rather to use carpets, in accordance with Islamic cultural practices. This approach preserves the positive aspects of Muslim culture without compromising the Gospel or falling into syncretism.

Similarly, house churches for AMBBs should respect Islamic language, cultural forms, and expressions that are compatible with biblical teachings. This includes, in particular, clothing styles, greetings, and interpersonal attitudes, so that faith in the divinity of Isa is lived and expressed in a culturally respectful and contextually relevant setting.

#### 6. Centers of Influence

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<sup>3</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 172.

Adventist schools and clinics must reflect the character of the divine Jesus as healer and teacher, preparing hearts to understand that he is more than a prophet: he is God the Savior.

### **Theological Strategy**

#### **1. Intercessory Prayer and Fasting**

Intercession demonstrates the Adventist Mission's dependence on Isa Al-Masih, the divine Mediator and eternal High Priest (Hebrews 7:25).

The Mandara are well acquainted with sacrifice, l'Aïd el-Kebir; this can introduce the notion of Isa as the Lamb of God. During Ramadan and l'Aïd el-Kebir, the Mission prayed and fasted so that Muslims would discover Isa not only as a prophet, but as the risen Lord.

#### **2. Incarnate Witness to the Gospel**

Bear witness that Isa is God in the flesh by reflecting his divine character: forgiveness, humility, justice, and holiness. Christ's approach remains the only successful way to reach the Mandara Muslims. He mingled with the people, showed them sympathy, responded to their physical and emotional needs, and thus gained their trust before offering them the message of salvation (Luke 19:1-10).

It is a holistic mission that encompasses the entire dimension of the human being, including physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual aspects. It involves proclamation and service. It reveals the divinity and character of Christ in the personal and communal life of the believer, thereby embodying God's mission in the world.

The lived experience of his divinity becomes a silent but powerful testimony. Only the Holy Spirit can change Muslims' hearts and minds to accept the Adventist message.

#### **3. Contextual Divinity**

Start from what Muslims know about Isa to gradually introduce his divinity: his miraculous birth, his miracles, his eschatological role. Adventist Mission has shown that these signs can only be fully explained if Isa is more than a prophet: he is the eternal Son of God.

#### 4. Integral Mission

Mission has linked service, proclamation, and friendship to the fact that Isa is both God and man.

Mission has insisted that only Isa's divinity gives meaning to his redemptive work: a mere prophet could not save humanity.

### **Conclusion**

In short, understanding the divinity of Isa Al-Masih through the Mandara Muslims in Mémé in the Mayo Sava department, North Cameroon region, requires immersion in their worldview before and after their conversion to the Adventist Church. It is necessary to establish strict Tawhid, to lead them to understand the divinity of Isa Al-Masih. Finally, equipping the church with the appropriate strategies will allow the AMBBs to reach the Mandara Muslims with the message of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih.

### **Recommendations**

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. The proposed strategies can be adapted by the various fields of the Northeast Cameroon Union Mission, particularly the North Cameroon conference.

2. The implementation of House churches to welcome AMBBs throughout the district under the jurisdiction of Mémé, Mayo Sava Department, North Cameroon conference.
3. Support measures are needed for the Mission to Mandara Muslims.
4. The translation of gospel documents and the Isa film into the Mandara language, and according to Islamic culture, to reach the Muslims of this locality.
5. The conference must train new and existing field pastors on AMR before assigning them to the field.
6. Leverage the experiences of the AMBBs to make other disciples of Isa among Mandara Muslims.
7. The church can lead projects for new converts, social reintegration, and job opportunities.
8. Train members and leaders to make disciples through authentic dialogue between Muslims and Christians.
9. Build baptismal fonts in each district in discreet locations, away from suspicion, for the baptism ceremony of Muslim converts.
10. This mission lies in establishing a bridge of theological dialogue and organizing Quran study groups with theologians and imams, before reaching the rest of the Mandara Muslim community.

## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to participate in a research study entitled: A Study on the Understanding of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih among the Mandara in Meme, Cameroon: Towards A Missiological, Theological Reflection.

The details provided below outline what the research entails, the tasks you will be required to perform, and the possible benefits and drawbacks of participating in this survey. You are encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification about the nature of the study. It should be noted that the decision to participate or not to participate in this research is entirely voluntary and yours. You have the option to decline to participate or to terminate your participation at any time during the research.

**Purpose of the Study:** The primary purpose of this research is to develop a Strategy for Adventist Mission in Mayo Sava District, specifically designed to share the divinity of Isa Al-Masih with Muslims in Meme

**Your Involvement:** You will be invited to participate in an interview. This involves sharing your journey of transitioning from a Muslim background to Seventh-day Adventism. The interview is expected to last approximately one (1) hour. You will be asked to provide information about your transition to Adventism from a Muslim background.

**Benefits and Risks:** By participating, you will contribute to enriching the understanding of the divinity of Isa Al-Masih among Mandara Muslims. This knowledge lays the foundation for the mission to Mandara Muslims and is used to develop a personalized approach to sharing the Messiah, Isa, with Muslims in Mayo Sava, Meme District. There are no identifiable risks associated with participation.

**Confidentiality:** Your personal information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your interview responses will be anonymized to ensure that they cannot be linked to you in any report or publication resulting from this study.

**Please read carefully and sign this form if you are willing to participate in the study.**

1. What motivates you to voluntarily participate in this research project, knowing that there is no coercion to do so?
2. How do you feel about the possibility of withdrawing or interrupting your participation at any time, without consequences for you?
3. What would you do if, during the interview, you feel uncomfortable with a question or the discussion?
4. What are your thoughts on audio-recording the interview and producing a transcript for data analysis?
5. How do you feel about the guarantee that your identity will not be revealed in the reports resulting from this interview?

If you have any ethical concerns regarding your participation in this research, don't hesitate to get in touch with the Institutional Scientific Ethics Committee of the 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 have been satisfactorily answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Contact the research supervisor if you need more information or have any questions:  
Obed Olaotse Gabasiane, PhD ([gabasiano@aua.ac.ke](mailto:gabasiano@aua.ac.ke))

Thank you.

Abraham Mapha (Master of Missiology Program, [mapha@aua.ac.ke](mailto:mapha@aua.ac.ke), +237 677 14 34 40)

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your age?
2. What is your occupation?
3. What is your level of education?
4. Are you a member of the Mandara ethnic group?
5. How long have you lived in Meme, Mayo Sava, Cameroon?

Section 2: Understanding of Isa Al-Masih

1. Who is Isa Al-Masih to you?
2. How did you first learn about Isa Al-Masih?
3. What are some of the key teachings or messages associated with Isa Al-Masih?
4. How do you understand the concept of divinity in relation to Isa Al-Masih?
5. Can you share any personal experiences or encounters that have shaped your understanding of Isa Al-Masih?

## APPENDIX C

### TRANSLATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM ENGLISH TO FRENCH

**(By Google translate)**

#### Section 1 : Informations démographiques

1. Quel est votre âge ?
2. Quelle est votre profession ?
3. Quel est votre niveau d'études ?
4. Êtes-vous membre de l'ethnie Mandara ?
5. Depuis combien de temps vivez-vous à Meme, dans le Mayo Sava, au Cameroun ?

#### Section 2 : Compréhension d'Isa Al-Masih

1. Qui est Isa Al-Masih pour vous ?
2. Comment avez-vous entendu parler d'Isa Al-Masih ?
3. Quels sont les principaux enseignements ou messages associés à Isa Al-Masih ?
4. Comment comprenez-vous le concept de divinité en relation avec Isa Al-Masih ?
5. Pouvez-vous partager des expériences ou des rencontres personnelles qui ont façonné votre compréhension d'Isa Al-Masih ?

## APPENDIX D

### TRANSLATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM ENGLISH TO FULFULDE

**(By Pastor Issa Babba)**

Wakere arande : Habaru Dow yedki

- 1) A mari duubi noy?
- 2) Dume woni kuugal ma?
- 3) A jaŋgi deydey suudu noy?
- 4) A don nder asngol Mandara'en na?
- 5) A yedi bakin duubi noy haa Meme nder Mayo-Sava haa lesdi Kamerun?

Wakere didabre: Faamu dow Isa Almasiihu

- 1) Moy woni Isa Almasiihu ngam ma?
- 2) Noy a arti ekkitaago dow Isa Almasiihu?
- 3) Jaŋde kanndude diye donno kawti bee habaruuji dow Isa Almasiihu?
- 4) Noy a faami numo dow allahku nder kawtal bee Isa Almasiihu?
- 5) A waawan senndugo kirseeku malla kawtal ma jey luggini faamu ma dow Isa Almasiihu na?

## APPENDIX E

### E-ERB APPROVAL



**Adventist University of Africa**  
*Developing Leaders for Service*

A Private Chartered University Accredited by Commission for University Education, Kenya



17<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Abraham Maspha  
Theological Seminary  
Adventist University of Africa  
Kenya

Reference: AUA/ISERC/12/03/2025

Dear Abraham Maspha

**RE: The Understanding of the Divinity of Isa Al-Masih among the Mandara in Meme, in the Department of Mayo Sava, Cameroon: Towards a Missiological and Theological Reflection**

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/2025/0018. The approval period is 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – 16<sup>th</sup> March 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)

ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA  
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## VITA

### **Personal information**

Name: Abraham Maspha  
Date of birth: 9<sup>th</sup> January 1984  
ID Number: S2024267  
Marital Status: Married

### **Academic background:**

2009 Bachelor of Arts in Theological Studies (BA Th)

### **Professional experience:**

January 2025 - Appointed District Chief of Mayo Kani, in Kaélé.

December 2021, Invested as SYL (Senior Youth Leader) in Mogodé.

July 2021-January 2025 - District Chief Pastor of Mayo Sava Sud in Mémé

2018-2021 - District Chief Pastor of Tokombéré Centre, in Tokombéré.

June 2015, I was ordained as a pastor of the World Church in the North Cameroon Conference.

July 2014-June 2018 - Senior Pastor of the Diamaré Nord District, Senior Chaplain of the Bergström Adventist College in Dogba, the primary school, and the Adventist dispensary in Dogba, History/Geography/ECM teacher.

January 2013-June 2014 - Senior Pastor of the Bénoué Ouest District, in Touroua.

July 2012-January 2013 - Senior Pastor of the Bénoué Est District, in Adoumri.

January 2012-June 2012 - First Pastor-in-Charge of the newly created Mayo Tsanaga Nord District, in Mozogo.

June 2010-December 2012 - Senior Pastor of the Mayo Moskota Group, in the Mayo Tsanaga Centre District, in Mozogo.

January 2010-June 2010 - Auditor for the North Cameroon Conference

September 2009-June 2010 - Professor of history and geography, civics, and French at Bergström Adventist College in Dogba and group leader in Papata, in the Diamaré North district.

2008 - Appointed Master Guide, Youth in Nanga Eboko.