

Received : 30 July 2024, Accepted: 27 August 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9i2.68>

## **A CRITICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIVINITY AND SONSHIP OF CHRIST IN LIGHT OF THE TWO QURANIC EXEGESIS TA'ARUF AL-FURQAN AND URWA-TUL-WUTHQA**

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### **Abstract**

*This research paper examines a critical and comparative analysis of the Divinity and Sonship of Christ in Light of the two South Asian Quranic Exegeses Ta'aruf Al-Furqan and Urwa-Tul-Wusqa. While both interpretations align in their core translations, they differ significantly in their approach. A detailed analysis of the two Islamic exegetes revealed that Ta'aruf Al-Furqan greatly emphasised the world philosophy of religions and their beliefs, and its style is more explanatory debating and survey-based. Ta'aruf Al-Furqan, overall, is written in the style of Tafseer bil Ma'thoor (exegesis based on transmitted traditions). In contrast, Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa with jurisprudential style explicitly contains Athari's distinctive views relying heavily on the Gospels and historical events, offering alternative interpretations on key issues such as Jesus being the son of Joseph, the death of Jesus, the permissibility of marrying Christian women and consuming their food, the allegorical nature of Jesus' miracles, and the ambiguity surrounding Jesus' ascension. Therefore, some Christian beliefs are interpreted against the consensus of traditional exegetes. These differences highlight the diversity within Islamic exegesis and provide a nuanced understanding of the theological discussions surrounding Jesus in Islam. Contrary to post-Jesus Christian doctrines (systems of beliefs), both exegeses agree that Jesus Christ is neither divine, nor the son of God, nor part of the Trinity but rather a servant of God and his messenger, reflecting the consistent message of the Quran.*

**Keywords:** Divinity, Sonship, Trinity, Quranic exegesis, Ta'aruf Al-Furqan and Urwa Tul-Wusqa.

## **A. Introduction: Contextual Background**

### **1. Definition of Belief**

The root of the word "belief" (عقیده) is "ع-ق-د" which means covenant, knot, and bond. In its literal sense, it means to bind, to tie a knot, and to make a pledge. In terminology, beliefs refer to the firm and unwavering concepts that dominate a person's heart and mind and serve as the motivation for their actions.

### **2. The Concept of God in Christianity**

The beliefs and doctrines of Christianity are described in The Apostles' Creed, a well-known belief confession statement of Christian Faith and as follows:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day, He rose again and ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there, He will come to judge the living and the dead".<sup>1</sup>

This has also been mentioned in Qamoos Al-Kitab - Urdu Dictionary of the Bible.<sup>2</sup> It is understood that Christians believe in the dual nature of Jesus Christ, both divine and human. At the same time, they consider God to be the Almighty and Creator and also attribute divinity to Jesus Christ. To understand Christians' fundamental beliefs, one must refer to their foundational creeds, known as "The Three Ecumenical Creeds."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Harnack, The Apostles' Creed, WIPF and Stock Publishers, 2001

<sup>2</sup> F. S. Khairullah, Qamoos Al-Kitab, Christian Publications, Ferozepur, Lahore, 1993: P. 654

<sup>3</sup> Sajid Mir, Professor, "Isaiyat Tajzia wa Mutalia", Page 27, Dar-ul-Salam, Lahore, Edition 2001.

(i) **The first fundamental creed** is the "Apostle's Creed" or "Apostolic Creed," which is also called the "Rasooli Aqeedah" because it summarises the teachings of the apostles.<sup>4</sup>

Huston Smith explains the "Apostolic Creed" as follows:<sup>5</sup>

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried<sup>6</sup>.

(ii) **The second fundamental creed** is the "Nicene Creed," which is essentially an elaboration and addition to the "Apostolic Creed."<sup>7</sup>

Regarding these additions, "Qamoos-Al-Kitab" states that,

"The Father and the Son are of one essence, and the Son is true God from God. Jesus Christ is considered to fully possess divine attributes".<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Divinity in Islam, Literal and Terminological Meaning

In "Ayat-ul-Kursi" (Surah Al-Baqarah: 255), the fundamental and intrinsic attributes of God are described, which are specific to the one true God (the deity). If these attributes are accepted by any other being, it would be tantamount to considering that being a deity as well.

"اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ"

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<sup>4</sup>. Qamoos-Al-Kitab under "Rasooli Aqeedah". Comparison of Religions by Christian scholar Huston Smith, P. 735.

<sup>5</sup>. Huston Cummings Smith was born on May 31, 1919, in an American Methodist missionary family in Suzhou, China and was raised there. He earned PhD in Philosophy from the University of Chicago in 1945 and served as a professor at Washington University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Syracuse University. After retiring from Syracuse in 1983, he served as a visiting professor of religious studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of thirteen books on world religions and philosophy. Around three million copies of his book "The World's Religions" were sold by 2017. He passed away on December 30, 2016, in California, USA.

<sup>6</sup>. The Religions Of Man (1965), P. 327-

<sup>7</sup>. Isaiyat, Tajzia wa Mutalia. P. 29.

<sup>8</sup>. F. S. Khairullah, Qamoos Al-Kitab, Christian Publications, Ferozepur, Lahore, 1993: P. 656

**Translation:** Allah! There is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living,  
the Sustainer of [all] existence.

**Explanation:**

The above-mentioned verse presents two attributes of God (Allah)

**(i) The first attribute of Allah**

This means that only that being can be considered a deity whose fundamental attribute is "Al-Hayy, **الْحَيُّ**" (the Ever-Living), and one who dies cannot be a deity because a deity can never die.

**(ii) The Second Attribute of Allah**

The second attribute of Allah is described as "Al-Qayyum," meaning the one who is self-sustaining and upholding the existence and affairs of all creation. Therefore, any being whose existence and powers can decline, who becomes dependent on others for health, illness, life, and death, cannot be considered an Allah.

**Linguistic Analysis of the Word "Ilah":**

Any entity that is worshipped can be linguistically referred to as "Ilah," as stated in "Mu'jam Al-Zawa'id":

<sup>9</sup>"إله: (اسم) 1- إله. كل ما عبد، ج آلهة، م. إلهة

"Ilah: (noun) 1- Ilah. Anything that is worshipped, plural: Alihah, singular: Ilahah."

**Shariah Definition of the Word "Ilah":**

However, in Shariah, the term Ilah specifically refers to the true deity, as mentioned in Tafseer Al-Razi by Imam Razi:

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<sup>9</sup>. Jibrān Masood, Al-Kitaab: Mu'jam al-Ra'eed, word "Al-Ilah", page 189.

أن الإله هو المعبود ، سواء عبد بحق أو بباطل ، ثم غلب في عرف الشرع على المعبود بالحق . وقال في ”  
الصفة التالية: ”من الناس من قال : الإله ليس عبارة عن المعبود ، بل الإله هو الذي يستحق أن يكون  
”<sup>10</sup> معبودا

### Translation:

"Ilah is that which is worshipped, whether rightfully or wrongfully, then in the terminology of Shariah, it is used exclusively for the one whose worship is rightfully due."

And in the next attribute, he said: "Some people have said that Ilah does not simply mean the worshipped one, but rather the one who deserves to be worshipped."

### In "Lisan al-Arab", Ibn Manzur (may Allah have mercy on him) states:

(أله) الإله الله عز وجل وكل ما اتخذ من دونه معبوداً إله عند متخذه والجمع آله والآله الأَصْنَامُ سما  
بذلك لاعتقادهم أن العبادة تُحَقُّ لها وأسمائهم تَتَّبَعُ اعتقاداتهم لا ما عليه الشيء في نفسه. وقال الإمام  
الطبري رحمه الله في تفسيره لآية 91 من سورة المؤمنون: وقوله: ﴿مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ﴾ يقول تعالى ذكره:  
ما لله من ولد، ولا كان معه في القديم، ولا حين ابتدئ الأشياء من تصلح عبادته، ولو كان معه في القديم  
أو عند خلقه الأشياء من تصلح عبادته ﴿مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَدَّهَبَ﴾ يقول: إذن لاعتزل كل إله منهم ﴿بِمَا  
خَلَقَ﴾ من شيء، فانفرد به، ولتغالبوا، فلعلنا بعضهم على بعض، وغلب القويّ منهم الضعيف؛ لأن  
القويّ لا يرضى أن يعلوه ضعيف، والضعيف لا يصلح أن يكون إلهاً، فسبحان الله ما أبلغها من حجة  
وتدبر" <sup>11</sup> وأوجزها، لمن عقل

### Translation:

<sup>10</sup>. Al-Razi, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Umar ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Husayn al-Taymi al-Razi, known as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, the orator of Ray (d. 606 AH). The book: "Mafatih al-Ghayb = Tafsi al-Kabir," the second book on the discussions of Bismillah, Publisher: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi - Beirut, Edition: Third - 1420 AH, Vol. 1, p. 144.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibn Manzur, Muhammad ibn Mukarram ibn Ali, Abu al-Fadl, Jamal al-Din, al-Ansari al-Ruwayfi al-Afriqi (d. 711 AH). The book: "Lisan al-Arab," Chapter on Alif, Publisher: Dar Sader - Beirut, Edition: Third - 1414 AH, Vol. 13, p. 467.

"(أله) The meaning of 'Ilah' is Allah, the Almighty, and anything else worshipped besides Him is called 'Ilah' according to the belief of those who worship it. Its plural is 'Alihah.' Idols are also called 'Alihah' because their worshipers believe that worship is obligatory for those idols. Their names are based on their beliefs, not on what they actually are. Imam Tabari, may Allah have mercy on him, said in the exegesis on Surah Al-Mu'minun, verse 91: 'And His saying: (مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ) meaning Allah has no son, nor was there anyone with Him from the beginning, nor when He created things was there anyone worthy of worship. And if there were someone with Him in ancient times or when He created things who was worthy of worship, then each Ilah would have taken his creation apart and they would have fought amongst themselves, and the strong would have prevailed over the weak; because the strong does not accept that the weak should prevail over him, and the weak is not capable of being an Ilah. Thus, glory be to Allah, what a great and concise argument this is, for those who understand and reflect.'"

As it is also mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah:

” يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ“<sup>12</sup>

**Translation:** "O people! Worship your Lord who created you, and those before you, so that you may become righteous."

Allah Almighty has guided in Surah Al-An'am:

”أَتُنذِرَكُمْ لَعْنَتِكُمْ لِتُشْهِدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ آلهةً أُخْرَى قُلْ لَا أَشْهَدُ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ“<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>. "Al-Baqarah, 2:21"

<sup>13</sup>. "Al-An'am, 6:19"

**Translation:**

"Can you indeed bear witness that along with Allah there are other gods (in existence)? Say, 'I do not bear witness to this.' Say, 'He is only one God, and I am innocent of what you associate with Him.'"

**B. Introduction to Exegetes**

The two contemporary exegetes Hameed Naseem and Abdul Karim Athari both are from South Asia.

**1. Hameed Naseem**

His real name was Hameed, and his pen name was Naseem. He was born on October 16, 1920, in Shahpur Dalhousie, Gurdaspur (Eastern Punjab), India. He was a writer, eminent poet, broadcaster, critic, and commentator of the Quran. In 1941, he completed his M.A. in English from Punjab University. After the partition of India, he joined Radio Pakistan, eventually reaching the position of Deputy Director General. He wrote scripts, poems, and exegeses for Radio Pakistan in Lahore. In 1944, he got a job at Radio Peshawar, then transferred to Lahore, and later in 1998, to Radio Karachi. After taking early retirement, he became the head of the Arts Academy at PIA and dedicated his life to Islamic studies.

His poetry collections include "Just Junoon," "Gird-e-Malal," and "Dard-e-Tahiyur," while his critical books include "Allama Iqbal Hamare Azeem Shair," "Kuch Ahem Shair," "Paanch Jadeed Shair," and "Kuch Aur Ahem Shair." He wrote the exegesis on the Quran "Ta'aruf Al-Furqan" in five volumes. He passed away on September 28, 1998, in Gulshan Iqbal, Karachi, and was buried in Gabol Welfare Cemetery.

One of his notable works is the Tafsir "Ta'aruf Al-Furqan," written in the context of global philosophy and religion, which includes discussions on

various subjects, including Christian beliefs. The following section will address these Christian beliefs.

## **2. Exegete Abdul Karim Athari**

His full name is Abdul Karim Athari, born Fazl Karim, son of Shams al-Din. He was born in April 1934, while his school and identification card show March 1935. Before the establishment of Pakistan, he received primary education and religious training from Allama Abdul Majid Dihlawi in Deoband. After the formation of Pakistan, he completed middle school in Jokalian in 1949 and matriculated from Halian in 1951. He then went to Gujarat to complete his religious education and completed military training in 1957 under Hafiz Enayatullah Athari.

He passed the Arabic Fazil exam from Punjab University in 1963 and immersed himself in the work of "Kutubat". Responding to the demand of the people that a Quranic exegesis be written according to theoretical principles for the benefit of the general public, he promised and began the Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa in December 1993, which was completed in nine thick volumes in July 1998. He is the author of the Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa and the translation of Tafsir Al Manar.

He passed away on March 13, 2015, in "Thatta Allyia" and was buried there.

<sup>14</sup>

## **C. Comparative Examination: Divinity and sonship of Christ in view of Ta'aruf al-Furqan and Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa**

Allah has explicitly addressed the two beliefs in the divinity and sonship of Christ in the Quran: as mentioned in Surah Al-Ma'idah , Surah Aal-e-Imran , Surah At-Tawbah , and Surah Maryam". Here, the two beliefs are studied in light of Ta'aruf al-Furqan and Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa.

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<sup>14</sup>. urwatulwusqa.info



## 1. Divinity and sonship of Christ in view of Ta'aruf al-Furqan

In the explanation of verse 17 of Surah Al-Ma'idah, Hameed Naseem, the commentator, states:

” لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا <sup>15</sup> ”

**Translation:** "Indeed, they have disbelieved who say, 'Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.' Say, 'Then who could possess any power against Allah if He had willed to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, or his mother or everyone on the earth?'"

### Exegesis

These verses have been revealed regarding the false beliefs of the Christians, the People of the Book, which the Quran has rectified. It has also clearly defined the true and esteemed status of Jesus Christ's prophethood. Since the mention of Jesus Christ begins after the Quranic teachings, it is evident that his birth, his mission, and his protection from the schemes of the Jews, and Allah raising him, all these mentions in the Quran have reached these Christians. Despite this clarity, the Christians persist in their belief in the divinity of Jesus, claiming either partnership with Allah or divinity themselves, straying far into misguidance. It is said to these disbelievers of erroneous beliefs and thoughts: If Allah were to decree to destroy Jesus, his mother, and all the creatures on earth and in the heavens, could anyone prevent it? This is a specific Quranic style of expression. Clearly, Mary, who passed away six hundred years ago, is mentioned, and this refers to her offspring, contemporaries, and other creatures. That is, if Allah were to give them death, could you resist it? What does it mean to call the mortal eternal? Can you apply reverse gears to time and change the course of history? If Allah today wishes to destroy you all, do you have the power to oppose His decree? After this, a true reality is being

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<sup>15</sup>."Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:17"

stated for clarity: O blind people! Just like you, Christ was a human being and could never reach the status of divinity, as he is limited and mortal. Absolute power and complete sovereignty over the universe belong only to Allah. He alone gives life and death, from the dust particle to the splendid moon, from ants to angels, everything in creation belongs to Allah. O people lacking understanding and perception! Consider a person as a person, place Adam in his rightful place, and give to him what belongs to him, just as your Prophet Christ said, 'What is Allah's is for Allah.' Divine power, governance, authority, and creation—all beauty belongs only to Allah. If you accept this truth, paths to salvation can still open for you."<sup>16</sup>

**The verses 72 to 73 of Surah Al-Ma'idah regarding the doctrine of divinity and sonship of Christ, explained by commentator Hameed Naseem, state:**

'يُوفَكُونُ: It refers to distortion, twisting something from its correct position. When falsehood is presented as truth, it is also called 'yuhfakoon.' They are being misled. The principle of Christ's invitation has already been mentioned in the Quran, that..."

”وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلَأَجَلٍ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا“<sup>17</sup>

**Translation:** "And I confirm the Torah which is with me, and I have come to make lawful for you some of what was forbidden to you. And I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, so fear Allah and obey me."

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<sup>16</sup>. "Tafsir Ta'araf Al-Furqan, Commentator: Hameed Naseem. Verse Al-Ma'idah: 17. Volume 2, pages 29-30."

<sup>17</sup>. Sure, "Aal-e-Imran: 3:50."

The children of Israel did not accept them, but among their followers there arose a group who adopted their teachings against belief. He commanded to reject these false beliefs:

”إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ“<sup>18</sup>

**Translation:** "Indeed, the example of Jesus in the sight of Allah is like that of Adam. He created him from dust; then He said to him, 'Be,' and he was."

### Exegesis

They are like the rest of creation, Allah's creation and His servants. They are messengers of Allah, but before them many great messengers had come. Here, the false beliefs of the Christians are presented. Those who claim the divinity of Christ are entirely disbelievers and polytheists, because they have strayed completely from the beliefs of Jesus. Whereas Jesus said, "I have come to revive the religion of our Lord and yours, so that I may revive the correct teachings of the Torah, renew the religion of Abraham, and establish the pure religion once again."

In these verses, Allah declares associating partners with Him as the greatest blasphemy in His presence, and He decrees that those who do so will suffer severe punishment in Hell. After this, it is said that Christ was a servant and messenger of Allah. This is indeed their primary and greatest honour. The rest is the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the misguided ones. The Messiah, Jesus, appeared at a particular historical stage in the lineage of

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<sup>18</sup>. Sure, "Aal-e-Imran:3:59.

prophethood and messengership among the Children of Israel. You are part of this lineage that began with Abraham and concluded with Muhammad. Now, warn them of their false beliefs, and ask them to seek forgiveness from Allah. Tell them that your salvation lies only in returning from this misguidance and coming towards the straight path, the path of righteousness and goodness. Those who disbelieve and associate partners with Allah will die in a state of disbelief, and they will suffer eternal punishment. Let the servant remain in his place as a servant and accept the messenger as a messenger. Once you accept him as a messenger, then surely coming towards the complete religion will not be impossible for you.

Turn away from your ancestral false religion and come towards the true religion, the religion of pure monotheism, which was taught by all the prophets, including Jesus. This is inviting you towards yourself."<sup>19</sup>

The example of Jesus in the verse is compared to Adam to refute the false beliefs of Christians. Allah created Jesus from clay and commanded, "Be," and he was, just as Adam was created. Jesus is a messenger and servant of Allah who came to revive the religion and uphold the correct teachings of the Torah. Those who claim his divinity are disbelievers and polytheists because they act against the teachings of Jesus.

Allah considers associating partners with Him as the greatest blasphemy and promises Hellfire for those who do so. The correct position of Christianity is to regard Jesus as a servant and messenger of Allah. Jesus is part of the lineage of prophets among the Children of Israel, starting from Abraham and ending with Muhammad.

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<sup>19</sup>. Hameed Naseem. Tafsir Ta'aruf Al-Furqan. Volume 2, Surah al-Ma'idah: 72 to 77, pages 62 to 65."

Christians are urged to repent from their false beliefs and return to the right path, otherwise they will face eternal punishment. They are invited to the religion of monotheism (Hanif) taught by all prophets, including Jesus.

**Similarly, in the explanation of Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:116-117), the commentator Hameed Naseem states:**

”وإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ أَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمَّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالِ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَعَلَّمَ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ“<sup>20</sup>

**Translation:** "And when Allah will say, 'O Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?"' He will say, 'Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen".

### Exegesis

These verses are figuratively presented in the form of dialogue. Jesus himself is presenting that, 'O Absolute God, what opportunity did I have to associate my and my mother's mortal beings with Your divinity? What transpired after my departure, You know. I can only assert that they are Your servants. If they become disbelievers, polytheists, or deviants, then they deserve punishment. If You punish them, it is Your justice, and if You forgive them, it is within Your absolute discretion.'

Allah decrees that only those who are truthful at heart, truthful in speech, and righteous will be forgiven. Allah will reward these sincere servants with the highest and greatest rewards. They will remain pleased with the pleasure of

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<sup>20</sup>. "Also Tafsir Ta'aruf Al-Furqan. Al-Ma'idah: 116, 117. Volume 2, pages 82, 83."

their Lord, and their Lord will continue to bestow His blessings upon them. As for those who were not truthful and became polytheists, they will face a punishment that has never been given to anyone in the world.<sup>21</sup>

### Refutation of the Doctrine of the Sonship of Christ in Surah At-Tawbah:

”وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عِزَّىٰرُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ۖ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۗ  
يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ“<sup>22</sup>

**Translation:** "And the Jews say, 'Ezra is the son of Allah,' and the Christians say, 'The Messiah is the son of Allah.' These are merely their verbal assertions. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before them. May Allah destroy them; how are they deluded away from the truth!"

”اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ۗ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا  
الَّهَآ وَآجِدًا ۗ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُسَبِّحُهُ ۗ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ“<sup>23</sup>

**Translation:** "They have taken their commentators and monks as lords besides Allah, and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary. Although they were commanded to worship none but one God, there is no deity except Him. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Him."

### Exegesis

The Jews claim Ezra is the son of Allah, and the Christians claim that Jesus is the son of Allah, falling into the detestable act of polytheism. The Christians abandoned the beliefs established by Paul and the monotheists like Peter, who considered Jesus as a messenger of God. Here, they have been cursed with great condemnation: these communities, their clergy, priests, and monks, are

<sup>21</sup>. "Tafsir Ta'aruf Al-Furqan, Al-Ma'idah: 116, 117, Vol. 2, pp. 83, 82."

<sup>22</sup>. At.Tuba:9:30.

<sup>23</sup>. Al Tuba: 9:31

all guilty of wickedness and false beliefs. Now that the lamp of truth has appeared, they seek to extinguish it with their breaths. Allah has struck them with such a blow that their intellects and senses are confounded.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. Divinity and sonship of Christ in view of Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa

Abdul Karim Athari has undertaken extensive work on the Christian doctrine, some aspects of which are mentioned in detail:

In his exegesis on verse 17 of Surah Al-Ma'idah regarding the doctrine of divinity and sonship of Christ, Abdul Karim Asri states that:

”لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۚ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ ۚ وَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ۚ لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيٌّ قَدِيرٌ“<sup>25</sup>

**Translation:** "Surely, those who say that Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary, have committed disbelief. Say: If Allah wanted to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone on earth, who could interfere in His Kingdom? To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is within them. He creates whatever He wills, and He has power over all things."

"There is no doubt about the disbelief of those who make the Messiah into Allah. Those who acknowledge the Messiah as a prophet and messenger are called Christians or Nasara. However, this verse makes it clear that the Qur'an does not refer to this polytheistic belief or its followers as 'Nasraniyyah' nor does it call them Nasara or People of the Book. Instead, there is a definitive judgment of disbelief for them, and the Qur'an mentions them with the words

<sup>24</sup>. Tafsir Ta'aruf Al-Furqan, Vol. 2, p. 321

<sup>25</sup>. Al-Ma'idah: 5:17, Vol. 3, pp. 112-117

'Certainly, those have disbelieved' (لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ). It is evident that they did not become disbelievers merely by rejecting the teachings of the Qur'an but also by deviating from the teachings of the Torah and the Gospel. Although commonly referred to as Christians, Nasara, or Jews, in reality, they are neither Christians nor Jews. They ceased to be addressed by the commands given to the People of the Book, the Jews, and the Nasara, because they rejected Judaism and Christianity and thus became disbelievers by that rejection. Therefore, what is permissible with the People of the Book is not permissible with these so-called People of the Book, as they deviated from being the People of the Book. Consequently, their position became nominal and not genuine in the sight of Allah. Therefore, their women are not lawful for Muslims, and it is not permissible for Muslims to eat all the food on their tables, as they have committed clear disbelief.

In the world today, the majority of those who identify as Jews or Christians have deviated from the original beliefs of Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, there is no justification for referring to them as Jews or Nasara. At present, the doctrines of their prominent and popular sects clearly share common expressions that assert the divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as one. The glory is equal; as the Father is, so is the Son. Both the Father and the Son are uncreated, unlimited, eternal, and omnipotent; the Father is God, and the Son is God.<sup>26</sup>

**In the Bible, it is written:**

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in

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<sup>26</sup>. Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa, Volume 3, pp. 75-79.



bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you, I am well pleased.' Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry."<sup>27</sup>

Because of their clear polytheism, the Qur'an does not address them as Nasara (Christians). The phrase "son of Mary" associated with the belief in the divinity of the Messiah delivers a significant blow, emphasizing that the one they are calling God is actually a woman's son. Do they make this woman God's wife? Even in their own belief, God is not supposed to have a wife. How then could one born from a woman be the son of God? Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further challenged their belief by stating, "A son always resembles his father." So, does the Messiah resemble God, Gabriel, or a human? The human appearance and birth of the Messiah from a woman's womb prove that he was the son of a human and resembled a human. They have elevated the true human status of the Messiah to openly declare him as "God." Ashraf Ali Thanvi commented that "This verse is a clear refutation of those who believe in the unity of the Creator and the creation." We further assert that it is also a refutation of those who believe in the unity of two different creations (angels and humans) and hold the false belief that the Messiah was born from the union of Mary and Gabriel.<sup>28</sup>

Why and how did this false belief come into existence? The reason for its emergence is that the Qur'an mentioned the Messiah with the title "son of Mary,"<sup>29</sup> which led to the perception that he did not have a father. This then raised the problem: if he had no father, how could he be called a "son" and be referred to as "walad"? In the Arabic language, the word "walad" in its true application requires the existence of two origins. If the word "walad" is

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<sup>27</sup>. Luke 3:21, 23.

<sup>28</sup>. Hafiz Muhammad Gondalwi, Amir Markazi Jamaat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith: Işbat al-Tawhīd, p. 19; Bezel al-Maidah (5:17); Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa, Volume 3, pp. 112-116.

<sup>29</sup>. Hafiz Muhammad Gondalwi, Amir Markazi Jamaat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith: Işbat al-Tawhīd, p. 40; Bezel al-Maidah (5:17); Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa, Volume 3, pp. 112-116.

attributed to the mother, then the second origin must be the father. Hence, the mother of the "walad" will be the consort (wife) of the "walad's" father. Moreover, for "walad" it is necessary to be separated from the substance of both origins, meaning that "walad" needs two origins and the separation of the substance is essential. Therefore, the meaning of the word "walad" is a particular part, i.e., one in which two persons are involved in its partiality. Similarly, the word "ibn" in Arabic is truly synonymous with "walad," and the same conditions apply to its usage. Since the Messiah is referred to as "ibn Maryam" (son of Mary) in the Qur'an, it necessitates the existence of two origins: one is his mother Mary, and the other is Gabriel, who is also referred to as the Holy Spirit and was the cause of the Messiah's conception.

**In support of monotheism, it is said:**

"Jesus' birth occurred between Gabriel and Mary, so he lives in heaven without consuming food, drink, or fulfilling other human needs, like Gabriel and other angels."

This belief was fabricated by some Christians, but the Qur'an avoided calling them "Nasara" (Christians) and instead labeled them as clear "disbelievers." The aforementioned belief is held by some Muslims, but it cannot be considered the belief of "the people of Islam." Our response is that this is neither the belief of "the people of Islam" nor can it be deemed correct, even if stated by a Sunni.

Nominal Christians are being told that they are strange for considering Jesus both a "son" and "God." Do they not understand what a son is?

In summary, these people declared God to have offspring but did not identify a father or wife for Him. Thus, they are asked, if God has offspring, who is His wife? Is Mary His wife? No Christian sect has been able to answer this, and they have resorted to interpretations. The question posed by the Qur'an still demands an answer from them, and neither the People of the Book of that time

nor anyone now or until the end of time will be able to answer it. The Qur'an states:

"How could He have a child when He has no consort?"

Jesus was a human, the son of a human, so why do you commit open disbelief by considering him "God"?

**In the exegesis of Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 72, Abdul Karim Athari**

**writes :**

”لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ بَيْنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ“

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**Translation:** "Surely, they have disbelieved who say: 'Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary.' But the Messiah said: 'O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever associates anything with Allah, Allah has forbidden Paradise for him, and his abode is the Fire. And for the wrongdoers, there are no helpers.'"

Jesus corrected those who were blind and deaf. These blind and deaf individuals were the ones who held incorrect beliefs, denied the Oneness of God, and committed acts of disbelief and polytheism. As a result of their misdeeds, they were destroyed. According to Abdul Karim Athari, the miracles of Jesus are actually metaphors. Regarding the miracles of Jesus mentioned in Surah Al-Imran (3:49), he writes that it means, "I precisely gauge your nature and disposition for your contemplation and understanding. Just as birds have the ability to fly but do not do so immediately upon birth; they develop wings

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<sup>30</sup>. Al-Ma'idah: 5:72. 'Urwah al-Wuthqa, Volume 3, pages 39-40.

and begin to fly after a few days. Similarly, when I breathe the words of prophethood into you, it influences the people."<sup>31</sup>

Jesus taught them to worship one Lord. "Lord" means the one who gradually brings something to perfection and strength according to its capacity, from deficiency to perfection and from weakness to strength. Then how can I be God? God is the one who is free from every defect and deficiency, and the Gospels still affirm this statement of the Quran today.

**The Gospels states:**

- "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."<sup>32</sup>
- "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."<sup>33</sup>
- "What is impossible with man is possible with God."<sup>34</sup>

According to the Quran, Jesus' first proclamation to his people was, "Indeed, I am a servant of Allah," and he continued to declare this throughout his life.

**In Surah Al Maida, verse 116 states:**

”وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يُعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ السَّيِّئِينَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالِ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ كَيْ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلُّنَّهُ ۖ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ ۖ تَعَلَّمَ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ“<sup>35</sup>

**Translation:** "And when Allah will say: 'O Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to the people: "Take me and my mother as deities besides

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<sup>31</sup>. Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa: p. 744.

<sup>32</sup>. Matthew (4:11).

<sup>33</sup>. Luke (4:9).

<sup>34</sup>. Luke (18:27).

<sup>35</sup>. Al maida:116.

Allah?" Jesus will say: "Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right to say. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, but I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is the Knower of the unseen."

On the Day of Judgment, this question and answer will occur, asking if Jesus ever claimed divinity for himself and his mother. He will respond: "How could I say what I had no right to say?" He did not simply say, "I did not say it," as this would merely be self-defence. Instead, he openly declared his servitude to Allah before all of creation. Is there anyone who can claim that Jesus ever told anyone to consider him divine? Jesus always conveyed to his disciples what he maintained during his life: "You know what is within me, but I do not know what is within Yourself." This negates the notion that prophets and messengers possess knowledge of the unseen.

This dialogue aims to make people aware of their grave error of considering Jesus as God, a partner of God, or the son of God. What a powerful method of understanding Allah has chosen, yet how short-sighted are those who do not benefit from this and fail to correct themselves? This also shows that the worship of Mary, like the worship of Jesus, is polytheism.

This emphasizes that Jesus never claimed divinity for himself or his mother. The Qur'an uses this narrative to correct the misconceptions held by some Christians. By highlighting Jesus' declaration of servitude to Allah, it negates any claims of his or his mother's divinity and reinforces the monotheistic message. The response from Jesus on the Day of Judgment serves as a clear refutation of any claims of polytheism, urging people to recognize the oneness of Allah and correct their beliefs.

**In the exegesis of Surah Maryam, verses 34 to 36, Abdul Karim Athari writes:**

"Jesus was born from the womb of Mary like other children. The Quran refers to him as 'born' just as all humans born from their mothers' wombs are called 'born.' He stayed in his mother's womb like other children and received nourishment in the same way. He had all the human needs and grew up like other children. He was made a prophet like other humans and preached and delivered God's message to his people. He died in the same way as other prophets died at their appointed times. He was neither crucified nor killed as the Jews and Christians claim; instead, he passed away in the same manner as other prophets did at their respective times. Undoubtedly, being killed or crucified does not contradict prophethood, but the claim of the Jews that he was killed is false, and the Christians' claim that he rose after three days and ascended to heaven has no basis in reality. This is Jesus, the son of Mary, about whom you have created doubts and suspicions, and if these clarifications do not remove your doubts, the fault lies within you, and there is no cure for that."<sup>36</sup>

**In Surah Maryam, verse 36 states;**

"And indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path."

Abdul Karim Athari writes: "The Jews called Jesus illegitimate, the Christians declared him to be God, the Son of God, and one of the Trinity, while Muslims emphasized his birth without a father. However, does anyone's claim alter the truth? He was one of those messengers of Allah whose birth was foretold before they were born, and what was said about him before his birth was fulfilled exactly as foretold."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>. Surah Maryam (19:34); Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa, Volume 5, pp. 639-649.

<sup>37</sup>. Surah Maryam (19:36); Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa, Volume 5, pp. 639-645.

**The Quran has declared both the extremism of the Jews and the Christians as disbelief. Abu'l-Ala Maududi, summarizing their situation, writes:**

"You will see that the greatest injustice done to Jesus was by his own adherents. They have covered him with so many layers of their imagination and delusions that it has become almost impossible to discern what his original teachings were, or even to determine what he himself was. His birth, childhood, youth, old age, and death—every aspect of his life appears to be filled with miraculous stories. From beginning to end, he is presented in such a manner that he is either portrayed as God Himself, or the Son of God, or God incarnated in him, or at least as having shared in divinity to some extent."<sup>38</sup>

Injustice was not only done to them by their opponents but also by their followers, who distorted their teachings, altered their guidance, and imbued their personality with divinity and godhood. The first type of injustice was limited to their lifetime or a few years thereafter, but the second type of injustice continued for centuries after his departure.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, among the prophets whose prophethood is known and established, the most severe injustice was done to Jesus. Along with all the attributes of humanity, Allah granted him wisdom and prophethood and appointed him to reform a corrupt people. Initially, his own people rejected him and could not tolerate him even for three years, eventually deciding to kill him in his youth, though they were not successful. Then, they exceeded all bounds in his exaltation by declaring him the Son of God and even God Himself. They distorted his teachings so much that today, apart from the Quran, no book in the world contains the original teachings of Jesus or even his true nature. The New Testament is tainted with corrupt concepts of incarnation, sonship, and

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<sup>38</sup>. Maulana Syed Abu'l-Ala Maududi, Publisher: Islamic Publications (Private) Limited, Mansoor Millat Road, Lahore; Tafhimat, Volume 2, pp. 10-11.

<sup>39</sup>. Ibid, Tafhimat, Volume 2, p. 9.

divinity. For instance, in the Gospel of Luke, Mary is told that her son will be called God.<sup>40</sup>

In the Gospel of Matthew, it is stated: "The Spirit of God descends upon Jesus like a dove and declares, 'This is my beloved Son.'"<sup>41</sup>

In the Gospel of Mark, it is written: "I am the Son of God, and you will see me sitting at the right hand of the Almighty."<sup>42</sup>

In some texts, on the Day of Judgment, Jesus is seated on the throne of glory instead of God, and he executes the decrees of punishment and reward.<sup>43</sup>

In other passages, Jesus is quoted as saying, "The Father is in me, and I am in the Father."<sup>44</sup>

Some texts falsely attribute to Jesus the words: "I came out from God."<sup>45</sup>

In certain places, Jesus and God are made completely one, with Jesus saying, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father, and the Father works through me."<sup>46</sup>

There are also passages where all the things of God are transferred to Jesus, and God entrusts all His divine affairs to Jesus.<sup>47</sup>

**Therefore, the Quran rejects all of these assertions and designates him as "a servant of Allah." and is mentioned in the Hadith that:**

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<sup>40</sup>. Luke (1:35).

<sup>41</sup>. Matthew (16:17).

<sup>42</sup>. Mark (14:62).

<sup>43</sup>. Matthew (25:31, 46).

<sup>44</sup>. John (10:38).

<sup>45</sup>. John 8:42.

<sup>46</sup>. John 14:9-10.

<sup>47</sup>. John 3:35.



” 48 “ألستم تعلمون أنه لا يكون ولدٌ إلا وهو يشبه أباه؟ ”

**Translation:** "Do you not know that a son is always like his father?"

#### **D. Comparison of the two Exegeses**

To take a comparative assessment of the interpretations regarding the doctrines of the divinity and sonship of Christ, the two different exegeses: Ta'aruf Al-Furqan by Hameed Naseem, Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa by Abdul Karim Athari are considered. The interpretation of other authoritative traditional exegeses has also been consulted. The identified fundamental points are as follows:

##### **1. Doctrine of Divinity**

Tafsir Ta'aruf Al-Furqan and Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa both extensively discuss the doctrines of divinity and the sonship of Christ in their interpretation.

According to Hameed Naseem, the concept of divinity in the Quran is purely singular and exclusive. Allah is unique in His unity, and no one can be associated with Him in worship.

Whereas, according to Athari, the concept of divinity is clear and unambiguous according to the Quran. Acknowledging Allah's unity and not associating anyone with Him in worship forms the basis of Islam.

##### **2. Sonship of Christ**

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<sup>48</sup> H. M. Qasim, Manar al-Qari, Commentary on Mukhtasar Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Page 382.

Considering Jesus Christ as the Son of God is deemed false and against Quranic teachings by Hameed Naseem. The Quran repeatedly emphasizes that Allah has no son.

Whereas Athari considers the belief in Jesus Christ's sonship as false as well. His interpretation strongly argues that the Quran refers to Jesus Christ as a prophet and servant of Allah, not His son.

### **3. Exegesis Style of Ta'aruf Al-Furqan and Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa**

#### **(i) Style of Ta'aruf Al-Furqan**

In a rigorous study of Ta'aruf Al-Furqan, it is found that there is a greater emphasis on the world philosophy of religions and their beliefs, and its style is more explanatory debating and survey-based. Ta'aruf Al-Furqan, overall, is written in the style of Tafseer bil Ma'thoor (exegesis based on transmitted traditions).

#### **(ii) Style of Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa**

After a critical study, it is revealed that Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa also contains a detailed discussion of Christian beliefs, but its style is more jurisprudential and scholarly. This tafsir is, overall, an excellent example of Tafsir Bil Ra'aye (تفسير بالرأى) means exegesis based on personal opinion. Although Athari has mentioned narrations, there is a greater emphasis on his personal opinion. He relied heavily on the Gospels and historical events.

### **E. Conclusions and Final Remarks**

Both exegesises agree on the fundamental Islamic rejection of Christ's divinity and sonship. They uphold the Quranic portrayal of Jesus as a prophet and a servant of God

Since both exegesises are translations of the same Quran, they exhibit significant consistency in their translations. However, a key difference lies in the approach taken: Tafsir Ta'aruf al-Furqan follows the majority opinion of

exegetes and their textual arguments, while Tafsir Urwa-Tul-Wuthqa presents Athari's views more explicitly and argues several points with evidence integrating philosophical reasoning and a broader historical Biblical context, known as Athari's distinct views, which set it apart from other exegeses. These distinct views have been identified as follows:

1. Jesus as the Son of Joseph: Athari refers to certain Gospel statements and considers Jesus to be the son of Saint Joseph (Joseph the Carpenter).
2. Death of Jesus: Athari holds the view that Jesus died, contrary to the majority of the Exegetes' opinion.
3. Legitimacy of Marrying Christian Women and Consuming Their Food: Given that contemporary Christians who hold beliefs in divinity and sonship have deviated from being "People of the Book" and become non-believers, it is no longer permissible for Muslims to marry Christian women or consume their food.
4. Miracles as Metaphors: Athari interprets miracles of Jesus, such as creating birds, healing the blind and lepers, and raising the dead, as allegorical rather than literal events.
5. Ascension of Jesus: Athari questions the belief in Jesus being taken alive to heaven, noting that the Quran does not provide specific details on whether Jesus was taken to heaven body and soul, and the Quranic text does not definitively establish that Jesus was physically taken to heaven alive.

The contemporary exegetes present a broadened work on these beliefs to develop more understanding of more philosophical discussions by interpreting some Christian beliefs contrary to the consensus of traditional exegetes. The agreement between exegetes on these interfaith beliefs is useful for the multifaith society and refers to unity in society whereas their disagreement suggests a state of tolerance and co-existence with others.

## **F. Declarations**

### **Author contribution statement**

Sadia Rehman wrote the first draft of the paper after reviewing, comparing, analysing and interpreting the two South Asian exegeses along with online available Biblical and other relevant literature at libraries in the United Kingdom, Italy and the United States of America related to Christian Beliefs and Saleem Khan proofread and edited the paper to get the final draft.

### **Funding statement**

The research work included in this paper did not receive any grant or funding from private or public sector organisations or agencies.

### **Declaration of Interests Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.