

Theological University Kampen/Utrecht

Paul, Neo-Calvinism, and *Qurbani ka Gosht*:

An Intercultural Theological Analysis of Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan

Thesis submitted for the completion of MIRT 10

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

This thesis explores the topic of eating meat sacrificed by Muslims on Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan. This topic is not usually part of the “usual suspects” of themes that constitute Pakistani Christian theology, which include unity of the church (denominationalism), poverty, Christian missionary movements, *Dalit/Churha* theology, etc. These are important themes, but it seems sometimes that ‘real’ and important topics from daily life for Pakistani Christians receive little or no attention in academic discourse. Contextual and ethical questions, such as eating sacrificial meat, calling God *Allah*, interfaith marriage, divorce, consuming alcohol, female ordination, etc. are seldom discussed by Pakistani theologians in literature. Local Christians, however, are discussing these questions in church, on social media, and at the dinner table. These issues often take the form of heated debates within the community, and one is supposed to answer yes or no. However, there is hardly any academic or pastoral literature that speaks directly to these topics.¹

Even when literature is available, it seems more polemical, and less academic and contextual. For example, Pakistani Pentecostal writer and preacher Jamil Nasir has written some books on how perceptions regarding the consumption of alcohol are used to harass and discriminate against the Pakistani Christian community.² This approach is commendable as he is one of the few local voices who publicly comments on these issues. However, what is the solution he proposes? His is a “no” solution, namely that Pakistani Christians should not consume alcohol and they should advocate banning the sale of liquor in the country.³ So while one can commend Nasir for adding to local

¹ John C. England, et al., eds. *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources, Volume 1 Asia Region, South Asia, Austral Asia*, (New Delhi, Orbis: 2004), 420-456; Also see Appendix 1- Pakistani Christian Literature)

² *Sherab, Akleetai Or Ayane Pakistan* (Liquor Minorities and Constitution of Pakistan) and *Is Liquor Prohibited In Christianity?* See list of books by Jamil Nasir at Church of Pentecost, “Resources,” <https://cop-pak.com/portfolio-item/urdu-bible/> (accessed 27th May 2024)

³ Jamil Nasir, *Liquor Minorities and Constitution of Pakistan*, (Lahore: Church of Pentecost, 2008), 106-108.

literature on topics that speak to the grassroots realities, his approach seems simplistic, devoid of method or theological nuance. It is one example that shows that exegetical and contextual theology has been done in Pakistan on [topics of lay Christian interest](#) seemingly without academic rigor and nuance. There is a need to move beyond simplistic solutions [when exploring contextual Christian topics that concern believers in the pews or topics that relate them to the majority Muslim community](#).

1.1 To Eat or Not to Eat? Corinth and Pakistan

Somewhere in the fifties of the first century AD, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthian church. He addresses several issues in his letter, such as unity in the church (1:10-4:21), marriage (7:1-40), and eating of food offered to idols (8, 10). The last theme (consumption of food offered to idols) is one that was raised by the Corinthian church in their earlier correspondence, a question about which they sought Paul's apostolic guidance (8:1). The question was: can Corinthians, as Christians, eat the food sacrificed to idols in the temples and sold in the markets? Before they asked Paul's teaching on the matter, they already had their views on it; some Corinthian Christians consumed the food, considering themselves "knowledgeable" believers, while the "weak" believers refused to partake in it (8:2, 9). Paul gave a multi-layered response to this problem, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. For now, it is sufficient to note that Paul stressed unity in the church in the context of mission and service to the wider society, which apparently both groups of Corinthian Christians were missing.⁴

Today, how do Pakistani Christians understand Paul's instructions on eating food offered to idols? This question is triggered by the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice (*Eid al-Adha*), in which Muslims share

⁴ Pervaiz Sultan, "ترقی کا باعث چیزیں" in خدا کا پیار (Karachi: Fact Publications, 2017), 405

sacrificial meat with Christians. Hence, this thesis explores Pakistani Christian and Muslim perspectives on eating the meat of sacrificial animals (*qurbani ka gosht*) sacrificed during the festival of Eid al-Adha. It will also discuss, if and how Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 regarding food offered to idols relates to this festival. Whether one can eat the meat sacrificed by Muslims on this religious festival is a question that divides the Pakistani Christian community.⁵ However, this question has not been analyzed in detail before. Hence this research.

1.2 The Pakistani Context

Before describing the research problem (section 1.3), it will be helpful to take an overview of the Pakistani context in which this topic emerges.

1.2.1 History of Christianity in Pakistan

Traditions talk about St. Thomas arriving in this region to preach the gospel in the first century AD.⁶ Stephen Neill identifies two layers of the Thomas tradition in northern and southern India.⁷ Relevant to Pakistan is the northern tradition, which is found in the non-canonical Acts of Thomas. According to this document, Thomas traveled to India during the reign of King Gundaphorus.⁸ The area of the kingdom is alleged to be the ancient city of Taxila, which is now part of Pakistan's northern Punjab region. Apart from these traditions, the Christian presence in the region now known as Pakistan can be traced back to at least the third century. Hence, Christian history in Pakistan predates the birth of Islam, let alone the arrival of Muslims in the

⁵ Kamran Chaudry, "Pakistan Church offers Eid guidelines on sacrificial meat," *UCA News*, August 21, 2018, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-church-offers-eid-guidelines-on-sacrificial-meat/83127> (accessed February 3, 2024).

⁶ C. B. Firth, *An Introduction To Indian Church History*, (Delhi: ISPCCK, 2007), 2-4

⁷ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions: The Pelican History of the Church: Volume 6*, (Baltimore: Pelican, 1964), 26-28.

⁸ Neill, 26-28

region.⁹ That said, Christian missionary work and mass conversions began much later, especially in the 16th century when Portuguese missionaries arrived at the court of Emperor Akbar (1542 - 1605) of the Mughal Empire.¹⁰ Missionary work changed its course in the latter part of the 19th century. This is the era of mass conversions in Punjab (particularly Sialkot) among the low-caste communities. Ditt's conversion in the *Churha* community of caste-less menial workers in 1873 is seen as the pivotal point in the history of missions in this region.¹¹

1.2.2 Christianity in Pakistan after 1947

In Pakistan, with a population of over 20 million people, Muslims make up 96.27%. The remaining 3.73% belong to minority religious groups, with Christians being 1.59% of the population.¹² According to these numbers, Christians represent less than two percent of the country's population. That said, concerns exist about the accuracy of Christian population statistics.¹³ These concerns have to do with the methodology of how the data are collected as well as the perceived fear of identifying as a Christian.¹⁴ The marginal numbers of Christians in Pakistan can also be understood in the context of what mission studies categorize as "people groups", communities with a distinct ethnicity and language. For instance, major people groups in Pakistan include Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, Seraiki, Balochi, and Muhajirs. Among these groups are those categorized as "unreached," meaning they have little or no exposure to the

⁹ Patrick Sookhdeo considers this psychologically important "to today's Christian community to know that their faith can validly be regarded as indigenous, not as a Western import." Patrick Sookhdeo, "The Impact of Islamization on the Christian Community in Pakistan," (Doctoral Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies University of London, 1999) 9, <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/33747/1/11010520.pdf>

¹⁰ England et al., 411-412.

¹¹ Stephen Neill, *The Story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan*, (Christian Literature Society, 1970), 104; Waskom J. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India: A Study With Recommendations*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1933), 23, 44-45, 56, 185, 238.

¹² Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, "Population by Religion," <https://www.pbs.gov.pk/> (accessed February 2, 2024)

¹³ Anmol Ahmed, "Religious minorities in Pakistan: A checkered year," *Tribune*, December 27, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2393613/religious-minorities-in-pakistan-a-chequered-year> (accessed February 5, 2024)

¹⁴ Ibid

Christian faith. According to the Joshua Project (a research initiative to identify unreached ethnic groups of the world), over 100 million people in Pakistan are unreached.¹⁵ This is relevant because, despite missionary efforts, large swathes of the country's population remain non-Christian. Moreover, it also shows the geographically and ethnically restricted nature of the missionary movement. There have been some recent conversions to Christianity from the tribal low-caste Hindus in the Sindh province.¹⁶ These new believers, however, are yet to be considered part of the mainstream Christian community.¹⁷

Then there are the “secret believers” and “insiders.” These are Muslims who have converted to Christianity secretly.¹⁸ They usually retain their outward Muslim identity while inside they are Christians. It is difficult to quantify this demographic since many insiders keep their Christian identity secret. However, their presence in Pakistan cannot be denied. For example, Samuel Namaan documents examples of insiders in Sindh in his analysis and recommendations on mission work in the province.¹⁹ It is a good, albeit succinct, source that highlights the reality of secret believers in Pakistan and documents a few examples of the practices of secret believers and their relation to mainstream Muslim and Christian communities.

1.2.3 Contemporary Realities and Identity Crisis

The Pakistani Christian community is not monolithic. It is a community with “haves” and the “have-nots.”²⁰ The latter include Christians from lower castes and tribal traditions, especially

¹⁵ Joshua Project, “Pakistan,” <https://joshuaproject.net/countries/PK> (accessed February 5, 2024)

¹⁶ England et al., 412

¹⁷ Samuel Ezra Naaman, “Revisioning Outreach To Sindhi Muslims: Proposals For Christians In Pakistan,” (Doctoral Thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary, May 1999), 61

<https://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1736&context=ecommonsatsdissertations>

¹⁸ See Brother Andrew and Al Janssen, *Secret Believers*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2007)

¹⁹ Naaman, “Revisioning Outreach,” 61, 115

²⁰ England et al., 415

Dalits/Churhas. By and large, the Pakistani church is Punjabi.²¹ Plus, there is visible denominationalism. There are mainline churches, the largest of which is the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant churches include the Anglicans, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and the Salvation Army.²² There are also several independent and home churches.

These layers of socio-economic, ethno-cultural, and denominational distinctions are worth noting, though they will not be explored in detail. This brief will help us draw parallels and contrasts with the Corinthian situation in Paul's day in Chapter 3. It will also help to recommend possible solutions in Chapter 5. One more aspect is worth noting here; the reality of Islam. Christianity in Pakistan has a missionary and colonial past, but its present context is Islamic. Since its creation in 1947, Pakistan has adopted a stringent narrative of Islamic nationalism that is enshrined in the constitution and social consciousness. The former declares Islam as the state religion, and all laws should be in line with Islam.²³ This "institutional emphasis on Islam underplays Pakistan's pluralism."²⁴

Moreover, the primary identity in Pakistan is religious. This can be observed and documented on several levels. For example, consider the popular slogan *Pakistan ka Matlab Kya? La Illaha Illal Allah!* (translation: What is the meaning of Pakistan?... There is no God but Allah) coined in 1943.²⁵ Thus, in popular political slogans, to be Pakistani means to make the Islamic confession. According to Sharif and Hussain, "This slogan shows the religious identity of Pakistan too."²⁶ 80 years after this slogan was invented, a survey revealed that "a majority of Pakistan's internet

²¹ Sookhdeo, "The Impact of Islamization," 50; Naaman, "Revisioning Outreach," 52

²² England et al., 412

²³ Iftikhar H. Malik, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*, (Minority Rights Group International: 2002), 16.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 22

²⁵ Muhammad Mujahid Sharif and Mahboob Hussain, "Islamic Slogans in Pakistani Politics," *INKISHAF* 3, no. 09 (2023): 18.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 19.

users consider themselves ‘Muslim first, Pakistani second.’”²⁷ Pakistani author and cultural critic Nadeem F. Paracha concedes this fact when he says that “even 75 years after Pakistan’s creation, most Pakistanis still call themselves Muslims first and then Pakistani.”²⁸ Paracha would also distinguish between “Muslim” and “Islamic” in terms of politics.²⁹ The former means a territory ruled or governed by Muslims, such as the Mughals in India. The latter, however, refers to a political ideology rooted in Islam, which is the case with Pakistan.³⁰ Moreover, Pakistan is **among those** countries where one’s religion is mentioned on the passport. It reaffirms the emphasis on religious, rather than national, identity.³¹ In such a scenario, non-Muslim Pakistanis are seen as outsiders or not full citizens, regardless of their social class or ethnicity. For example, Pakistani Christians are often perceived as belonging to the West, rather than “sons of the soil.”³² When Western countries attack Muslim countries or offend the religious sentiments of Muslims, Christians in Pakistan often become scapegoats.³³ Individual Christians, communities, and Christian buildings are attacked, resulting in loss of life, limb, and property.³⁴ These two realities of religious identity and the otherness of religious minorities in Pakistan indicate that Christians are not equal citizens in the country. This aspect is critical to our discussion on Eid-al-Adha. It is in this context that the problem statement is framed.

²⁷ “Tribune survey: Online Pakistanis ‘Muslim’ first, ‘Pakistani’ second,” *Tribune*, February 16, 2012, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/337202/tribune-survey-online-pakistanis-%E2%80%98muslim%E2%80%99-first-%E2%80%98pakistani%E2%80%99-second> (accessed May 30, 2024)

²⁸ Nadeem F. Paracha, *The Reluctant Republic: Ethos and Mythos of Pakistan*, (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2022), 129; I would argue, based on my observation, that most Pakistani Christians would also say the same thing.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 129-130

³⁰ *Ibid*, 130

³¹ “Religion column in passports,” *Business Recorder*, February 10, 2005, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/3128154/religion-column-in-passports-20050210175286> (accessed July 10, 2024)

³² Sookhdeo, “The Impact of Islamization,” 99

³³ Malik, 22

³⁴ *Ibid*, 22

1.3 Problem Statement

In Pakistan, Eid-al-Adha celebrations put Pakistani Christians in a quandary. This annual Islamic feast recalls Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.³⁵ It is incumbent upon all Muslims who can afford to sacrifice animals at this festival. It is a time of celebration, but also a time of charity as Muslims are required to share the sacrificial meat with their family, friends, and the poor.³⁶ In this scenario, they may share some of this meat with a Christian. This gives us birth to a conflict: to eat or not to eat? Pakistani-born former Anglican Bishop Michael Nazir Ali writes indicates this conflict in his writings when he says that “in the Muslim context there is a recurrent problem of Christians who want to know whether it is permissible to eat the meat of sacrificial animals at the Muslim feast of ‘Eid-ul-Adhā. The answer that is often given is that such meat should be avoided.”³⁷ The Muslim research scholar Farman Ali also notes this in research on contextual theology of the Eucharist. He notes that those who abstain from eating sacrificial meat on Eid-al-Adha consider themselves “true Christians.”³⁸ Kamran Chaudhry, a Pakistani Christian journalist, also highlights this conflict in one of his news articles published in 2018.³⁹ He explains that Pakistani Catholics find no theological problem with Eid-al-Adha, viewing the religious festival as a commemoration of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.⁴⁰ The identity of the son is a subject of debate.⁴¹ Muslims believe it was Ishmael whereas Jews and Christians have always claimed that it was Isaac.

³⁵ “Id al-Adha,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, ed. John Esposito (Oxford University Press, 2003), 131

³⁶ “Id al-Adha,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 131

³⁷ Michael Nazir Ali, *Frontiers in Muslims-Christians Encounter*, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1991), 122-123

³⁸ Farman Ali, “The contextualisation of Christian Eucharistic worship in Pakistan,” *Practical Theology*, (2022): 9

³⁹ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Abdelilah Ljamai, “Sacrifice and Islamic Identity,” in *Sacrifice in Modernity: Community, Ritual, Identity*, eds. Joachim Duyndam et al., (Brill, 2017), 224.

Regardless of the identity of the son, Pakistani Catholic officials maintain that there is no theological problem with the festival.⁴² This article references Vatican II, perhaps to *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration On The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions.⁴³ This declaration says that both Islam and Christians revere Abraham as an esteemed figure and a man of faith.⁴⁴ Hence, Pakistani Roman Catholic priests interpret this to mean that Christians should not have a problem with appreciating Eid-al-Adha, which in Islam, is a memorial of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.⁴⁵ They believe that "we should abide by cultural norms and share the happiness of our Muslim siblings."⁴⁶

However, there are also Christians who call this festival "the devil's sacrifice."⁴⁷ One example of a pastor who preaches this view is Imran Nasir of the Church of The Nazarene, Pakistan. He made a short video on YouTube titled "Qarbani ka Goshat. Can Christians Eat Eid Ul Adha Meat in Urdu (Bible 1 Corinthians 10 25-28)"⁴⁸ In this video, using 1 Corinthians as his text, Imran Nasir condemns the Muslim Festival of Sacrifice as a counterpoint to the sacrifice of Jesus. Thus, if a Christian eats this meat, he denies the unicity of Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins. This is not an isolated view. Imran Nasir is one of the dozens of Pakistani Christians who have made similar videos on YouTube, some of which will be described in the thesis. This video has almost 74000 views and 267 comments, which is a good view-to-engagement ratio, indicating that the

⁴² Chaudry, "Pakistan Church offers Eid guidelines on sacrificial meat," 2018

⁴³ Vatican II "Declaration On The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* Proclaimed By His Holiness Pope Paul Vi On October 28, 1965," Vatican, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra_aetate_en.html (accessed April 24 2024).

⁴⁴ Vatican II "Declaration On The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* Proclaimed By His Holiness Pope Paul Vi On October 28, 1965,"

⁴⁵ Ljamai, "Sacrifice and Islamic Identity," 221

⁴⁶ Chaudry, "Pakistan Church offers Eid guidelines on sacrificial meat," 2018

⁴⁷ Chaudry, "Pakistan Church offers Eid guidelines on sacrificial meat," 2018,

⁴⁸ Imran Nasir, "Qarbani ka Goshat | Can Christians Eat Eid Ul Adha Meat," *Gospel 49*, Aug 9, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-gWPwSm30w> (accessed Feb 3rd, 2024).

views of the video are genuine. A cursory glance at the comments on Nasir's shows that most people agree with his analysis. Again, this indicates the fact that many Christians, mostly Protestants, view participation in the Feast of Sacrifice to be at odds with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

In the last couple of years, even Muslim scholars have started to speak on the issue, i.e., whether or not they can share this meat with Christians or not. One can see a short video clip of Mufti Akmal, where he says when distributing the meat of the sacrifice, preference should be given to Muslims, but there is nothing unlawful about sharing this meat with non-Muslims.⁴⁹ He said this in response to a question, and this video is a small section from a program aired on national television. It indicates that there is some tension or debate concerning the sharing of meat sacrificed on Eid within the Pakistani Muslim community as well. The reluctance to share and receive sacrificial meat may also have to do with the question of religious identity, and not just with the nature of the sacrifice. Islamic scholars like Abdelilah Ljamai argue that the identity of the child to be sacrificed (Isaac or Ishmael) also has to do with contemporary group identities. He notes that "many Islamic scholars emphasize that the story concerns Ismail and not Ishaq, because this interpretation is an essential element of their religious identity."⁵⁰ How far this is true in the context of Pakistan will be discussed in the thesis. The challenge of identity has been described in section 1.2.3.

⁴⁹ "Ghair Muslim Ko Qurbani Ka Gosht De Saktay Hain? | Mufti Akmal | ARY Qtv"
<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/seTPCG9EhbU>

⁵⁰ Ljamai, "Sacrifice and Islamic Identity," 229

There is a third dimension to this debate: the reality of secret believers or insiders.⁵¹ Such secret believers would, in most cases, participate in the religious life of their Muslim community.⁵² They reject or reinterpret “aspects of “Islamic theology which are incompatible with the Bible.”⁵³ For them, the issue is not just eating the meat of sacrifice, but also participating in the ritual itself, whether as part of a group of other secret believers or with their Muslim families. [This thesis will also discuss whether Eid-al-Adha as a whole or certain aspects of it have to be rejected or reinterpreted \(i.e. “Christianized”\).](#)

These three dimensions show the actuality and relevance of this topic in the Pakistani context. The discussion among Christians is multi-layered. On the one hand, there is the challenge of having good relations with the Muslim community as fellow citizens of Pakistan. [Does that mean, however, that Christians should participate in Islamic festivals or share meals on religious occasions with Muslims?](#) To what extent can one share meals with Muslims, if, in the minds of many Christians, it may lead to denying the sacrifice of Jesus and compromising our faith? Herein lies the dilemma, especially in the context of Eid al-Adha in Pakistan. As indicated in the introduction, currently the Pakistani Christian community thinks in terms of yes and no. Yet, like in Corinth, this cannot be answered with a few rules of thumb in Pakistan.⁵⁴ Instead, it is more helpful to ask the right questions.

⁵¹ Section 1.2.1

⁵² [There is no specific data to document this. The researcher has observed secret believers celebrating this festival in Pakistan. Scholars from other Muslim contexts say otherwise. See Bernard Dutch, “Should Muslims Become Christians?,” *The International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Volume 17, Number 1, \(January-March 2000\): 20](#)

⁵³ This is not a uniform group and represents a spectrum of belief and practices. See John Travis, ‘The C-1 to C-6 Spectrum,’ *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34:4 (October 1998): 408; Bernhard J. G. Reitsma, *Vulnerable Love: Islam, the Church and the Triune God* (Langham Global Library: 2020), 123.

⁵⁴ Reitsma, 77

1.4 Research Question

The main research question is: **What can we learn from Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 8-10 for Christians-Muslim engagement in a Neo-Calvinist perspective, with special attention to the eating of sacrificial meat in Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan?**

1.4.1 Sub-questions

- What is Eid-al-Adha in the Muslim perspective?
 - What are the religious and cultural practices of Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan?
 - What is the theological meaning of sacrifice in Islam?
 - Who do Muslims sacrifice to? (concept of God)
 - How essential is the identity of the son (Isaac or Ishmael) to Muslims?
 - What is the general practice of Pakistani Muslims for sharing sacrificial meat with Christians?
- How do Christians in Pakistan perceive this question of eating sacrificial meat on Eid-al-Adha?
 - What are the main arguments for and against eating sacrificial meat?
 - How does Eid-al-Adha relate to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross?
 - How do Pakistani Christians relate to the identity (Isaac or Ishmael) debate?
- What can we learn from Paul's teaching about food offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 considering the discussion on Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan?
 - How do Pakistani Biblical scholars use 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 in this respect?

- What are the differences and comparisons between the Corinthian context and today's Pakistani context?
- How do Paul's teachings relate to the sacrificial meat of Eid?
- How do Paul's teachings on other gods/idols relate to Allah/the Islamic concept of God?
- What can Neo-Calvinism contribute to this discussion?
 - How can we understand the question of participation in Eid-al Adha in the light of the Christian worldview as espoused by Albert Wolters?
 - How does Abraham's Kuyper lecture on "Calvinism and Religion" inform this discussion?
 - How does Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen's work on pluralism inform this discussion?
 - What conclusions, recommendations, or questions for further research emerge from analyzing the main thesis topic from a Neo-Calvinist perspective?
 - How can Neo-Calvinism provide practical guidelines or recommendations for Christians regarding participation in Eid-al-Adha?

1.5 Research Method

Considering the research questions (section 1.4), this thesis has three broad goals; i) to describe the perceptions of Pakistan Christians and Muslims on sacrificial meat, ii) to explore Paul's teaching on food offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, and iii) to [use Neo-Calvinist concepts of worldview and pluralism as a theological framework for a theological analysis of i\) and ii\).](#)

1.5.1 Pakistani Christian and Muslim Perception of Sacrificial Meat

First, the researcher will describe the beliefs and practices of Muslims and Christians in Pakistan regarding Eid-al-Adha, specifically the sharing of meat. This description will occupy chapter 2.

The main sources used in this chapter are books, journal articles, news articles, and YouTube videos. The last of these sources are especially relevant because the sheer abundance of

YouTube videos on the topic demonstrate the importance of this topic in the Pakistani Christian community.⁵⁵ These videos have been created by theologians, pastors, and even lay persons.

The researcher has opted to utilize literary and online sources instead of surveys and interviews to document the perceptions of Pakistani Christians regarding sacrificial meat. It is primarily due to time constraints. Moreover, performing surveys and interviews with a meaningful sample size requires the researcher to be on ground. It is a project that requires volunteers who can help the researcher answer questions. Digital permeation and literacy are two significant challenges to quantitative research among Pakistani Christians, which means one requires handouts and in-person conversations. This challenge can be exacerbated by the possibility that many people would not want to go on record with their views on Eid-al-Adha. This was noted by Kamran Chaudary in his article on Eid-al-Adha.⁵⁶

Furthermore, while interviews and surveys can provide nuances, but the researcher estimates that they will not reveal something significantly different from this desk research. Pakistani Christians are not monolithic, but their views on Eid-al-Adha seem uniform, regardless of their geographical location in Pakistan.⁵⁷ For example, the Lutheran Bishop of Mardan (northern

⁵⁵ One can simply type “qurbani ka gosht Christian” in the Youtube search bar to observe this

⁵⁶ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

⁵⁷ Or even outside Pakistan. All Pakistani Christians that the researcher encountered in The Netherlands are against eating Eid-al-Adha meat. The pastor of the “Light of God” Urdu church in Rotterdam told the researcher that he did a study group with his members on not eating sacrificial meat.

Pakistan) Jimmy Matthew notes that “Catholics are more open to sacrificial meat than Protestants.”⁵⁸ This coincides with what a Catholic lady in Karachi (southern Pakistan) says: “Many of my Muslim friends send us meat every year. I happily accept it with thanks.”⁵⁹ Or a Catholic priest in Lahore (central-eastern Pakistan).⁶⁰ Maybe quantitative research may reveal more differences. Maybe not.

The data from the sources used in this chapter will be analyzed using Dutch theologian Jos Colijn’s BBBE model of contextual appropriation. BBBE is an abbreviation of **Believing, Belonging, Behaving, and Experiencing**.⁶¹ It is a method of doing theology in context, recognizing that theological claims and practices are multi-faceted. For example, theological aspects specific to Eid-al-Adha have to do with **believing**, while the act of sharing and eating has to do with **behavior**. The question of consuming meat also affects one’s relationship with God and the neighbor, (**belonging**). It also has to do with friendship, kinship, work partnerships, and group identity. In doing so, we cannot leave out the element of **experience** of performing the sacrifice and partaking in it.

By examining these aspects, we may uncover complex perspectives at play. It will be done in recognition of the pitfalls of this method, which include the fact that an exact demarcation between the four aspects is not always precise.⁶² The BBBE model will help describe and analyze the different aspects of Eid-al-Adha systematically.

⁵⁸ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church;” The article incorrectly refers to him as a “Church of Pakistan bishop.”

⁵⁹ Rock Ronald Rozario, “Celebrating Eid al-Adha in South Asia” UCA News, September 24, 2015 https://www.ucanews.com/news/celebrating-eid-al-adha-in-south-asia/7432_1 (accessed 10th July 2024)

⁶⁰ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

⁶¹ Jos Colijn, “Testing the Waters: Infant Baptism as a Case Study for Doing Reformed Theology Interculturally,” (Doctoral Dissertation: Protestant Theological University, 2023), 18-19.

⁶² Colijn, “Testing the Waters” 23-24.

1.5.2 Paul's Teaching on Food Offered to Idols

1 Corinthians is the go-to text for Pakistani Christians in the context of Eid-al-Adha. Hence, an exegetical overview of these chapters is required, which will occupy Chapter 3. This will be done using commentaries of Pakistani and Western contexts. Three major Urdu Bible translations will be used in this chapter: Catholic Bible Commission Version, Pakistan Bible Society (Protestant) Version, and the Urdu Geo Version (Insider translation). Comparison will be made to discover whether differences in the translation of 1 Corinthians has any bearing on how readers understanding Paul's teaching on sacrificial food.

1.5.3 Using Neo-Calvinism to Analyze Eid-al-Adha

In Chapter 4, the findings from chapters 2 and 3 will be analyzed in light of Neo-Calvinism. The researcher recognizes the broadness of this theological tradition, which is why this thesis will use selected authors. Thus, Eid-al-Adha will be analyzed using the criterion of religion provided by Abraham Kuyper and the Creation-Fall-Redemption worldview model Albert M. Wolters.⁶³ Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen's description of pluralism and dialogical theocentrism can be used to analyze Christian-Muslim public relations in the Pakistani context.⁶⁴

To be clear, this is not an attempt to make a case for doing neo-Calvinist theology in the Pakistani context. On the contrary, one of the aims of this thesis is to demonstrate how neo-Calvinism provides a viable method of intercultural and interreligious theological analysis in the researcher's context. Bringing a Neo-Calvinist perspective to the conversation can be helpful for analyzing, commenting on, and suggesting solutions for a contemporary situation involving sacrificial food.

⁶³ Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism and Religion" in Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1931), 58-59; Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.

⁶⁴ Mouw, Richard J., and Sander Griffioen. *Pluralisms and Horizons: An Essay in Christian Public Philosophy*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993.

The recommendations will be on several levels, such as celebrating religious festivals, Muslim-Christian public relations, theological dialogue, sharing our faith with others, and doing theology and exegesis in the Pakistani context.

Why neo-Calvinism? The researcher was introduced to this theological tradition during the course of his studies at the Theological University and it was identified as a viable theological framework for analyzing Christian topics of contextual relevance in Pakistan. Neo-Calvinism is indeed Western, but it is also critical of Western thought, especially post-Enlightenment humanism and rationalism.⁶⁵ Moreover, neo-Calvinism has the capacity to serve the theological needs of the global church.⁶⁶ For instance, neo-Calvinism espouses a high view of scriptures, which Pakistani Christians can relate to.⁶⁷ The neo-Calvinist emphasis on creation can also help Christians engage with Islamic teachings of creation to find commonalities against the “mechanical” view of the origins of life.⁶⁸ More examples can be cited, but these do hint at the contextual possibilities provided by neo-Calvinism in Pakistan.

1.6 Researcher’s Position

I will describe my position in line with the Pakistani situation documented in section 1.2. I am a third-generation Christian, ethnically Punjabi, but born and brought up in urban Sindh (Karachi). I belong to the Church of Pakistan, which is a united church with an Anglican outlook.⁶⁹ I have been involved in theological education, (non-ordained) pastoral ministry, and media evangelism

⁶⁵ Kuyper, “Calvinism and Science” in *Lectures on Calvinism*, 121; Richard Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 9-10.

⁶⁶ Richard Mouw, “Neo-Calvinism: A Theology for the Global Church in the 21st Century” Herman Bavinck Lecture, Theological University Kampen, June 1, 2015

⁶⁷ Kuyper, “Calvinism and Science,” 56

⁶⁸ Observe the similarities, for example, between the Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck and Pakistani Muslim Theologian Abu Ala Maududi on how they describe the scientific and moral inadequacies of “Darwinism” in Herman Bavinck, “Creation or Development?” and Salman Hameed, “Maududi on Evolution,” Irtiqa, <https://www.irtiqa-blog.com/2009/07/maududi-on-evolution.html> (accessed 7th August, 2024)

⁶⁹ England et al., 412

in Karachi, hence my triple interest of scholarship, pastoral concern, and evangelism when I write this thesis. While doing research, however, I am beginning to see socio-political factors within the debate on sacrificial meat as well, which will be highlighted in the thesis.

1.7 Summary

To sum up, this thesis explores the Christian-Muslim perceptions of Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan, particularly the sharing of sacrificial meat, in light of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10. The findings will then be analyzed and reflected upon using selected voices from the neo-Calvinist tradition.

Chapter 2 - Christian-Muslim Perceptions of Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan

This chapter describes the beliefs and practices of Muslims and Christians in Pakistan regarding the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid-al-Adha), specifically the sharing of sacrificial meat. [As indicated in Section 1.5.1, the researcher will use literature and online sources to explore the perceptions of Christian and Muslims regarding Eid-al-Adha.](#) The facets of this discussion will be analyzed using the BBBE model of contextual appropriation.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Section 1.5.1

2.1 Pakistani Muslims and Ritual Sacrifice

A brief description of Christians in Pakistan has been made in section 1.1.3. Here we begin with an overview of the Muslims in Pakistan, who are not a monolithic group either. Although Pakistan Muslims belong predominantly to the Sunni sect and the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence, sectarianism is a reality in the country.⁷¹ Major segments of the population also practice what is known as “folk Islam.”⁷² Socioeconomic and ethnic distinctions are also visible within the Muslim community.⁷³ This chapter will only highlight those beliefs and practices of Muslims on Eid-al-Adha that can be [generally observed and documented](#). With this brief overview, let us proceed to the BBBE analysis of Eid-al-Adha. To keep things focused, we will try to answer the questions relating to the concept of God, the nature of sacrifice, the question of identity, and the practice of sharing/receiving the meat of sacrifice.

2.2 Eid-al-Adha: Believing - Muslims

The act of believing can be distinguished as “to believe that” and “to believe in.”⁷⁴ The former refers to mental assent to propositional truths, while the latter refers to “a relationship and an act of believing.”⁷⁵ Both these dimensions can be observed in the Feast of Sacrifice, though they are not always distinguishable. What do Muslims believe about Eid-al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice?

⁷¹ See “Islamic sects in contemporary Pakistan” in Eamon Murphy, *Islam and Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: The Terror Within* (Taylor & Francis, 2018).

⁷² Warren Larson, “Ordinary Muslims in Pakistan and the Gospel,” in *Margins of Islam: Ministry in Diverse Muslim Contexts*, eds. Gene Daniels and Warrick Farah (William Carey Publishing, 2018), 82.

⁷³ Paracha, 24-28

⁷⁴ Colijn, “Testing the Waters” 19

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

2.2.1 Sacrifice of Commemoration

To them, it is a reenactment of the story of how God (Allah) tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son.⁷⁶ Abraham obeys God, and in turn, God rescues the son by providing an animal for sacrifice. In commemoration of this event, Muslims sacrifice animals on Eid-al-Adha every year during the Islamic month of pilgrimage (*Hajj*).⁷⁷ The celebration of this feast corresponds to the “believing that” factor.

2.2.2 Pillars of Faith

Islam has five pillars (the declaration of faith, prayer, alms-giving, fasting, and pilgrimage).⁷⁸ It also has six articles of faith (belief in Allah, the angels, the prophets, divine books, the Day of Resurrection, and predestination).⁷⁹ The Feast of Sacrifice corresponds with the former because it is performed in the month of pilgrimage. It is a sacrifice to God, which affirms the belief in monotheism.⁸⁰ It also corresponds with the six articles of faith because the feast is about belief in God, scriptures, and prophets. By sacrificing animals on Eid-al-Adha, Muslims affirm their belief in God. They also uphold the Qur’anic version of this story, which describes the faith of Abraham, whom Muslims believe as one of the major prophets in Islam.⁸¹

⁷⁶ “Id al-Adha,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 131

⁷⁷ *Ibid*

⁷⁸ “Pillars of Islam,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 247

⁷⁹ “Articles of Faith,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 22

⁸⁰ Ahmad Imam Shafaq Hashemi and Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdudi, *Worship in Islam: An In-Depth Study of ‘Ibadah, Salah and Sawm* (New York: Kube Publishing Ltd, 2015), 163

⁸¹ Hashemi and Mawdudi, 163; “Abraham” in *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 4

2.2.3 Drawing Closer to God

What about the “believing in” aspect? According to Muslim scholars, the act of animal sacrifice draws one near to God Allah.⁸² The Qur’an teaches in chapter 22 and verses 36-37 that it is not the meat or blood of the animal that reaches God, but the intention of the one who made the sacrifice. An Islamic tradition also states that the reward of the sacrifice is given by God even before the blood of the animal falls on the ground.⁸³ This implies, as shall be discussed later, that the Eid-al-Adha sacrifice does not have the Levitical understanding of atonement where the blood of the animal seems essential to the efficacy of the sacrifice (Leviticus 17:11). The sacrifice has a physical form - the act of slaughtering an animal - but also carries a spiritual dimension, which is selflessness and devotion to God. Muslims celebrate this feast to affirm their belief in the i) oneness of God, ii) prophethood of Abraham, and iii) integrity of the scriptural (Qur’anic) accounts of this story. Muslims also seek to be closer to God through this sacrifice.

2.3 Believing - Christians

What do Pakistani Christians believe about Eid-al-Adha? Theological opinions are divided, as indicated earlier.⁸⁴ Chaudry describes the divide of the Pakistani Christian community.⁸⁵

2.3.1 A Catholic-Protestant Problem?

On the one hand, Roman Catholic scholars are committed to interfaith dialogue and better relations with Muslims.⁸⁶ This is the closest one can get to documenting an official stance from a denomination in Pakistan regarding the Feast of Sacrifice. The Vatican in the “Declaration On

⁸² HM Azhar Usama et al., “Concept of Sacrifice in Islam and Christianity (An Exploratory and Analytical Study).” *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 6, no. 11 (2022), 3364.

⁸³ Al-Tirmazi, Hadith No. 1493, quoted in Usama et al., “Concept of Sacrifice” 3366

⁸⁴ Section 1.3

⁸⁵ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

⁸⁶ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions” considers Muslims as people submitting to the one true God like Abraham did.⁸⁷ In line with the teachings of Vatican II, we can find Roman Catholic priests in Pakistan who publicly state that there is nothing wrong in eating the meat of Eid-al-Adha, with the caveat that one should “not force others to do so.”⁸⁸ We should note here that these opinions by Pakistani Roman Catholic leaders do not come in a vacuum. Chaudhary also describes briefly how the local Roman Catholic church is involved in dialogue with the Muslim community.⁸⁹ We see a well-rounded approach by the Roman Catholic Church in Pakistan regarding the Feast of Sacrifice that encompasses theological nuance, scriptural engagement, and a commitment to interfaith dialogue and harmony.

On the other hand, there are some Protestant Christians who would call Eid-al-Adha a “devil’s sacrifice.”⁹⁰ Some also say that eating the meat of the sacrifice amounts to participation in the festival, and in doing so, they deny the unicity of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.⁹¹ This argument has been put forward in several YouTube videos.⁹² The perception that Eid-al-Adha is the “devil’s sacrifice” indicates how some Pakistani Christians understand the Feast of Sacrifice in the light of 1 Corinthians 10:20 where Paul claims that pagans sacrifice to devils or demons.⁹³ This verse will be discussed in the next chapter, but for now, we can recognize the implicit claim being made by some Pakistani Christians, which is the complete opposite of what the Roman Catholic Church is claiming.

⁸⁷ Vatican II “Declaration”

⁸⁸ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Nasir, “Qurbani ka Gosht”

⁹² “Kiya Bible Muqaddas ke Mutabiq Qurbani Ka Gosht khana Christians ko mana ha?”, Christian Logician, Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5oqYsXnypM> (accessed July 3rd 2024); “Qurbani ka gosht khana chaye? || Sacrifice in Christianity || Masihi concept about sacrifices,” Emaan ka Safar, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJCo_wzx8G4 (accessed July 3rd 2024); “Qurbani ka Gosht ?,” Bible Attiya Ministry - Official, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZ1PZQfBNOs> (accessed July 3rd 2024)

⁹³ King James Version; most other English translations use “demons”

2.3.2 Eid-al-Adha and the Cross

The second perception is that Eid al-Adha is a parallel sacrifice to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and by extension, to the Eucharist. According to Farman Ali, “Punjabi Christians feel they should not eat the sacrificial meal during the Muslim festival of Eid-ul-Adhā (festival of sacrifice) arguing that the Muslim theology behind the festival contradicts the Christian theology of the Eucharist.”⁹⁴ Ali also notes that this perception is only among Protestants, not Pakistani Catholic theologians.⁹⁵ Moreover, Eid-al-Adha does not require a priestly class for the slaughter of animals. In Pakistan, the slaughter of animals is usually performed by professional and seasonal butchers. Before the sacrifice, Muslims utter a prayer affirming belief in the oneness of God, instead of asking for atonement or forgiveness.⁹⁶ The Qur’an is also against the idea of substitutionary sacrifice; everyone is responsible for their own good or bad deeds.⁹⁷

In light of these facts, the concept of some Pakistani Christians that Eid-al-Adha is a parallel sacrifice to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus is unfounded. It is reading Christian concepts into a non-Christian religious practice. This can be noted in Abdiyya Akbar Abdul Haqq’s book *Sharing Your Faith with a Muslim*. Abdiyya Akbar Haqq was an evangelist with Billy Graham’s ministry. He was the son of Abdul Haqq, one of the most prominent converts from Islam in the subcontinent.⁹⁸ Abdiyah Akbar Abdul-Haqq writes that “though the sacrifices on Id Al-Adha are considered only commemorative, some traditions and beliefs about them indicate awareness of a deeper significance of the festival.”⁹⁹ In this deeper significance, Abdiyah Akbar Haqq finds

⁹⁴ Farman Ali, “The contextualisation of Christian Eucharistic worship,” 9

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Hashemi and Mawdudi, 164

⁹⁷ Usama et al., “Concept of Sacrifice,” 3363

⁹⁸ See Abdul Haqq. *How I Came to Christ*. Henry Martyn Institute, n.d.

⁹⁹ Abdiyah Akbar Abdul-Haqq, *Sharing Your Faith With A Muslim* (Baker Publishing Group, 1980), https://www.google.nl/books/edition/Sharing_Your_Faith_With_A_Muslim/CYnq5rud3f4C?hl=en&gbpv=1 (accessed 3rd July, 2024)

similarity with the Old Testament concepts of ransom and covering of sins.¹⁰⁰ The notion of ransom is present in the Islamic version of Abraham binding his son.¹⁰¹

Such similarities can be used by Christians as a tool of evangelization and contextualization. The Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck also wrote that “all sacrifice points—in Israel and among other peoples—to the one perfect sacrifice of Christ.”¹⁰² In this sense, we may say that the Feast of Sacrifice points back to the one perfect sacrifice of Christ. We do so, however, from the standpoint of faith, i.e. since we already believe in the sacrifice of Christ, we can recognize the symbolism in other religious systems. It is, however, one thing to interpret and reflect on the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice with Christian concepts of ransom and atonement, but an entirely different thing to claim that these Christian concepts are inherent in this festival. That is simply not the case. Muslims reject the notion of blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, especially in ways in which Christians talk about Jesus’ sacrifice for sins. The perception that Eid al-Adha is a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins is thus a Christian reading of this Islamic festival which is *idiosyncratic (but not exclusive)* to the Pakistani Christian community, going back, at least, to Abdiyah Akbar Haqq. However, note that Haqq does not forbid Christians from participating in the festival.

2.3.3 Authority of Scripture

Apart from these two arguments, namely that the Feast of Sacrifice is not a sacrifice to the God of the Bible, and that it is not done for the forgiveness of sins, there is another argument related to the belief factor. That has to do with the story of Abraham sacrificing his son. In the Bible

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Quran, 37:107 “And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice”

¹⁰² Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume. 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, Translated by John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 332

(Genesis 22), the son is Isaac. However, Muslims believe that it was Ishmael. How can we account for this difference? The Muslims have a simple answer: Christians have corrupted the scriptures. Since Christians no longer have the original scriptures, they believe that it was Isaac and not Ishmael who was the child to be sacrificed.¹⁰³ Hence when Muslims publicly affirm that Ishmael was a child to be sacrificed, Christians perceive it as an attack on the truth and the veracity of the Bible. This is a (if not the) central issue of Muslim-Christian theological engagement in Pakistan. That said, while the question of the identity of the child of sacrifice has to do with beliefs, one does not find any Pakistani Christian making this their reason to not participate in the Feast of Sacrifice or reject the meat offered to them. It is, however, a bone of contention between the two communities. Protestant Christian apologists in Pakistan engage Muslims on this topic, even in public forums.¹⁰⁴ Roman Catholic leaders, as noted above, also recognize that the identity of the son is debatable.¹⁰⁵ They still insist, however, that there is no theological problem in participating in the celebration of Muslims during this feast and eating the meat of sacrifice.¹⁰⁶ In any case, the literal reading of Genesis 22 which identifies Isaac as the child who was bound is essential for Pakistani Christians. It puts us at odds with the Islamic version of the same story. This has to do with the aspect of belief, namely the authority and integrity of scriptures. Yet it also has to do with group identity, which we explore in the next section.

¹⁰³ Abdus Sattar Ghauri, *The Only Son Offered for Sacrifice: Isaac or Ishmael? with Zamzam, Al-Marwah and Makkah in the Bible* (Lahore, Al-Mawrid, 2004), 56-57, 66.

¹⁰⁴ “Abraham and The Son of Sacrifice: Isaac or Ishmael? إضحاق يا إسماعيل؟ حقيقي ذبيح كون:” Matthew Suleman Official, Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVBBtDrKMkA> (accessed 4th July 2024); “Pastor Ghazala Shafique's conversation about Zabiullah Ishmael or Isaac,” Christian Debate Academy, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkVTfp_R78A (accessed 4th July 2024)

¹⁰⁵ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

2.3.4 Secret Believers

Finally, it can be indicated how secret believers might associate with the Feast of Sacrifice as far as the aspect of believing is concerned. Generally, one can imagine that since these believers are part of the Muslim community, they would engage in this feast. In their case it is not just about eating the meat or avoiding it; they may have to perform the rituals as well. They do so while hiding their identity and contextualizing Christian beliefs in Islamic terminology. In both cases, they may participate in the festival. In this case, the Pakistani Roman Catholic stance is favorable because it teaches Christians that they can participate in this festival and eat the meat. A question that requires an answer is whether those Christians who object to the meat of sacrifice and present theological reasons to do so actually take into account the reality of the secret believers. This is because if eating or not eating the meat of Eid al-Adha is a matter of faith, then are we implying that the insider Christians lose their faith if they participate in this feast? This will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Some years ago, the researcher had the opportunity to do participant observation of Eid-al-Adha with a group of secret believers.¹⁰⁷ There was no issue with consuming the meat for both open and secret believers in this group. What I understood from the conversations was that the secret believers had purchased the animals and sacrificed them in the Islamic manner according to the feast of the sacrifice because they lived in those communities. It was not an issue of conflict or something that bothered them; they seemed “at home” with this festival. With this, we come to the aspect of belonging.

¹⁰⁷ The group was known as the “Fellowship of Believers.” See Gene R. Preston, “Pakistan’s Christian Minority,” *Christian Century*, (September 19-26 1990): 841-844; “ Also see books published by the group on Amazon https://www.amazon.com/s?i=digital-text&rh=p_27%3ATeyyeb+Saleem&s=relevancerank&text=Teyyeb+Saleem&ref=dp_byline_sr_ebooks_1 (Accessed July 4th, 2024)

2.4 Eid-al-Adha: Belonging - Muslims

Belonging is more than just an affiliation to a group or a community.¹⁰⁸ It encompasses vertical (spiritual) and horizontal (social) aspects. Thus belonging has to do with how people relate to each other and God.¹⁰⁹ How can one explore this aspect in the context of Eid al-Adha?

Belonging in the context of the Feast of Sacrifice means several things to the Pakistani Muslim community.

2.4.1 Belonging to God

To begin, they belong to God, as noted above. The sacrifice has to do with affirmation of God's oneness and is done to be closer to him. Eid celebrations begin with communal prayer, which is also how the community comes together to worship God in unison and demonstrate their belief in God's oneness.¹¹⁰

2.4.2 Belonging to the Sacrificial Animal

There is also a belonging with the animal that is sacrificed. In principle, the animal of sacrifice should be part of the household. Ideally, the Muslim household should be rearing this animal from its birth. This forms a special attachment with the animal, which makes sacrificing it a real challenge. The idea is to re-enact the sacrifice of Abraham. Like Abraham, they should feel a genuine sense of loss and grief when they sacrifice something that belongs to them. In Pakistan, especially in urban contexts, the majority of Muslims do not rear animals in the house. In many cases, they would try to purchase animals for sacrifice a month before the feast. This still gives enough time for the family to be attached to the animal.

¹⁰⁸ Colijn, "Testing the Waters," 20

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Hashemi and Mawdudi, 164

2.4.3 Belonging to the Community

Muslims also display belonging to each other when they offer community prayers and share the meat of sacrifice. In many cases, several households would pool money to buy one animal and then divide its portions among them. This is seen as an economical religiously sanctioned method of offering sacrifice. Yet this also reveals the financial aspect of the sacrifice, namely that it can only be done by only those who can afford it. The meat has to be shared with the less fortunate, which is an appreciable aspect of this feast. Yet it does highlight the socioeconomic divide, which can hamper the aspect of belonging.

2.4.4 Belonging to Christians?

Muslims may also choose to include Christians in these festivities. There is a debate within the Pakistani Muslim community about whether to share the meat of sacrifice with Christians or not.¹¹¹ There are several YouTube videos where one can see audience members asking Islamic scholars this very question. In most of these videos, the standard reply from Muslim scholars is that it is lawful to share the meat with non-Muslims. Some would add a caveat that the preference should be given to Muslims, but even then there is nothing wrong if you share this meat with people of other religions. Hence while many Muslim scholars seem open to the idea of sharing meat, there is some confusion among ordinary Muslim believers on this question. The fact that they are asking this question shows some tension regarding sharing meat.

However, some other Islamic scholars would openly state that Muslims should not share this meat with Christians. For instance, there is a video by Maulana Ilyas Qadri in which he says Muslims should not share this meat with Christians.¹¹² He does so in a derogatory way, labeling

¹¹¹ Section 1.3

¹¹² “Qurbani Ka Gosht Gair Muslim Ko Dena | Maulana Ilyas Qadri Short Bayan,” Madani Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5jUGwTROow> (accessed 10th July, 2024)

Christians as “sweepers,” which is a pejorative. This has to do with the perception of Christians in Pakistan being “churhas,” which means they are low-caste sweepers. Thus, eating and drinking with Christians becomes a matter of purity and impurity. Domestic workers and cleaning staff in households and organizations often would have separate vessels for eating and drinking. Since many Christians are employed in these professions, this creates a double discrimination.

The famous case of Asia Bibi accused and jailed for blasphemy in Pakistan is also said to have originated from the issue of Muslims and Christians drinking from the same source.¹¹³ In the Open Doors Visitors Center in Harderwijk, the Netherlands, viewers may recognize this also in an exhibition of a prison cell where Tahir Iqbal, a Pakistani convert, was imprisoned. The exhibit features his pictures, life story, and personal items (Bible, notebook, etc.) Among these personal items is a cup and plate that he used, and these items have been put on display to show that even within the prison, a Pakistani Christian man’s utensils were kept separate from Muslim inmates.¹¹⁴ It is striking evidence of the perception among Pakistani Muslims that they cannot eat and drink with Christians, which may compel them not to share the meat of sacrifice, or invite Christians into their homes for a meal on Eid-al-Adha. To be fair, Islam is not teaching them to do so. Muslims can exchange meals with Jews and Christians without defiling their faith (Qur’an chapter 5 verse 5). It shows, however, that in the Pakistani context, socioeconomic dynamics, rooted in casteism, also play a role. These are some reasons for having exclusive group identities in Pakistan when it comes to Christian-Muslim relations.

¹¹³ “Asia Bibi: “My Tears Were My Companion” *Open Doors*, February 11, 2020, <https://www.opendoors.nl/nieuws/asia-bibi-mijn-tranen-waren-mijn-metgezel/> (accessed 10th July, 2024)

¹¹⁴ “Pakistan,” *Open Doors*, <https://www.opendoors.nl/ranglijst/pakistan/> (accessed 10th July, 2024)

2.4.5 Belonging and Group Identity

Here we come again to the identity of the child to be sacrificed: Isaac or Ishmael? What is interesting is that while Muslims believe that it was Ishmael, the Qur'an does not say so explicitly.¹¹⁵ In fact, the name of the child is not mentioned in the story of the sacrifice. That's why some Muslim scholars have also recognized Isaac as a child of sacrifice. Ljamai, argues that the identity of the child has less to do with exegesis than with recognition of group identity.¹¹⁶ When Muslims say that Ishmael was the child of sacrifice, they align themselves with the Ishmaeli-Arab identity. This helps to give a new dimension to the debate. Muslim and Christian scholars in Pakistan are debating the historical accuracy of the identity of the child to be sacrificed, but they are not recognizing the theme of group identity as argued by Ljamai. From theology, we also come to the sociopolitical reality of Pakistan, where the issue of identity comes to the fore. Most Muslims in Pakistan would prefer their religious identity over their national one.¹¹⁷ Hence they would try to search for an Islamic identity, which often means that they align themselves with Saudi Arabia, where Islam originated. It is beyond the scope of this paper to expand upon how the Arab identity crept into Pakistani consciousness. Here it is sufficient to note that in the absence of a clear national or ethnic identity, Muslims in Pakistan have often looked to the broader Muslim world in search of identity, [especially Saudi Arabia](#).¹¹⁸ Apart from the political and historical practice of Pakistani Muslims of identifying with Arab history, there are also theological reasons for affirming Ishmael as the child of sacrifice. In one sense, non-Arab Muslims consider themselves also heirs to the spiritual heritage of Abraham via

¹¹⁵ Ljamai, "Sacrifice and Islamic Identity," 222-225

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 229

¹¹⁷ Section 1.2.3

¹¹⁸ Paracha, 116-118

Ishmael, just like Jews and Christians would consider themselves the same via Isaac.¹¹⁹ This will be elaborated on in the next section.

Thus in a country where religious identity is supreme, the theological group identity becomes immersed in the socio-political landscape. This reinforces the feeling of belonging within the Muslim community, who consider Pakistan as the land of Islam. It can also be exclusive to people of other faiths, who though being part of this country, feel excluded, especially during Islamic festivals.

2.5 Belonging - Christians

For Pakistani Christians, the aspect of belonging also has theological and sociopolitical aspects.

[Let us focus on the theological aspect first.](#)

2.5.1 Belonging to Christ

Christians belong to Christ, who is the son of God who died for their salvation. The saving experience is the foundation of the church.¹²⁰ Hence, if anything is perceived as contradicting or compromising this is a threat to belonging (to Christ). In the case of Eid al-Adha, the perception of Christians that it could be understood as a parallel sacrifice to the death of Jesus on the cross can create a challenge for belonging. By not partaking in the meat of sacrifice, Christians feel that they strengthen their belonging to Christ but potentially weaken their belonging to the Muslim community. On the other hand, eating meat may improve belonging with the Muslim community, whereas in the minds of many Pakistani Christians, it may hamper belonging with

¹¹⁹ Mark Harlan, "The Role of Ishmael in the Divine Drama: Act 2," *Journal of Language, Culture, and Religion* 4, no. 1 (2023): 91

¹²⁰ Pervaiz Sultan, "Living with People of Other Faiths," in Brian Wintle, ed., *South Asia Bible Commentary* (India, Open Door Publications, 2015), 1089

Christ, and also with those believers who have different beliefs and practices about this sacrifice. This will be evaluated in chapter 5.

Here again, the reality of secret believers makes the situation complex. In principle, both open and secret believers belong to the one body of Christ. Yet this belonging can be obstructed due to theological divisions on questions like eating the meat of sacrifice.

2.5.2 Belonging to Isaac (Israel)

Keeping in line with the theological aspect of belonging, Pakistani Christians would align themselves with the biblical view of history. This means, in the context of Eid al-Adha, taking a literal interpretation of Genesis 22. Christians believe that Isaac was a child of sacrifice. Unlike the Jewish people, however, Christians would see Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of the binding of Isaac, both as Isaac's descendant and the fulfillment of the son who is sacrificed. As already noted, this is an affirmation of an alternate salvation history than what Muslims are proposing. Moreover, just as Pakistani Muslims align themselves with Arab history, many Pakistani Christians associate themselves with biblical (Jewish) history, and sometimes, by extension, with the modern State of Israel.¹²¹ Sometimes there is also a debate in the local Christian communities about whether or not we should celebrate the biblical Jewish holidays.¹²² It means that hypothetically, many Pakistani Christians would not object to eating the meat of Passover, considering it a biblical feast. One wonders then, whether sharing the meat of Eid al-Adha has to do with theology or group identity.

¹²¹ Kamran Chaudhry, "Pakistan Christians urged to stop singing 'pro-Israel' psalms," *UCA News*, October 20, 2023 <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-christians-urged-to-stop-singing-pro-israel-psalms/102994> (accessed August 13, 2024); Rushna and Suleman Gilbert, "Pakistani Christian's View On Israel," *Medium*, Oct 8, 2020 <https://sgj107.medium.com/pakistani-christians-view-on-israel-3a81c28d037d>,

¹²² "؟مسیحی یہودی عیدیں کیوں نہیں مناتے؟", Why Christians do not celebrates Jews festivals," Rab TV https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WYuSIRZL9w&list=PLriPs7tyik80KtI590N13nnY6ndKH_zKk&index=9 (accessed 10th July 2024)

2.5.3 Belonging to Pakistan?

As in the case of Muslims, distinctions of theology can take the form of exclusive group identities in Pakistan due to a lack of a national identity.¹²³ Again it is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully explain how the identity crisis of Pakistan as a country affects the Christian community. What can be noted here is that within the Christian community, there is a feeling of not fully belonging to the land as their home. One of the common recognizable themes of Pakistani Christian discourse is the fact that we are the “sons of the soil.”¹²⁴ It also has to do with the historical fact that the arrival of Christianity in the region now known as Pakistan predates the arrival of Islam.¹²⁵ In addition to this, the Christian community is aware of its participation in the Pakistan freedom movement. In fact, it is often said that if Christian politicians had not voted in favor of Pakistan, the country would never have been independent. Therefore, the contemporary state of the community is [sometimes seen as](#), in the words of Patrick Sookhdeo, a “betrayal;” Christians played a part in making Pakistan free, but now their freedoms are taken away.¹²⁶ This sense of betrayal and alienation is reinforced during Islamic festivals like Eid al-Adha. The overt religious displays of the Muslim majority (considered as expressions of freedom in their own country) can have the opposite effect on religious minorities who might feel excluded.

2.5.4 Belonging - Secret Believers

Finally, where do secret believers belong? With the Muslim community, a local church, or with each other? It is easy and perhaps simplistic to say that they belong to Jesus. Theologically true,

¹²³ Section 2.4.5

¹²⁴ Section 1.2.3

¹²⁵ Sookhdeo, “The Impact of Islamization,” 99

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 304-205

but what does it mean in practice concerning their social identity, freedom, and safety in Pakistan? Hence, the recognition of group and identity dynamics in Pakistan must be considered before theologizing the question of consuming Eid-al-Adha meat.¹²⁷

2.6 Eid-al-Adha: Behaving - Muslims

Behaving in the context of Eid-al-Adha has to do with the way this festival is celebrated in Pakistan. And likewise, how Christians participate in or respond to this festival, particularly the sharing of meat. Eid-al-Adha is generally celebrated in Pakistan as follows.

2.6.1 Preparations

Traditionally, Eid-al-Adha preparations can begin weeks, if not months, before the festival. People purchase animals and keep them in their homes or communal spaces in the neighborhood. Eid-al-Adha celebrations usually last three days, but the sacrifice is usually performed on the first day.

2.6.2 Celebrations

The celebrations begin with communal prayers in the mosque in the morning, after which animals are slaughtered in homes, mosques, or other communal spaces. Once the animal has been slaughtered, the meat is divided into portions for personal consumption and sharing with others. Concerning the sharing of meat, most Muslims have no problem sharing this meat with Christians, especially Christian relatives, colleagues, or neighbors.¹²⁸ The same goes for inviting

¹²⁷ Or any theme of contextual theology

¹²⁸ Rozario, "Celebrating Eid al-Adha in South Asia"

Christians for a meal where the sacrificial animal is cooked. When there is reluctance to share meat, it may also have to do with the perception of Christians being unclean.¹²⁹

2.6.3 The Act of Sacrifice

There is one aspect of behavior that ties in with believing and belonging. It has to do with Islam, from a Christian view, being a “works-based religion.” Muslims seek to be close to God through good deeds, which constitutes their behavior. In Islam, there is no fall or original sin that separates God and man. Thus humans can get close to God through proper behavior. In the case of Eid-al-Adha, it means performing the sacrifice in the religiously prescribed manner.

It must be noted, however, that concerning behavior, Pakistani Muslims do not celebrate this festival in the most hygienic or aesthetic manner. This was especially documented during COVID times, when it was (correctly) noted by experts that animal “markets lack compliance with safety and health protocols” and “in-house slaughtering of animals by non-professional butchers is a common practice in Pakistan.”¹³⁰ Animals are not only kept and sold in unhygienic spaces, but how they are transported, handled, and slaughtered is often brutal and unethical. It is also common for animals tied outside their homes to break their cords and run around aimlessly, endangering themselves and others. Plus, since many people sacrifice animals on roads and streets, it is common to see blood and animal remains left all over the place, only to be cleaned up after the Eid celebrations are over. This creates ethical and environmental concerns. Once again though, this is not why certain Christians object to this feast. Yet, it has to do with a lack of civil etiquette and weak law enforcement on one hand and overt displays of religion on the other.

¹²⁹ Section 2.4.4; Sara Singha, “Christians in Pakistan and Afghanistan: Responses to Marginalization from the Peripheries,” in Daniel Philpott et al., eds, *Under Caesar's Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 239

¹³⁰ T.H. Mallhi et al, “Celebrating Eid-ul-Adha in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan: potential threats and precautionary measures,” *Clinical Microbiology and Infection*, July 22, 2020.

Thus, the display of religiosity in Pakistan often comes with disregard for other people's health, safety, privacy, and freedom to not participate in a religious festival. This happens around the year. For instance, restaurants are closed during the day in the month of fasting (Ramadan). You can even get beaten up if you eat in public this month!¹³¹ This over-religiosity dilutes the religious freedoms of those who do not want to participate in Islamic festivals and rituals, which is perhaps another manifestation of the identity issue discussed previously.

2.7 Behaving - Christians

The question for Christians on Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan is whether to participate or not. Precisely: to eat the meat or not? Answering yes or no leads to different behaviors.

2.7.1 Accepting Sacrificial Meat

First, those who eat the meat do so for friendship and interfaith harmony.¹³² They also do so simply for getting meat. It means that when meat is shared with the poor, the recipients can also be Christians who accept it because they cannot afford to have meat otherwise. Sometimes, poor Christians may ask for meat from Muslims who perform the sacrifice.¹³³ To many in the Pakistani Christian community, this is seen as a lack of dignity and a source of shame when Christians ask or "beg" for meat. Pastor Imran Nasir makes this implication when he says to those who eat sacrificial meat: "will you compromise your faith for a little meat?"¹³⁴ The implication here is that those who eat the meat of sacrifice are poor or gluttonous. The parish

¹³¹ Diaa Hadid, "Breaking Pakistan's Ramadan Fasting Laws Has Serious Consequences," *NPR*, <https://www.npr.org/2018/05/25/614315937/breaking-pakistan-s-ramadan-fasting-laws-have-serious-consequences> (accessed 10th July 2024)

¹³² Rozario, "Celebrating Eid al-Adha in South Asia"

¹³³ "Is it impermissible to give qurbani meat to non-Muslims?" *Stack Exchange* <https://islam.stackexchange.com/questions/49672/is-it-impermissible-to-give-qurbani-meat-to-non-muslims> (accessed 10th July 2024)

¹³⁴ Nasir, "Qurbani ka Gosha"

priest whom I assisted for several years also told me that the reason most pastors discourage people from eating sacrificial meat is because otherwise, they “all go out begging for meat.” Here again one can see classist perceptions at play, but it also shows the non-theological motives of theological discourse in the Pakistani Christian community.

We have also seen that Roman Catholic leaders would encourage participation in the Feast of Sacrifice for interfaith harmony, while lay Roman Catholics would do so for friendship. Plus, secret believers, for the most part, participate in this festival. I once joined such a celebration myself.¹³⁵ Hence, it is insulting and dismissive to assign meat eating as the sole reason for participation in Eid-al-Adha, even if some poor Christians do ask for or accept sacrificial meat as charity.

2.7.2 Rejecting Sacrificial Meat

What about those who do not eat sacrificial meat? They may refuse to accept the meat, but for the most part, they receive it but do not consume it. Lutheran bishop Jimmy Matthew says “I accept the meat from visitors but distribute it among neighbors.”¹³⁶ Here is a leader of a denomination who does not eat the meat, but also does not decline it. This is the observable common practice of many Pakistani Christians who do not want to consume Eid-al-Adha meat. They may do so for politeness or out of fear of offending Muslims.

To sum up, Pakistani Christian behavior regarding Eid-al-Adha meat broadly falls into two camps: Those who eat (mostly Roman Catholics and secret believers) and those who don’t (mostly Protestants).

¹³⁵ Section 2.3.4

¹³⁶ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

2.8 Eid-al-Adha: Experiencing - Muslims

Finally, we come to the aspect of the experience, which has to do with what a Pakistani Muslim or Christian “feels” during the Festival of Sacrifice. Experiences are subjective, yet they are essential for a thorough overview of how people relate to religious and cultural practices.¹³⁷

2.8.1 Experience of Celebration

Generally, for Muslims in Pakistan, Eid-al-Adha is a source of joy and celebration. It is a special occasion that brings the community together to pray and sacrifice animals, which also aims at bringing them near to God. The act of sharing meat or hosting meals also adds to the experience of togetherness. So, along with the “exuberant joy” of the festival, “Muslims experience peace in their lives through their relationship with God; it gives their lives meaning and fulfillment.”¹³⁸

There is also a sense of pride and privilege, which comes with the freedom to celebrate religious festivals openly, maybe more openly than, for example, India or the Netherlands, where Muslims are a minority and have to abide by the laws of the land on animal slaughter and communal assembly.

2.8.2 Experience of Exclusion

These positive experiences may not be shared by everyone. For instance, the financial aspects of this festival can make some people ashamed of their lack of resources. Television and social media become filled with displays of expensive animals (and the people who buy them), which reinforces the socio-economic divide between the elite and the masses. This experience is similar to, let’s say, not wearing new clothes on Christmas, which can diminish the celebratory power of

¹³⁷ Colijn, “Testing the Waters,” 21

¹³⁸ Reitsma, 82

the festival. Moreover, not every Muslim wants to celebrate. Reluctance to participate can stem from various reasons; liberalism, lack of money, ethical concerns, animal rights, and even theological reasons.¹³⁹ Yet, the public (and intrusive) nature of Eid-al-Adha celebrations in Pakistan does not consider the experience of Muslims who do not want to participate in the sacrifice. They are either forced to participate, mocked, or have their faith questioned. **The worst examples of exclusion come from the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan, who experience harassment and violence from fundamentalists and the police during Eid-al-Adha celebrations.¹⁴⁰ In the case of Ahmadiyyas, they are refused participation in the festival.**

2.9 Experiencing - Christians

The discussion so far shows that the experience of Pakistani Christians regarding Eid-al-Adha depends on their attitudes on the nature of sacrifice.

2.9.1 Experience of the Eucharist

Bishop Jimmy Matthews says “Christ, as the Lamb of God, sacrificed himself for our sins and we share his blood and meat during the sacrament of Holy Communion.”¹⁴¹ Thus, the concept is to avoid the meat of Eid-al-Adha in favor of the “meat of Jesus.” The true experience of partaking in sacrificial elements is thus, for many Pakistani Christians, realized in the holy communion meal. It is quite paradoxical, however, that Roman Catholics (having a high view of

¹³⁹ Mohammed Hashas, “Revisiting the Religious Practice of Eid al-Adha. Public Good Prioritized,” *Reset Dialogues*, 18 October 2013, <https://www.resetdoc.org/story/revisiting-the-religious-practice-of-eid-al-adha-public-good-prioritized/> (accessed 10th July 2024)

¹⁴⁰ “Pakistan: Authorities must end escalating attacks on minority Ahmadiyya community,” *Amnesty*, June 21, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/06/end-escalating-attacks-on-minority-ahmadiyya-community/> (accessed August 13, 2024)

¹⁴¹ Chaudry, “Pakistan Church”

the Eucharist) do not make this connection. Bishop Matthew says that “Catholics are more open to sacrificial meat than Protestants.”¹⁴² Don’t they also partake in the meat and blood of Jesus?

2.9.2 Encounter of Sharing Meat

Most Christians, instead of feeling excluded, actually feel relieved when no one shares the meat with them. That way they do not have to compromise their beliefs or offend fellow believers and Muslims by accepting or refusing sacrificial meat. One can notice this, by implication, in a video by Tony William, a prominent pastor and theological educator in Pakistan on the topic of eating sacrificial meat.¹⁴³ In the video, he is reacting to another video where a Muslim cleric is asking Muslims not to share Eid-al-Adha meat with non-Muslims. Williams sees this as the solution to the problem. No sharing, no receiving. In his obvious relief, however, he proves the uneasiness of Pakistani Christians to refuse a Muslim person face-to-face when he wishes to share meat.

2.9.3 Vulnerability and Power

The Christian experience of Eid-al-Adha also has to do with the perception of whether it is a challenge to faith or an opportunity to share it. In both cases, the vulnerable Christian community of Pakistan finds a way to assert its identity and faith expression. Those who participate in the festival want to display a maturity of faith and openness to dialogue. Those who do not participate want to display their sharp sense of self-identity and faith which may be compromised by consuming sacrificial meat. Which of these is the better (or more Biblical) option is not the point. The point is that a vulnerable minority, in both cases, displays a level of power and

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ Tony William, “Qurbani ka Gosht | Eid al-Adha - sacrificial Meat should be Eaten or not,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpU5Roxu0Zo> (accessed 10th July 2024)

assertiveness when encountering the majority religious community. In a way, they became vulnerably fearless.¹⁴⁴

2.9.4 Experience of the Insiders

Finally, regarding secret believers, it is not easy to describe their experience. It can be said with certainty that not all secret believers experience Eid-al-Adha in the same manner. If they find salvific elements in the festival, they may find it joyful to partake in it. For others, celebrating Eid-al-Adha may be a deal-breaker, in which case they have to find ways to avoid participation.¹⁴⁵

2.10 Summary

To sum up, the BBBE analysis of Eid-al-Adha uncovers the various perceptions and practices of Christians and Muslims in Pakistan, particularly about sharing the meat of the sacrifice. One can recognize multiple dimensions that form this debate, particularly the question of identity, both theological and socio-political. So far, we have noted different perceptions about the concept of God (monotheism or Trinity?), the meaning of sacrifice (commemoration or atonement?), and identity (Isaac or Ishmael? religious or national identity?). These will be further analyzed in Chapter 4. For now, it can be noted that Eid-al-Adha holds a range of meanings for all participants and non-participants in Pakistan, theological, political, and cultural. What is missing thus far is the Biblical aspect. Hence, we now turn to 1 Corinthians 8-10, the main Biblical text used by Pakistani Christians in the context of Eid-al-Adha.

¹⁴⁴ Reitsma, 158-160

¹⁴⁵ Dutch, "Should Muslims Become Christians?," 20

Chapter 3 - Sacrifice to the “Devil”? 1 Corinthians and Eid-al-Adha

This chapter attempts to analyze how (or if) Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 regarding food sacrificed to idols relates to Eid-al-Adha. Many Pakistani Christians use these texts, where Paul prohibits the food sacrificed in the pagan temples, as a scriptural basis for not eating Eid-al-Adha meat.¹⁴⁶ The phrase “قربانی کا گوشت” (*qurbani ka gosht*, “meat of sacrifice”) occurs twice in the Urdu translations of 1 Corinthians 10 (in verses 18 and 28). Since *qurbani ka gosht* almost always refers to the meat of animals sacrificed on Eid-al-Adha in the local context, it is only natural that Pakistani Christians apply Paul’s directives in 1 Corinthians to this Islamic festival. In other words, this is the contextual reading of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.

Dean Flemming sees this section of 1 Corinthians as a case study of contextualization in the New Testament, where Paul is trying to teach his readers how to live out their faith in a “culture of many gods and many lords.”¹⁴⁷ This thesis, however, will not attempt to contextualize 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 in Pakistan. In one sense, this is already done, as Pakistani Christians apply this text to the Feast of Sacrifice. This application, however, needs to be analyzed. Thus, this chapter provides an exegetical overview of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 in light of what has been discussed about local Eid-al-Adha celebrations and Christian involvement in them. Let us begin with an overview of the religious and cultural context of first-century Corinth.

¹⁴⁶ Section 1.3

¹⁴⁷ Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2005), 183.

3.1 The Corinthian Context

Located in southern Greece, Corinth was one of the major cities of the ancient Mediterranean. It was a place of commerce and craft till 146 B.C. when the Romans destroyed it.¹⁴⁸ Julius Caesar later rebuilt Corinth and it became a trade hub of the Roman Empire.¹⁴⁹ It was also the seat of the provincial government.¹⁵⁰ Corinth was a temple city, with prominent temples of Apollo, Asclepius, and Aphrodite (where temple prostitution was practiced).¹⁵¹ There was a Jewish synagogue as well.¹⁵² Overall, Corinth can be described as a multicultural city where Paul's congregation was surrounded by the Romans, Greeks, and Jews.¹⁵³

3.1.1 Paul comes to Corinth

Paul first visited Corinth on his second missionary journey around AD 51.¹⁵⁴ Working as a tentmaker, he laid the foundation of a Christian community with the help of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:3, 1 Corinthians 4:12, 9:12-15, 18). He won some converts in the synagogue, but his message was accepted more by the Gentiles than the Jews of Corinth (Acts 18:4-7). Paul maintained contact with the Corinthian Christians through letters and visited them briefly during his third missionary journey.¹⁵⁵ Most scholars think that 1 Corinthians was written as a response to the questions and concerns of the community. Kenneth Bailey, however, believes that Paul

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2011), 69

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 69

¹⁵⁰ Finny Philip, "1 Corinthians," in Brian Wintle, ed., *South Asia Bible Commentary* (India, Open Door Publications, 2015), 1555

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 1555

¹⁵² Bailey, 171

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 69

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 504

¹⁵⁵ Philip, 1555

initiates the conversation and only uses the concerns of the Corinthian believers to drive his own message.¹⁵⁶

Paul probably wrote 1 Corinthians in AD 54 or 55.¹⁵⁷ This standard early dating of the mid-fifties may help us understand the theme of “weak” Christians. The temptation to fall back to their pagan lifestyle was a major concern for Paul because these were new converts (1 Corinthians 8:7). They were weak in faith (or “conscience”) because they had recently left the temple cults and joined the Christian community. However, this is not the case with most Pakistani Christians, who are (at least) third-generation believers. The relevance of this aspect will be discussed below.

3.1.2 The Church in Corinth

Corinth was a rich and politically significant city. Wealth and power, however, were not evenly distributed. This means the city had “haves” and “have-nots,” and Paul won converts among both. The Indian scholar Finny Philip writes that “the situation in the Corinthian church reflected the disparities between rich and poor (1:26; 7:21; 11:17-22; also Romans 16:23).”¹⁵⁸ These verses indicate that the church in Corinth comprised the elites and the outcasts, who were now part of the same community (“body” - 12:13). Conflicts, therefore, were inevitable.

The conflict over idol food (chapters 8 and 10) may also have had elements of class disparity. Perhaps some elite Christians (proud of their knowledge and social connections) continued to maintain their social status, which often involved hanging around temples or being invited to private dinner parties.¹⁵⁹ They had a theological basis for their actions (“an idol is nothing in

¹⁵⁶ Bailey, 26

¹⁵⁷ Bailey, 297

¹⁵⁸ Philip, 1555

¹⁵⁹ David W. J. Gill, "In Search of the Social Elite in the Corinthian Church," *TynB* 44 (1993): 336-337

itself' - 8:4), but perhaps they were also motivated by culture, class, and commerce. On the other hand, temples, especially their animal sacrifices and prostitution, were off-limits for many Corinthian Christians. Finney writes that "the city ...had such a ... reputation for gross immorality that there was a saying 'to act like a Corinthian'."¹⁶⁰ Thus, those who liberally visited temples were becoming a stumbling block for those who did not. That is why Paul warns his readers of the dangers of "exercising your rights" as Christians (8:9). The dangers included defiling one's body (the "temple of God" - 6:18-20) with sexual immorality and succumbing to idol worship, thereby invoking God's wrath (10:22). Even if some Christians could avoid these sins despite visiting the temples, they might cause "weaker" Christians to stumble and sin (8:9-13). Thus, one of the main themes of 1 Corinthians is solidarity with the weak, exemplified by Paul, and ultimately, Jesus (8:13; 9:22; 10:33; 11:1). With this overview, let us proceed to an exegetical overview of chapters 8 and 10.

3.2 1 Corinthians 8: Exegetical Remarks

While *qurbani ka gosht* occurs in 1 Corinthians 10, the theme of idol food begins in chapter eight. The issue was raised by the Corinthian church in their earlier correspondence (8:1). Some Corinthian Christians consumed the food, considering themselves "knowledgeable," while the "weak" believers refused to partake in it (8:2, 9). The traditional view is that 1 Corinthians 8 concerns idol food sold in the markets or served in private homes, while Chapter 10 deals with meals within the temple precinct.¹⁶¹ In both chapters, however, Paul's main concern seems to be Christian participation in cultic meals and its negative effects, especially for those with a weak conscience.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Philip, 1555

¹⁶¹ Flemming, 183

¹⁶² Ibid, 183

The chapter begins with “now about,” which indicates sections of the epistle where Paul answers his readers’ questions (see 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). The issue in chapter eight is not idolatry, but eating food offered to idols (8:1). The Greek phrase τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων literally means “that which is offered to idols,” in the temples, but it can also refer to meat leftover by pagan sacrifices that may have been sold in the markets.¹⁶³ Paul clarifies this when he introduces the word “eating” in 8:4 and “meat” in chapter 10. For many in the Corinthian church, eating idol food meant participation in idolatry (8:7-8). For them, there was no distinction between the two acts. In this sense, the spatial location of the food was irrelevant to them, whether it was served in the temple or sold in the market.

3.2.1 Knowledge vs. Love

Paul begins his response by comparing knowledge and love. Knowledge “puffs” the ego, while love “builds” the community (8:2). Without love, Corinthians “do not yet know,” even though they claim to “possess knowledge.” Thus, Corinthians should focus less on knowledge and more on loving God, for it is better to be known by God than simply having knowledge about him (8:3). Thus, while some Corinthian Christians were basing their actions on knowledge, Paul gives them another ethical paradigm, which is love.

3.2.2 Reality of Idols

Their knowledge had to do with pagan deities. They claimed that “an idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “there is no God but one” (8:4). Paul agrees with these claims. He goes on to say that while pagans have many “gods and lords,” Christians have only one God, the Father, and

¹⁶³ Anthony C. Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 617-620

one Lord, Jesus Christ (8:5-6). Many scholars consider this to be a Christian *Shema*.¹⁶⁴ It is essentially the same confession as Deuteronomy 6:4 but with Trinitarian language.¹⁶⁵

Coming back to verse five, Paul does not deny those who are “called” gods. Some translations, such as the New International Version (NIV) and the Urdu Geo Version (UGV) render it “so-called gods” (نام نہاد), which means that such entities have no existence, but are only “called” gods.

3.2.3 The Corinthian Christian Identity

Some scholars suggest that 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 is a circumlocution used by elitist Christians of Corinth (which Paul seems to endorse) that allows them to simultaneously proclaim the lordship of Jesus in the church while having a tolerant view of pagan gods when they mingle with the wider society.¹⁶⁶ However, by asking his readers to avoid idol meat in the temple, Paul dismantles the efficacy of this equivocation. He puts the elitist Christians in a tight spot. By not participating in temple feasts (and private dinner parties - 10:27-29), they risk social ostracization and persecution.

Paula Fredriksen hypothesizes that by avoiding idol food, Paul is asking Gentile Christians to be neither Jews (who were tolerated by the empire) nor pagans.¹⁶⁷ It is also why early Christians were often called “atheists,” because they did not fall into the recognized camps of Jewish monotheism and pagan polytheism.¹⁶⁸ Fredriksen attributes this to Paul’s imminent eschatology, where Christ will return soon and all his enemies, including pagan deities and spirits, will

¹⁶⁴ N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 2004), 662; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 374; Philip, 1570

¹⁶⁵ Thiselton, 636

¹⁶⁶ Margaret Froelich, “Sacrificed Meat in Corinth and Jesus Worship as a Cult Among Cults,” *Journal of Early Christian History* (2020): 10

¹⁶⁷ Paula Fredriksen, “Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel,” *New Testament Studies*, (2010), 232-252

¹⁶⁸ Stephen Bullivant, “We Confess that we are Atheists,” *New blackfriars* 101, no. 1092 (2020): 120-134.

become subject to him (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Gentile Christians then, are to express this eschatological expectation by ceasing to visit the temples.¹⁶⁹

One does not have to subscribe to these scholarly theories to understand the predicament gentile Christians may have faced in the first-century Roman empire by theologically and practically proclaiming the non-existence of pagan gods, including the genius of the Roman emperors.

However, this is precisely what Paul is asking them to do for the sake of their fellow Christians.

He appeals to the crucifixion of Jesus, the one who died for weak believers (8:11). Jesus is the one who Paul now identifies as the Lord that his ancestors proclaimed in the Shema (8:6).¹⁷⁰ In a sense, he is asking Christians with knowledge to put their life on the line for weak believers, just like Jesus did. But who are the “weak” Corinthians?

3.2.4 Weakness of Conscience

Paul says that while idols are nothing in themselves, some Corinthian believers, the ones with the weak “conscience,” still fail to comprehend this (8:7). For them, the idols are real entities and eating food offered to idols is akin to idolatry. “Conscience” (συνείδησις) refers to the moral knowledge of distinguishing between what is lawful and unlawful for believers. That the weak Christians are “still so accustomed” to idol worship indicates the recency of their conversion (8:7). When they see their fellow believers eating idol food - both in and outside the temple - they consider it idolatry as if the food has been sacrificed to gods that exist (8:7).

In Romans, discussions on food involved “strong” and “weak” believers (Romans 14, 15). The strong ones eat anything (particularly meat), while the weak ones do not. On the surface, the same phenomenon seems to be at play in 1 Corinthians. But that is not the case. The word

¹⁶⁹ Fredriksen, 241

¹⁷⁰ Wright, 667

“strong” (singular: δυνατός, pl: δυνατοὶ) does not appear in chapters 8 and 10. Bernhard Reitsma notes that “in 1 Corinthians 8 there is no distinction between the weak and the strong like there is in Romans 14:1 and 15:1, but between believers with knowledge and believers with a weak conscience.”¹⁷¹ Yet, several commentaries use the categories of “strong” and “weak” to exegete these texts.¹⁷² This lumping of texts can obscure the specific context or problem of the Corinthian church.

It can be argued, however, that the “weakness” of avoiding meat, whether in Rome or Corinth, had to do with the fact that in the first-century Mediterranean, it was hard to tell whether or not meat sold in the markets came from pagan temples or not.¹⁷³ Thus, those with a weak conscience may have been avoiding meat altogether. Paul was also ready to give up meat for the sake of these Christians (8:13).

3.2.5 Sinning Against Christ

Moving on, the apostle knows that “food does not bring us near to God,” but also emphasizes that Corinthians are “no better” in the eyes of God for eating idol meat (8:8). In other words, they are not earning extra credit by exercising or showing off their spiritual maturity concerning idol food. On the contrary, they are sinning against Christ! Eating idol food is not a sin. The sin is becoming a “stumbling block” to weaker believers and “emboldening” them to relapse into idolatry (8:9-13). Weak believers should be given priority and their concerns should affect the actions of those with knowledge because Christ died for them (8:11). The knowledge of the elite Corinthian Christians seems to have obscured this truth.

¹⁷¹ Reitsma, 72.

¹⁷² Anjum and Marium, 54; Philip, 1570; Schreiner, 193; Thiselton, 648; Blomberg, 165

¹⁷³ Schreiner, 213-215; Thiselton, 779-86

To summarize, 1 Corinthians 8 is about Paul's emphasis on love over knowledge. The Corinthians got some theological points right but missed the bigger picture. The issue was not idol food (which is neither polluted nor unlawful for Christians), but causing one's brother to sin. To prevent this, Paul is willing to go to great lengths (8:12) and he encourages the knowledgeable Corinthians to do the same, even if it means losing their social status and facing persecution. Thus, Paul's theology of food in 1 Corinthians is counter-cultural.¹⁷⁴ It is not just rooted in theological knowledge but in love for the weak. It is not ad-hoc practicality but arises from the "heart of Christian theology itself."¹⁷⁵

3.3 1 Corinthians 10: Exegetical Remarks

In Chapter 8, Paul emphasized the importance of being known by God (8:3). In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul continues the discussion on exercising one's right as a Christian and giving up one's God-given authority for the sake of others. Paul then moves on to stories about Israel in the wilderness to resume his discussion on idol food. In Chapter 10, he uses Israel as an analogy. Even though God chose the Israelites, they also incurred God's wrath because of their sins. This serves as a reprimand for Corinthian Christians who took things lightly concerning idol food.

3.3.1 Sacramental History of Israel

When the Israelites left Egypt, they experienced God's protection and care under the cloud (10:1). Paul here compares the crossing of the sea to a kind of baptism, in which the Israelites were united with their spiritual head, Moses (Exodus 13:12-22, 14:19-22; Psalms 78:13-14:105:39). This analogy implies that Corinthians had similarly left their idolatrous past through

¹⁷⁴ Flemming 189

¹⁷⁵ N.T. Wright, "One God, One Lord, One People. Incarnational Christology for a Church in a Pagan Environment." *Ex Auditu* (1991): 49, quoted in Flemming, 187

baptism into Christ (1 Corinthians 10:2). When they crossed the sea, the Israelites received spiritual food and drink in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:3; Exodus 16:1-17:7; Numbers 20:2-13; Psalms 78:15-16, 23-29). This food and drink, Paul suggests, was Christ himself. He was the rock from which they drank (1 Corinthians 10:4). Similarly, Corinthians now participate in the nourishment of the Lord's table.

3.3.2 Four Warnings

These analogies lead to a four-fold warning against idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, and grumbling. First, the Israelites made and worshiped the golden calf, which was accompanied by "eating, drinking, and revelry" (10:7). Both these issues, idol worship and sexual immorality, spoke directly to the Corinthian church (10:8).¹⁷⁶

Moving on, the Israelites also tested God in the wilderness with their grumbling, which God punished by sending poisonous snakes into their camps (10:9; Num 21:4-9). Grumbling was also a trait of the Corinthians, who constantly bickered about everything, including Paul's leadership. The apostle warns them that they too are testing God with their attitude.

Paul reminds his readers that despite all their blessings, the Israelites behaved in a manner that displeased God (10:5). These examples should serve as a warning to the Corinthians. Paul is not overtly harsh, for he also encourages the Corinthians that God is faithful, and will strengthen them if they face temptations (10:13). In all this, Paul's tone is not of condemnation, but of speaking to "sensible people" who are (spiritual) descendants of the Israelites (10:1,14-15).

¹⁷⁶ Thus Paul's double warning to "flee from" prostitutes and idols (6:18, 10:14)

3.3.3 Back to Idol Food

Paul then addresses the issue of food, which he hinted at in verse seven. He compares the pagan feasts, Jewish temple sacrifices, and the Lord's Supper. In all three examples, Paul stresses the idea of communion in verse 16 (*κοινωνία* - mostly translated as "participation").¹⁷⁷ The bread and cup of the Lord's supper is participation in the body and blood of Christ (10:16), which also binds believers together (10:17). Similarly, consuming the meat of the sacrifice in the Jewish temple signified common participation in the altar (10:18). By the same logic, eating in pagan temples also unites one with deities represented in the idols, whom Paul calls "demons" (*δαίμονίων*, 10:21). *Daimonion* can mean foreign gods, benign/neutral demigods, or evil spirits.¹⁷⁸ What exactly Paul means by "demons" is unclear in 1 Corinthians, although it seems unlikely that he meant evil spirits similar to the ones described in the gospels. This is because Paul does not fear demon possession for Corinthians who eat at pagan temples.¹⁷⁹

3.3.4 Reality of "Demons"

Most commentators think that Paul has Deuteronomy 32:17-21 in mind.¹⁸⁰ These verses talk about Israel's sacrifice to "demons," who are actually "false" or "no" gods (see also Psalm 106:37). The use of *daimonion* in the LXX to describe these false gods or idols seems to imply a post-exilic theological development concerning pagan deities.¹⁸¹ These deities were first treated as a given (e.g. Exodus 12:12, 18:11; Deuteronomy 4:7; Psalm 86:8, 95:3; Micah 4:5 - a view Paul seems to endorse in 1 Corinthians 8:5-6), but later relegated to the rank of demons, i.e.

¹⁷⁷ Reitsma, 73; Anjum and Marium, 63; The Urdu word "شَرِيک" carries a stronger connotation than mere "participation." It is a theologically loaded word and used aptly in the local translations

¹⁷⁸ G. J. Riley, "Demon Δαίμων," in Karel van der Toorn et al. eds, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 235-240

¹⁷⁹ Reitsma, 76

¹⁸⁰ Schreiner, 22-213; Thiselton, 772-778; Blomberg, 161

¹⁸¹ Riley, 238

lower in rank than Israel's God.¹⁸² Rabbi Rashi commenting on Deuteronomy 32:17 says that God's jealousy was triggered precisely because the idols are no-gods.¹⁸³ In other words, the ontological reality of the idols was not the basis of God's jealousy and wrath, but the folly of worshiping idols that humans create themselves. Paul also alludes to God's jealousy of idols in 1 Corinthians 10:22.

Thus, warnings from Israel's history and comparison of the Lord's table with "demonic" sacrifices serve as a rejoinder to avoid pagan feasts in the temple. It is the same teaching as in chapter eight, but this time with warnings of consequences for both groups of Christians. For the weaker Christians, the temptation is to fall into idolatry and cultic prostitution, similar to Israel in the wilderness. For Christians with knowledge, the sin is to encourage the weak Christians to follow their old pagan ways through their exercise of Christian "rights." Paul agrees that they have rights as Christians, but they should realize that "not everything is constructive" (10:23, also 1 Corinthians 8:3). Therefore, anything sold in the market may be eaten without guilt, but one should avoid eating in temples or private gatherings where idol food is served for the sake of those with a weak conscience (10:25-28).

3.3.5 Conscience or Discernment?

The meaning of "conscience" has been noted above, and this word reoccurs five times in chapter 10. Most English translations consistently render it "conscience" in both chapters. The UGV and the Catholic Bible Commission (CBC) Urdu translation consistently use the word "ضمير" (conscience) in both chapters. The Pakistan Bible Society (PBS) translation, however, is

¹⁸² Perhaps Paul is making a similar claim, namely that pagan deities of Corinth (possibly including the emperor) are lower in rank to Lord Jesus. This becomes both a theological and political claim.

¹⁸³ Rashi, "Devarim (Deuteronomy) - Chapter 32," Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9996/showrashi/true/jewish/Chapter-32.htm (accessed 19th July 2024)

inconsistent. In chapter eight, *συνείδησις* is translated “دل” (heart), and in chapter 10, it is translated “ديني امتياز” (religious discernment). While *συνείδησις* does give the meaning of moral discernment, it is not clear why the translators of the PBS have not followed the conventional translation for this word, “ضمير” (conscience). Moreover, “امتياز” is often used in the Urdu translations to translate *διάκρισις* (discernment), as in 1 Corinthians 12:10. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 10 “ديني امتياز” seems to be an odd (though not inaccurate) translation. Moreover, it replaces “weak conscience” with “religious discernment,” reinforcing the belief of some Christians in Pakistan that there is something religiously wrong with eating sacrificial meat.¹⁸⁴ It is clear from the context, however, that the conscience being referred to is that of the weak Christians. It is for their sake that idol meat is to be avoided, not for any intrinsic defilement. [The overall principle is to seek the good of others, whether Jew, Gentile, or Christian \(10:32\). The ultimate goal is the salvation of all \(10:33\).](#) Thus, love for the weak and salvation of sinners have greater priority than knowledge and personal freedoms. This is what informs Paul’s theology of food in 1 Corinthians. Pakistani theologian Pervaiz Sultan, commenting on 1 Corinthians 10:23, says that Christians should rise above issues of eating and drinking for the greater purposes of mission and service to others.¹⁸⁵

To sum up, Paul instructs Corinthian believers in chapters 8 and 10 to avoid idol food where possible, not because of any intrinsic defilement, but for the sake of those who still believe in the reality of idols and are in danger of backsliding. The question we will address in the next section is: does this apply to Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan?

¹⁸⁴ Nasir, “Qurbani ka Goshat”

¹⁸⁵ Sultan, 404-405

3.4 1 Corinthians and Eid-al-Adha

Christian perceptions of the Feast of Sacrifice in Pakistan have to do with i) the concept of God ii) the nature of sacrifice, iii) the sharing of meat, and iv) identity. Let us analyze these perceptions in light of what has been discussed above regarding idol food in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.

3.4.1 *Allah* or *Khuda*?

Some Christians in Pakistan consider Eid-al-Adha as the devil's sacrifice. They "use selected Biblical verses to prove that this feast honors the devil."¹⁸⁶ According to Reitsma, "there are Christians who connect the God of Islam with the evil one. The statement made by Paul that serving idols is essentially serving demons seems to allow room for this interpretation."¹⁸⁷

There is some truth to this. As noted above, 1 Corinthians 10 uses the precise phraseology of *qurbani ka gosht*, which in Pakistan refers to the sacrificial meat of Eid-al-Adha. And since the same text says that *gosht* is sacrificed to "demons" or "devils" (Urdu: شياطين), the conclusion that Eid-al-Adha is a devil's sacrifice seems inevitable to many Christians. This theological conclusion is also strengthened by local debates on the name of God. Pakistani Muslims insist on calling God *Allah* instead of using local names for God, especially the Persian/Urdu *Khuda*. Christians, on the other hand, would almost always use *Khuda* and not *Allah*. Secret believers and insiders may use both names without any hesitation. Thus, the UGV uses both names to translate "God" in the Old and New Testaments, whereas the PBS and CBCB rarely use *Allah* and opt for *Khuda* throughout.¹⁸⁸ Reitsma makes an oversight when he writes that "in line with

¹⁸⁶ Chaudry, "Pakistan Church"

¹⁸⁷ Reitsma, 80

¹⁸⁸ Kenneth J. Thomas, "Allah in Translations of the Bible," *The Bible Translator* 52, no. 3 (2001): 303

all Arabic Bible translations, Christians in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia use the word “Allah” for the God of the Bible.”¹⁸⁹ That is simply not true for Pakistan.

For Muslims in Pakistan, the choice of not translating *Allah* probably has to do with religious identity and the “Arabization” of Pakistani society indicated in Section 2.4.5.¹⁹⁰ It also has to do with the Muslim belief that Qur’anic words should not be translated.¹⁹¹ For Christians, the choice of God’s name also has to do with having a distinct religious identity, but that is not the only reason. There is a debate between missionaries and Bible translators across the Muslim world on using Islamic terminology, and using *Allah* for God is part of this debate.¹⁹² In any case, there is some confusion in the minds of Pakistani Christians to whom *Allah* refers. Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 8:5 and 10:20 seem to add to the confusion. Taking these texts literally means believing that *Allah* who Muslims worship is another god or a *daimon*.

Interestingly, Pakistani commentaries on 1 Corinthians do not make this association. They do not even emphasize the aspect of “demons” at all, let alone apply the word to contemporary contexts or practices of other religions like some Western commentators do.¹⁹³

Sacrifice to whom?

So, to whom are Muslims sacrificing animals on Eid-al-Adha? Not to the gods of Greece and Rome, and definitely not to idols.¹⁹⁴ The Feast of Sacrifice is a monotheistic festival, dedicated to the one God who Muslims call “Allah.” According to the late Pakistani Muslim scholar Maududi, “Islam seeks to introduce festivals that leave a deep imprint of monotheism and

¹⁸⁹ Reitsma 64

¹⁹⁰ Reitsma, 64; Paracha, 116-118

¹⁹¹ Reitsma 64

¹⁹² Thomas, 303-306

¹⁹³ Blomberg, 168

¹⁹⁴ Reitsma, 77

righteousness on everyone taking part in them.”¹⁹⁵ He also argues that Islam rescues the ritual of animal sacrifice from paganism and restores it to its monotheistic context which originates in Abraham.¹⁹⁶ Nor is Eid-al-Adha sacrifice about appeasement of the gods and neither is it accompanied by temple rites and orgies. Hence, the sacrifices Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians have no similarity with Islam, which did not even exist in the first century. Thus, any application of this epistle to Islamic rituals is anachronistic at best.

Some would argue that while associating *Allah* with the devil may be extreme (and dualistic - if *Allah* is not God, he must be the devil), there are demonic elements within Islam, such as the denial of Jesus’ divine sonship.¹⁹⁷ By the same logic, one has to concur that there are demonic elements in Judaism as well.¹⁹⁸ However, most Christians, especially in Pakistan would not make this association. Hence, there is a need for theological clarity for Pakistani Christians regarding who the God of Islam is.

Paul’s message is clear; there is only one God (8:5). Logically, then, no other God can exist. Most major world religions claim to believe in one God, who is the God of the universe.¹⁹⁹ There are deep conceptual differences and contradictions among religions, which pluralists often overlook. How to theologically account for the differences between Islam and Christianity will be touched upon in the next chapter. Here, one can conclude by agreeing with Pakistani Catholics that Eid-al-Adha is not the devil’s sacrifice.

¹⁹⁵ Hashemi and Mawdudi, 164

¹⁹⁶ Hashemi and Mawdudi, 163

¹⁹⁷ Reitsma, 79-80

¹⁹⁸ Reitsma, 80

¹⁹⁹ Including Hinduism. Wesley Ariarajah, *Your God, My God, Our God: Rethinking Christian Theology for Religious Plurality* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 43.

3.4.2 The Nature of Sacrifice

As mentioned above, there is no similarity between the pagan sacrifices in Corinth and the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice. Imran Nasir, whose video on this topic has been referenced several times in this thesis, agrees with this fact but maintains that Paul has given us a “principle” in 1 Corinthians that we can apply to sacrifices of any religion.²⁰⁰

The word Nasir stresses is “دینی امتیاز” (religious discernment) following the PBS Urdu translation of 1 Corinthians 10:27. This phrase implies that there is something religiously wrong with sacrificial meat. However, there are difficulties with this translation. First, this is not the most clear translation. The context is all about an individual’s conscience, not the nature of the meat of sacrifice. Moreover, Paul says that one can eat whatever is sold in the market. If there was something religiously wrong about idol meat, does its spatial location matter? The same goes for those who take the demonic influence of idol food literally. How can the same demonic influence lose its value in the market?

Here one notes another interesting phenomenon in the local context concerning Paul’s teaching on meat “sold in the markets” (10:25). Muslim butchers pronounce the name of *Allah* before slaughtering animals (*bismillah* - “in the name of Allah”). This is one of the prerequisites for meat to be classified as *halal* (lawful).²⁰¹ They also utter *bismillah* before slaughtering animals on Eid-al-Adha. Yet, many Christians in Pakistan will eat what is sold in the markets, but not what is sacrificed on Eid. Exegetical issues aside, one can see once again how Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians seem to fit the local context. Yet, this does not solve the problem. Both *halal* and *qurbani* are religious (دینی) terms. So why the selective application of دینی امتیاز (religious

²⁰⁰ Nasir, “Qurbani ka Ghost”

²⁰¹ Taqi Usmani, *The Islamic Laws of Animal Slaughter: A Discussion on the Islamic Laws for Slaughtering Animals & a Survey of Modern-day Slaughtering Methods* (White Thread Press, 2006), 35-47

discernment)? These inconsistencies expose the weakness of applying 1 Corinthians to Eid-al-Adha.

Finally, Paul's statement on sacrificial meat being antithetical to the Lord's Table (Eucharist) is also applied to Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan.²⁰² Nazir Ali writes:

“In the Muslim context there is a recurrent problem of Christians who want to know whether it is permissible to eat the meat of sacrificial animals at the Muslim feast of ‘Eid-ul-Adhā. The answer that is often given is that such meat should be avoided, for it is dishonoring the Eucharist. If we believe that all-sufficient sacrifice has been offered for us, if we believe that in the Eucharist, we are privileged to participate in such a sacrifice, if, moreover, we believe that Scripture and tradition discourage us from participating in the Eucharist as well as in other sacrifices, what choice have we left?”²⁰³

Thus, here is an allusion to 1 Corinthians that, in the mind of local Christians, discourages them from participating in “the Eucharist as well as in other sacrifices.” This perception stems from viewing the Feast of Sacrifice through a Christian lens, something that can be traced to local theological writers like Abdiyya Akbar Haq.²⁰⁴ However, Haqq does not forbid participation in Eid-al-Adha. Moreover, the Catholic Church in Pakistan, with its high view of the Eucharist, does not make the association of Eid-al-Adha with *daimonion*. Most ironically, Nazir Ali, quoted above, has now joined the Catholic Church!²⁰⁵

²⁰² Section 2.3.2

²⁰³ Nazir Ali, 122-123

²⁰⁴ Section 2.3.2

²⁰⁵ Michael Nazir Ali, “Michael Nazir-Ali explains his dramatic defection from CofE to Catholic church,” Daily Mail, 17 October 2021, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10101671/Former-Bishop-Rochester-Dr-Michael-Nazir-Ali-explains-defection-CofE-Catholic-church.html> (accessed 19th July 2024)

3.4.3 Consuming the meat of the sacrifice

Reitsma notes that Paul's teaching on sacrificial meat is determined by context and a believer's stance on idol food.²⁰⁶ It has been indicated above how Paul's distinction between temple meat and meat sold in the markets plays out in the Pakistani context. The third category of idol food served at dinner parties is hard to apply on Eid-al-Adha. Paul teaches that when invited to someone's house, do not ask where the meat comes from (10:27). However, this is impossible in Pakistan because if you are invited to a Muslim household during the three-day celebration of Eid, it is almost certain that you will be served sacrificial meat. Moreover, there is nothing about pagans bringing meat to Christian households as a sign of friendship in Corinth, which is the case with Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan. Paul's teaching is also concerned with the Jews and Gentiles of Corinth, not just those inside the church (10:32). Is it possible that by refusing Eid-al-Adha meat, one may cause a Muslim to stumble (10:33)?

The main difficulty of application occurs when we approach the theme of "weak" Christians. The only reason to avoid sacrificial meat in 1 Corinthians is to not make weaker Christians stumble. But who are the weaker Christians of Pakistan? Those who do not eat *qurbani ka gosht*? On the surface, it is easy to make this correlation. In that case, it is Pakistani Protestants who have a weak conscience, while Catholics seem to have the right knowledge about Eid-al-Adha. Are those Protestants who avoid *qurbani* meat ready to admit this? It seems unlikely. It can be argued that their theological and exegetical reasoning against sacrificial meat is simply a cover. To avoid admitting a weakness of conscience, they create theological and Biblical arguments against Eid-al-Adha, thereby becoming the ones with knowledge. They also consider themselves "true Christians."²⁰⁷ This was not the case with weak believers in Corinth. There is

²⁰⁶ Reitsma, 77

²⁰⁷ Farman Ali, "The contextualisation of Christian Eucharistic worship," 9

also a possibility of using “weakness” as a pretense of imposing one’s beliefs and practices.

Bailey calls it “bullying,” and no church is immune to it, especially in Pakistan.²⁰⁸

To reiterate, the “weak” in Corinth were those who were “still accustomed to idols” (8:7), which means that they were recent converts. But the majority of Pakistani Christians who do not eat sacrificial meat are generational Christians. Why, after three or four generations, are they still in fear of stumbling back to their (possible) Islamic roots?

3.4.4 The Question of Identity

The identity struggle of Pakistani Christians has been described in the preceding chapters. The strong identification of Pakistan with Islam leads to perceptions that non-Muslims are not fully Pakistani.²⁰⁹ To what extent, if any, does this affect how Christians theologize in Pakistan? This is a separate research topic. Did Corinthians also face an identity issue concerning idol food? It may be possible. Paul’s congregation was by and large Corinthian, both ethnically and culturally, and religion was a major part of their identity.²¹⁰ Reitsma writes that “it was impossible to separate social life from religious life. If someone wanted to participate in society, this implied participating in the many religious meals and festivals.”²¹¹

However, refusing to participate in cultic meals meant forsaking their pagan Corinthian identity, which could lead to social ostracization and persecution. The society tolerated monotheistic Jews, but gentile Christians were forging a unique identity that was neither Jew nor pagan, thus making themselves vulnerable religious minorities. According to Bailey, Paul considered the

²⁰⁸ Bailey, 239-240

²⁰⁹ Section 1.2.3

²¹⁰ Fredriksen, 239

²¹¹ Bernhard JG Reitsma, "The Jew a Jew, the Muslim a Muslim? Paul, Mission and Taqiyya in the Context of 1 Corinthians 9," *European Journal of Theology* 30, no. 1 (2021): 153

Corinthians spiritual descendants of Abraham (10:1) but not “Israel according to the flesh.”²¹² Yet, they have also ceased to be “gentile.” (12:2).²¹³ Fredriksen describes them as “ex-pagan pagans.”²¹⁴

Thus, there is some similarity between Pakistani and Corinthian Christians, who have a unique and vulnerable identity that is not fully integrated into the religious practices of the dominant culture. There are differences as well. For example, when Paul was persecuted for preaching the gospel, he appealed to his Roman citizenship for justice to the point of seeking an audience with the emperor (Acts 25:9-12). Christians and other religious minorities of Pakistan can hardly exercise such rights.

So, there is a possibility that Corinthians also had a challenge of identity, particularly concerning temple feasts. Yet, Paul never encouraged them to withdraw from society (1 Corinthians 5:9-10, 9:22). Associating with sinners or engaging with culture, however, is a different matter than participating in the cup of demons (10:21). Bailey sees this as an identity issue as well.²¹⁵ The Corinthian Christians had a “deeper” identity as people of God, as spiritual descendants of Israel.²¹⁶ They also had an ethnic identity, which did not change with their conversion. Association with Israel does not mean that they are under the yoke of law. Likewise, a Corinthian ethnic identity does not give them the license to engage in idol worship and cultic prostitution.²¹⁷

Applying this to the Pakistani context, one can say that Pakistani Christians should also have a spiritual association with Israel. However, it does not mean that Christians have to

²¹² Bailey, 333, 508

²¹³ Ibid, 507-508

²¹⁴ Fredriksen, 239

²¹⁵ Bailey, 169

²¹⁶ Bailey, 333

²¹⁷ Ibid, 282

celebrate Jewish feasts or show support for the modern state of Israel. Paul also encourages Pakistani Christians to uphold their ethnocultural identities as long as it does not lead to syncretism, or tempt recent converts and secret believers to revert to their previous religions. [However, the charge of syncretism should be used carefully with insiders and secret believers for whom participation in Islamic rituals does not amount to compromising their allegiance to Christ.](#)²¹⁸

3.5 Summary

To sum up, while Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 is regarding idol food, the focus is not on the nature of pagan sacrifices or the food itself. Instead, it is more about the relationship of believers with each other and the wider society. Paul's advice to believers with knowledge is to show love to their weaker brethren and avoid temple feasts. Doing so will help weaker Christians avoid the sin of idolatry. This is the main theme of both chapters 8 and 10. Terms like "demons" and "دينى امتياز" ("religious discernment") should be understood in this context. Otherwise, it may lead to negative perceptions of Eid-al-Adha and Islam in general. This should not discourage Pakistani Christians from critically examining Islamic belief and rituals and their relation to Christianity. The next chapter attempts to provide a viable method for doing this.

²¹⁸ [Reitsma, "The Jew a Jew, the Muslim a Muslim?"](#) 162

Chapter 4 - Eid-al-Adha and Neo-Calvinism

In 1898, the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper gave the Stone Lectures at Princeton Seminary. These six lectures elucidated his interpretation of Reformed theology which would later be called, among other names, “neo-Calvinism.” This theological tradition distinguishes itself with concepts like “sphere sovereignty” and “common grace” that enable Christians to fully participate in society while upholding God’s creational sovereignty.²¹⁹ “Sphere sovereignty” suggests that human life and society are divided into “spheres” like family, government, education, and art.²²⁰ Each sphere has its internal, God-given principles and should not be dominated or assimilated by another sphere (such as the state).²²¹ “Common grace,” on the other hand, refers to God's common blessing on all creation, even those outside the church. It allows for scientific progress, societal order, and the flourishing of the arts, even in a fallen world.²²² For Kuyper, Christianity is a “life system” that provides a comprehensive view of human life and society.²²³ This is one of the characteristics of neo-Calvinism. Can this theological tradition help analyze how Pakistani Christians can relate to Eid-al-Adha? This will be explored in the following sections.

²¹⁹ Craig G. Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction* (IVP, 2017), 35; D. Kristanto & T. Salurante, “Kuyper’s sphere sovereignty and institutional religious freedom in Indonesia,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 44(1), a2613, (2023): 2-3

²²⁰ Bartholomew, 33

²²¹ “Abraham Kuyper,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, eds., Ian A. McFarland, David A. S. Fergusson, Karen Kilby, and Iain R. Torrance, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2011), 268; Bartholomew, 137-145; For further classifications of common grace, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1941), 480.

²²² “Abraham Kuyper,” *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 268; Bartholomew, 36-43

²²³ Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 9-40

The neo-Calvinist analysis of Eid-al-Adha will begin with Abraham Kuyper's description of the nature of religion, followed by a worldview analysis of Eid-al-Adha using the neo-Calvinist concepts of creation, fall, and redemption as elucidated by Albert Wolters. Finally, Richard Mouw's and Sander Griffioen's neo-Calvinist approach to social and religious pluralism will be used to analyze how local theological discourse on Eid-al-Adha can take the form of public engagement. Hopefully, by the end of this brief survey, one may be able to see i) what neo-Calvinism can teach Pakistani Christians about participation in Eid-al-Adha and ii) how it can guide their interactions with Muslims in Pakistan.

4.1 Kuyper: What is True Religion?

"Calvinism and Religion" is the second of six Stone Lectures. It develops on the first one which describes Calvinism as a "life system." In this lecture, Kuyper would describe the ideal religion as requiring no intermediaries between God and man.²²⁴ Moreover, religion is more than piety and extends to all aspects of life and society. For Kuyper, of course, Calvinism fulfills the criteria for true religion.²²⁵ This conclusion aside, "Calvinism and Religion" can help contribute to the discussion of Islamic sacrifice by redirecting the question from "Is Islam a true religion?" to "What is true religion?"

4.1.1 Criterion for True Religion

Following Augustine and Calvin, Kuyper talks about humanity's longing for God as fundamental to its creation.²²⁶ The aspects of creation and fall will be discussed later in this chapter. Here the focus is on what Kuyper describes as the elements of "true religion." In other words, what is the

²²⁴ Kuyper, "Calvinism and Religion," 58-59

²²⁵ Ibid, 69-70

²²⁶ Ibid, 45-46

religion that pleases God? Kuyper lists four criteria: i) true religion is for God, not man ii) it has no intermediaries between man and God, iii) it is universal, and iv) it is soteriological (“abnormal”).²²⁷ Whether Islam fulfills these criteria requires a detailed study. However, Eid-al-Adha provides a specific example to apply these criteria.

4.1.2 Is Eid-al-Adha for God?

The first two criteria apply to Eid-al-Adha. As noted in Chapter 2, Muslims perform this sacrifice to God.²²⁸ Moreover, there is no priestly class to perform that sacrifice.²²⁹ Specialists may be required to slaughter the animal and distribute the meat portions, but no priest is required to bless the animal or perform the sacrifice. Thus, Eid-al-Adha is for God, requiring no intermediaries. Even the sacrificial animal is not an intermediary, because Eid-al-Adha is not a sacrifice of atonement in the Levitical sense.²³⁰

4.1.3 Is Eid-al-Adha Universal?

While Islam claims to be a religion for mankind (Qur’an 21:107, 29:56), one may ask if Eid-al-Adha is truly universal. For one thing, it can only be performed by those who have the means to afford it.²³¹ Moreover, the reward of the sacrifice is also for the one making the sacrifice and his family.²³² Of course, most portions of the sacrificed animals are shared with others, especially the poor. In doing so, however, the distinction between the rich and the poor remains. Moreover, the element of animal sacrifice Eid-al-Adha means it is not celebrated universally the same way. In European countries, for instance, laws on animal slaughter may prevent public celebrations of

²²⁷ Kuyper, “Calvinism and Religion,” 58-59

²²⁸ Section 2.2.3

²²⁹ Section 2.3.2

²³⁰ Section 2.2.3

²³¹ Section 2.4.3

²³² Usama et al., “Concept of Sacrifice” 3366.

Eid-al-Adha.²³³ In these contexts, ritual slaughter may be permitted in the confines of slaughterhouses instead of mosques or Muslim houses, which removes the religious aesthetic. That said, animal sacrifice is not the only facet of Eid-al-Adha. Individual piety and communal worship are necessary elements. Islamic traditions teach that if one misses the communal Eid prayer, his sacrifice becomes ineffective.²³⁴ [So some aspects of Eid-al-Adha can be practiced universally \(such as prayer\), while others cannot \(animal sacrifice\).](#) Thus, the claims of universality may not hold up to scrutiny, even in the individual example of Eid-al-Adha, let alone the whole religious system.

4.1.4 Is Eid-al-Adha “Normal?”

Finally, the fourth criterion of religion is being “normal” or “abnormal.”²³⁵ By this, Kuyper meant that true religion acknowledges the reality of sin and offers a solution. The condition of humanity is not normal. It is “abnormal” because of sin.²³⁶ The Christian worldview acknowledges this reality, but does Islam in its central act of sacrifice?

In the Feast of Sacrifice, there is no element of atonement for sin, because Islam does not believe humanity has fallen into sin.²³⁷ It regards the condition of humanity as normal, as able to perform good deeds like animal sacrifice to get close to God. From a Christian standpoint, this aspect also limits the universality of Islam, because sin is a universal problem.

Thus, using Kuyper’s criteria, one can identify some elements of true religion in Eid-al-Adha.

That is not the same as saying that Eid-al-Adha as a ritual (and Islam as a religion) is one

²³³ Lauren Walker, “Ban on unanaesthetised slaughter: ECHR rejects freedom of religion violation,” *The Brussel Times*, 13 February 2024 <https://www.brusselstimes.com/922361/ban-on-unanaesthetised-slaughter-echr-rejects-violation-freedom-of-religion-claim> (accessed 24th July 2024)

²³⁴ Hashas, “Revisiting the Religious Practice of Eid al-Adha”

²³⁵ Kuyper, “Calvinism and Religion,” 54

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 54

²³⁷ Usama et al., “Concept of Sacrifice,” 3363; “Adam” *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 6

hundred percent “true.” Overall, Eid-al-Adha (and Islam in general) does not meet the soteriological criteria. Eid-al-Adha is “normal” in Kuyperian terms. Thus, Protestant Christians should also find it normal to participate in it.

Yet, Kuyper’s criteria help to find grounds for engagement with Muslims while also providing a way of evaluating theological claims and ecclesiological practices within Christianity. It also accounts for theological differences between Islam and Christianity in the realm of creation and falls instead of a dualism of God and *daimonion*. These categories of creation and fall are central to the Reformed worldview, which brings us to the next section.

4.2 Wolters: Can sacrificial meat be sanctified?

Worldview (*Weltanschauung*) is what individuals and communities believe about things.²³⁸ What can a worldview analysis of Eid-al-Adha teach Christians about consuming sacrificial meat and engaging with Muslims?

4.2.1 Creation, Fall, and Redemption

According to Albert Wolters in *Creation Regained*, three elements distinguish the Christian worldview: Creation, Fall, and Redemption.²³⁹ These elements are central to the Biblical narrative and relate to human cultures and societies of all ages. Everything in this world is part of God’s good creation but is tainted by sin due to the fall. However, Wolter says that “sin neither abolishes nor becomes identified with creation.”²⁴⁰ Sin and evil, no matter how visible, do not trump God’s faithfulness or his redemptive plan to restore the original goodness of creation. This is how societies, cultures, and human institutions can be redeemed.

²³⁸ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained. A transforming view of the world* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 2.

²³⁹ Ibid, 7-11.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 57

4.2.2 Structure and Direction

Wolters also discusses the concepts of “structure” and “direction” in the Reformed worldview. “Structure” has to do with creation. It is “the essence of a creaturely thing, the kind of creature it is by virtue of God’s creational law.”²⁴¹ On the other hand, “direction” refers to the movement of created order toward or away from God.²⁴² Wolters claims that creation, though fallen, retains structural integrity. Structure is the inherent goodness of creation. On the other hand, the fall represents the movement (direction) of creation away from God. Conversely, redemption represents the movement toward God. Christians are called to identify the goodness of creation, oppose its sinful distortions, and take part in God’s redemptive work to redeem the goodness of creation. Wolter writes:

“It is still humanity that plays the pivotal role... If Christ is the reconciler of all things, and if we have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation on his behalf, then we have a redemptive task wherever our vocation places us in this world.”²⁴³

Is reconciliation possible in the case of Eid-al-Adha? This question holds special relevance for both Christians who do not eat sacrificial meat and secret believers who may be required to eat it in their surroundings.

4.2.3 Eid-al-Adha: Worldview Analysis

One can understand the Christian (Reformed) worldview in the three-fold and two-fold patterns of creation-fall-redemption and structure-direction respectively. These categories can be used to analyze religious-cultural practices which may seem at odds with the Christian worldview but

²⁴¹ Wolters, 88

²⁴² Ibid

²⁴³ Wolters, 60

require Christian participation in a given context. Wolters also uses food as an example when discussing structure and creation. For example, he quotes 1 Timothy 4 and Romans 14 to discuss creational goodness.²⁴⁴ Both these scriptures in their context have to do with debates within churches of the first century regarding eating meat (ritually sacrificed or otherwise). This provides a framework to use the creation-fall-redemption model to analyze the Feast of Sacrifice in the Pakistani context. Three questions will inform this analysis (i) Is there creational goodness in this sacrifice? (ii) What aspect of fallenness does it signify? (iii) How Christians may seek to redeem the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice, especially sacrificial meat?

4.2.4 Eid-al-Adha: Structure (Creation)

The Islamic Feast of Sacrifice is about nearness to God, fellowship, celebration, and compassion.²⁴⁵ These aspects of the festival can be understood as creational. Paul affirms that everything God has created is good, which includes animal meat for consumption (1 Timothy 4:1-5).²⁴⁶ He uses similar language in the context of 1 Corinthians 10:25-31 when discussing sacrificial meat from pagan sacrifices. In these verses, Paul teaches that neither the fall nor pagan sacrifices have polluted animal meat that God has provided as food for humans.

Is sacrifice itself creational? This is debatable, but in a general sense one may agree with Herman Bavinck when he talks about sacrifice preceding the fall.²⁴⁷ He is not talking about ritual animal sacrifice but sacrifice defined as anything “that unites us in a holy communion with God.”²⁴⁸

According to Bavinck, sacrifice is not the result of sin, though sin may have changed its

²⁴⁴ Wolters, 49, 91

²⁴⁵ Sections 2.2.3, 2.4.3

²⁴⁶ Also 1 Corinthians 10:26

²⁴⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume. 3*, 330-331

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*

nature.²⁴⁹ The changing nature of sacrifice after the fall has to do with an awareness of sin and guilt, and blood sacrifice became a way, in Israel and other nations, as a way to atone for sins. The Islamic sacrifice, however, is not a sacrifice of expiation. Nor is there any ritual significance of the blood of the animal. Muslims are emulating the example of Abraham. In his sacrifice, it was his obedience that mattered to God, not the ritual act of (almost) killing his son. The story in the Qur'an has a vocabulary of redemption, which a Christian can appreciate.²⁵⁰ By and large, Eid-al-Adha has more to do with worship and celebration rather than redemption from sin. Hence, the Islamic Feast of Sacrifice retains elements of creational goodness, even though it lacks an understanding of fall and redemption. In other words, Eid-al-Adha retains structural elements, but not in the sacrifice-before-the-fall sense of Bavinck. It does so because there is no fall or original sin in Islam.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁰ Qur'an chapter 37, verse 107

²⁵¹ "Adam," *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, 6; Pierre Berthoud and Pieter J. Lalleman, eds., *The Reformation: Its Roots and Its Legacy* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2017), 171-172

4.2.5 Eid-al-Adha: Direction (Fall)

While religion and sacrifice may have existed before the fall, sin has changed their nature. This has been noted above in section 4.1 with reference to Abraham Kuyper. One of the changes brought by sin is the change from a relationship or longing for God to organized religion, and from religion (singular) to religions (plural). How does one approach the multiplicity of religions, which also implies a multiplicity of worldviews? To be fair, Wolters himself does not apply the analysis of structure and religion to world religions as he does to human emotions, arts, and even spiritual gifts.²⁵² This chapter is an exercise to see what one can learn by applying the creation-fall-redemption schema to Eid-al-Adha. As in all his examples, the lesson we learn from Wolters is that we can find signs of fallenness in human institutions (including organized religion) by discerning their direction, namely, whether something takes us toward or away from God. In this sense, what is the direction of Eid-al-Adha?

It has also been noted, both in the context of Eid-al-Adha and 1 Corinthians, how some Pakistani Christians associate Islam with the devil. This perception promotes a dualistic worldview, where if something is not from God, then it is automatically of the devil. Reitsma criticizes this duality, indicating that apart from God and the devil, humans also have agency in the created order.²⁵³ He also makes a distinction between God in his essence and a particular religion's concept of God. Christians and Muslims have different understandings or "images" of who God is (as opposed to who God is as an "entity"), but that does not mean that they worship different gods.²⁵⁴

Sri Lankan theologian Wesley Ariarajah distinguishes between a religion being "true" and "valid." He maintains that for Christians, other religions may not be "true," but they can still be

²⁵² Wolters, 100-114

²⁵³ Reitsma, *Vulnerable Love*, 79-80

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 63

“valid” in the sense that they are trying to comprehend the mystery of ultimate truth.²⁵⁵ He writes:

“In so far as a community has explored the nature of that mystery with the tools available to them, has developed a symbol system to describe it, and has followers who claim that the path they follow leads them to their spiritual goals, they have a "validity" that no one outside that experience can challenge.”²⁵⁶

Even if one agrees with this observation, Wolter’s position is more nuanced. Ariarajah wants to describe a complete religion as valid, whereas the creation-fall-redemption model helps to analyze particular teachings, rituals, and doctrines of a religion case by case.

In terms of direction, Eid-al-Adha is a movement toward God, not away from him. This makes it “valid” in terms of direction. It does not absolve Eid-al-Adha of fallen tendencies in its religious system which may be antithetical to Christianity and represent a movement away from God in Christ (e.g. the denial of fallenness of humanity and the need for sacrificial atonement).

Once again, it is not about accepting or rejecting entire religious systems. Within those systems, one can use neo-Calvinist concepts to identify structural and directional aspects. This nuanced approach to Eid-al-Adha is also beneficial to secret believers, who being part of Muslim communities may need a theology that helps them analyze and appropriate individual Islamic teachings and rituals.

4.2.6 Eid-al-Adha: Direction (Redemption)

The goal (direction) of Eid-al-Adha is to be close to God and fellow humans. Stripped of their Islamic exterior, Christians may recognize and appreciate these goals as genuine signs of

²⁵⁵ Ariarajah, 168

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 168

creational goodness, which can encourage participation. This is especially relevant to secret believers in Pakistan who may have to participate in Eid-al-Adha in their communities. It also means that it is possible to “Christianize” the meat of sacrifice before consumption. [The following recommendations are adapted from Wolters’ worldview analysis examples from *Creation Regained*.²⁵⁷](#)

- First, one should ask whether eating this meat takes us away from God or closer to Him. And does it take one away from our fellow man (in this context, the Pakistani Muslim) or closer to him? Most Pakistani Christians will answer these questions differently.
- Paul says that nothing is unclean in itself, and should be received with thanksgiving.²⁵⁸ This can enable Christians to enjoy aspects of creational goodness in Eid-al-Adha, namely, the provision of animal meat as food, fellowship, celebration, and (partial) acceptance of the underlying goals of the Feast of Sacrifice.
- Another question is about the environment in which the sacrificial meat is being consumed. Are Christians asked to be a part of the ritual? Are they forced to eat the meat as an acknowledgment of the ritual behind it? In these cases, Paul (and also Wolters) would advise against eating this meat. This may not be always possible for secret believers, in which case, they should receive it with thanksgiving, and appreciate the creational aspects of the sacrifice.

To sum up, a worldview analysis of Eid-al-Adha can encourage Christian participation in Eid-al-Adha. Participation, however, is not mandatory, i.e. no one is suggesting that due to the

²⁵⁷ [Wolters, 100-115](#)

²⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 4:4; [Wolters, 49](#) (also [1 Corinthians 10:26](#))

possibility of redemption, Pakistani Christians must consume the meat of the sacrifice. 1 Corinthians (and Romans 14) allows for freedom of choice for believers to eat or not eat sacrificial meat. However, Christian engagement with Eid-al-Adha is not restricted to meat. This leads to the wider aspect of Christian-Muslim relations in Pakistan.

4.3 Mouw and Griffioen: Eid-al-Adha and Christian-Muslim Relations

Even though the fall has created pluralisms in society, the creational goodness and God's sovereignty remain. In *Pluralisms and Horizons*, Richard Mouw and Sander Griffioen provide a neo-Calvinist framework to navigate pluralism in society.

4.3.1 Definition of Terms

Mouw and Griffioen describe three main types of pluralisms:

- “Associational” pluralism refers to the diversity of human institutions, such as family, church, state, etc.
- “Contextual pluralism” refers to broad cultural identities of groups, such as being male, Punjabi, Christian, etc.
- “Directional” pluralism refers to the “diversity of visions of the good life that give direction to people’s lives.”²⁵⁹

Organized religions fall in the category of directional pluralism.²⁶⁰ This can be further categorized as descriptive and normative.²⁶¹ Descriptive pluralism acknowledges the reality of pluralism in society, whereas “normative” pluralism treats this plurality as the natural state of

²⁵⁹ Mouw and Griffioen, 16

²⁶⁰ Ibid

²⁶¹ Ibid, 17

affairs. Thus, descriptive directional pluralism acknowledges the diversity of directions in world religions, while normative directional pluralism considers this to be good.

Proponents of the Christian worldview may disagree with the assumption of normative pluralism, which can lead to relativism.²⁶² However, it is hard to ignore the reality of directional pluralism.²⁶³ In the preceding section, it was noted that Eid-al-Adha directs Muslims towards God and the neighbor, and one can hear the echo, no matter how faint, of Jesus' command to love God and the neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). This directional understanding of Islamic practices can encourage Pakistani Christians to participate in religious festivals. Catholic priests and theologians, representing the biggest Christian denomination in the country, already encourage their parishioners to develop friendly relations with Muslims on Eid-al-Adha. As Pervaiz Sultan notes, the issue of eating or not eating a particular food is secondary to Christian mission and participation in society.²⁶⁴ Thus, Mouw and Griffioen provide a theological framework for Christians to participate in Eid-al-Adha due to the directional validity of Eid-al-Adha.

4.3.2 Dialogical Theocentrism - Beyond Eating and Drinking

Mouw and Griffioen also advocate "dialogical theocentrism."²⁶⁵ They see dialogue as also part of God's creation plan.²⁶⁶ Mouw and Griffioen maintain that despite the fall, Christians can and should learn from people of other faiths through theocentric dialog.²⁶⁷

²⁶² Mouw and Griffioen, 18

²⁶³ It is similar to Ariarajah's idea of "validity" described above, but it is more nuanced.

²⁶⁴ Sultan, 404- 405

²⁶⁵ Mouw and Griffioen, 104

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 104-105

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 105

This is a viable methodology of Christian public engagement. It is not done with the superiority of the Christian worldview, but with humility in recognition of the fact that everyone, including Christians, are fallen sinners who need a Savior. Jonathan Chaplin says that dialogical theocentrism “itself is not a political norm, but an epistemological and ethical framework to guide constructive communication across... directional boundaries.”²⁶⁸

This aspect of theocentric dialogue is relevant to Eid-al-Adha. This is because even if Pakistani Christians do not want to consume the meat, they should still engage with their Muslim neighbors in dialogue. In fact, this should be done all year rather than during a particular Islamic festival in which Christians may or may not participate. Catholics are already advocating dialogue with Muslims in Pakistan using Vatican II as their theological motivation. Protestants can learn from neo-Calvinist authors like Mouw and Griffioen who offer a theological method that can guide their theological and social engagement with Pakistani Muslims.

4.3.3 Eid-al-Adha and the Politics of Pluralism

The framework of dialogical theocentrism does not always lead to harmony between communities. There is recognition of the fact that even if Christians engage with people of other faiths with a theocentric assumption, other communities may not reciprocate or engage with a similar assumption. It leads to situations of conflict. Moreover, the appropriate space might not be available for such a dialogue within society. Here one enters the domain of the politics of pluralism. It has been argued in the thesis that part of the reluctance of the Pakistani Christian community to participate in Eid-al-Adha has to do with a perceived fear of compromising their religious identity.²⁶⁹ If this is true, then the question of participation in Eid-al-Adha is not just an

²⁶⁸ Jonathan Chaplin, “Law, Liberty and Plurality: The Political Problem of “Interculturality”” in *Een weg gaan*, ed. Sander Griffioen (Uitgeverij DAM ON Budel: 2006), 73

²⁶⁹ Sections 2.5.3

issue of faith or theology, but also justice, particularly the rights of minorities. Does the policy and polity of Pakistan ensure just outcomes for religious communities? Does it adjudicate the right of Christians to express their public identity without the fear of offense or revenge from the conservative elements within the Muslim majority? These are more apt questions to ask in relation to the issue of identity. This approach still remains theological, but it addresses the root or at least one of the roots of the conflict. Once again, this aspect is especially relevant to secret believers because, in a society where religious freedoms are protected, there might be no secret believers!

The rights of religious, ethnic, or cultural minorities are not always guaranteed, even in liberal democratic societies of the West. Jonathan Chaplin's essay on the problems of interculturality to find examples of how minority rights play out in Western democracies.²⁷⁰ According to Chaplin, these issues arise because the directional value of worldviews is not recognized.²⁷¹ He also realizes that in non-Western contexts, this becomes even more problematic, as violence may be involved.²⁷²

What can Christians do in such a scenario? First, they must distinguish between issues of faith and justice. Participation in Eid-al-Adha is a primarily matter of faith. However, the challenge of identity is a matter of justice. This gives a clear direction in which solutions can be formulated. This also means that Christians in Pakistan, despite being vulnerable minorities, should advocate for social justice, especially concerning their community.

²⁷⁰ Chaplin, "Law, Liberty and Plurality," 77-78

²⁷¹ Ibid, 78-79

²⁷² Ibid, 78 (footnote 4)

4.4 Summary

To sum up, what can neo-Calvinism bring to the discussion of Christian perceptions of eating sacrificial meat during Eid al-Adha? In this brief survey, one can glean elements of creation, fall, and redemption in this festival. One can also see that Kuyper's Reformed understanding of religion has some partial agreement with Islam particularly with regard to the ritual of sacrifice. Finally, Mouw and Griffioen's description of pluralism can help us guide this debate beyond the theological aspects of public engagement. In short, neo-Calvinism in its intercultural praxis has much relevance to the grassroots-level questions of the Pakistani Christian community. It also offers a theology of public engagement that is not rooted in Islam, Catholicism, or secularism.

Chapter 5 - Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions

This thesis attempted to analyze the question of Christian participation in the Islamic festival of Eid-al-Adha in Pakistan through consuming sacrificial meat. In this chapter, the main findings will be summarized and recommendations will follow.

5.1 A Topic of Contextual Relevance (Finding 1)

The researcher's context stimulated the research question. In Pakistan, Christian participation in Eid-al-Adha is debated, particularly the aspect of consuming sacrificial meat. During the research, sources were referenced that document this issue within the Pakistani Christian community.²⁷³ While these sources document the perception of Pakistani Christians, there is no full-length exploration of the topic from a theological perspective.

The main issue for Pakistani Christians is consuming sacrificial meat (*qurbani ka gosht*).

However, research uncovered several factors that also might influence the discussion:

- Denominationalism (Catholic vs. Protestant)²⁷⁴
- Casteism²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Chaudry, "Pakistan Church"; Nazir Ali, *Frontiers in Muslims-Christians Encounter*, 122-123; Farman Ali, "The contextualisation of Christian Eucharistic worship," 9

²⁷⁴ Sections 1.3; 2.3.1

²⁷⁵ Sections 1.2.3; 2.4.4

- Political identity²⁷⁶
- The reality of secret believers²⁷⁷

Thus, while Christians offer theological and biblical reasons for and against participation in Eid-al-Adha, contextual and socio-political realities also play a part. The issues of casteism and identity were also observed in the Muslim community in the context of Eid-al-Adha.²⁷⁸

5.1.2 Conclusion

While exact correlations were not worked out in the thesis, it seems probable that these socio-political reasons influence not just the debate on Eid-al-Adha, but other contextual issues of Christian-Muslim interaction in Pakistan (e.g. alcohol consumption, interfaith marriage, *Allah* or *Khuda?* etc.)²⁷⁹ The debate on Eid-al-Adha was also recognized as *idiosyncratic to Pakistan*.²⁸⁰ Thus, it is a fertile, home-grown topic for contextualization, but has been ignored by local theologians and publishers. This research tries to bridge this gap.

5.1.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Methodology

This thesis used the methodology of desk research. The depth and scope of the topic can be enhanced with quantitative research to identify the perception of Christian population samples based on factors like location, denomination, age, social class, and ethnicity. That will reveal the

²⁷⁶ Sections 1.2.3; 2.4.5

²⁷⁷ Sections 1.2.2; 1.3

²⁷⁸ Section 2.4.4

²⁷⁹ Chapter 1 - Introduction

²⁸⁰ Based on desk research and informal conversations, it seems that Christians in Muslim majority countries like Syria, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt participate in Eid-al-Adha. The only other nationality that seems to have a theological issue about this topic are the Nigerian Christians. For e.g. see David Okafor, "Can Christians eat Sallah meat? My journey," Vanguard, June 16, 2024, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/06/can-christians-eat-sallah-meat-my-journey/> (accessed 26th July 2024).

Pakistani Christian community's standing on Eid-al-Adha with greater clarity. Moreover, historical research may also be helpful to determine when Eid-al-Adha became a contentious topic for the Pakistani Christian community. Through literature research, it was identified that up to the 1970s, local theological writers were trying to engage with Eid-al-Adha from a Christian perspective.²⁸¹ The earliest reference to the Pakistan Christian community's reluctance to consume sacrificial meat comes from 1991.²⁸² Perhaps something happened in the 1980s that changed Christian perceptions. The 1980s was the decade of "Islamization" in Pakistan.²⁸³ Is there a connection? This needs further exploration. Finally, Eid-al-Adha can be analyzed as a case study for contextualization in Pakistan.

Official Sources

The Roman Catholic Church in Pakistan has been recognized as the only denomination with an official stance on Eid-al-Adha.²⁸⁴ Theologians and heads of denominations from the Protestant side seem silent on the matter. Is this reluctance, negligence, or ignorance? It is hard to say, but the lack of published material from official sources is also a gap identified in this thesis. This gap is currently filled by sermons, social media content, and apologetics, which in the researcher's view leads to confusion rather than clarity on the topic.

The Question of Identity

The challenge of identity is also idiosyncratic to Pakistan. By and large, being Pakistani means being Muslim.²⁸⁵ Further research is needed to establish to what extent, if any, this influences

²⁸¹ Section 2.1.1

²⁸² Nazir Ali, *Frontiers in Muslims-Christians Encounter*, 122-123

²⁸³ Nadeem F. Paracha, *Muslim Modernism: A Case for Naya Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2019) 100-121

²⁸⁴ Chaudry, "Pakistan Church"

²⁸⁵Section 1.2.3

how Christians live out and contextualize their faith in Pakistan, particularly concerning participation in Islamic festivals and rituals.

The Reality of Secret Believers

The mainstream Pakistani Church has yet to come to grips with the reality of secret believers.²⁸⁶

There is some mission literature that generally describes the beliefs and practices of secret believers, but more research is required within the Pakistani context. This can be done with a focus on Eid-al-Adha, using quantitative research to document the views and practices of secret believers and the Christians who work among them.

5.2 Towards a Christian Theology of Eid-al-Adha (Finding 2)

While socio-political factors may be involved, Christians describe their perceptions of Eid-al-Adha in theological terms, which need further exploration.

5.2.1 Eid-al-Adha and the Cross

The theological reluctance to participate in Eid-al-Adha is based on the perception that it is a parallel sacrifice to Jesus' atoning death on the cross.²⁸⁷ Thus, Christians should not participate in Eid-al-Adha, lest they deny the efficacy and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. Likewise, Eid-al-Adha is also seen as antithetical to the Eucharist.

5.2.2 Eid-al-Adha and Vatican II

According to the sources used for this thesis, those who participate in Eid-al-Adha and consume sacrificial meat in Pakistan are mostly Roman Catholics.²⁸⁸ Their motivation is based on the

²⁸⁶ Section 1.2.2

²⁸⁷ Section 2.3.2

²⁸⁸ Section 2.3.1

desire to establish dialogue and good relations with the Muslim majority, in line with the teachings of Vatican II. The “clear difference” between Roman Catholic and Protestant approaches to Eid-al-Adha can be attributed to how both groups contextualize their faith in Pakistan.

5.2.3 Conclusions

The Protestant theology of Eid-al-Adha sees this Islamic festival in the light of the Christian understanding of atonement, which requires blood sacrifice. This is regardless of the fact that Muslims do not consider Eid-al-Adha as a sacrifice of atonement.²⁸⁹ The Pakistani Protestant understanding of Eid-al-Adha as a parallel sacrifice to Jesus’ crucifixion may have originated in missionary attempts to use Eid-al-Adha as a tool or bridge for communicating the gospel with Muslims. Likewise, the antithetical association of Eid-al-Adha and the Eucharist is possibly a contextual application of 1 Corinthians 10:21.²⁹⁰

5.2.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Revisiting Assumptions

Protestant Christians should revisit their perceptions of Eid-al-Adha in light of how Roman Catholics, Muslims, and secret believers react to the festival. They should be attentive to how Muslims themselves describe the ritual of sacrifice instead of reading Christian concepts of ransom, atonement, or covering sins into Eid-al-Adha. This is not a call for Protestant theologians to change their stance on sacrificial meat, but to revisit and clarify their methodology. The same goes for Protestants who are open to participation in Eid-al-Adha. Further deliberation may reveal a difference in methodology and conclusions among different

²⁸⁹ Section 2.3.2

²⁹⁰ Section 3.4.2

Protestant groups (e.g. Anglican, Presbyterian, or Pentecostal), which is understandable. But the cards need to be put on the table.

Recognition of Cultural Factors

Pakistani Christians can also learn from their fellow believers in other Muslim countries. This is also a question that requires qualitative research, but informal conversations, newsletters, social media posts, and exposure visits can also tell a lot about the general Christian beliefs and practices regarding Eid-al-Adha in Muslim countries.

Exploring Broader Questions

Theological engagement with Eid-al-Adha has to do with broader themes, especially the theology of identity and the theology of religions. These themes should be more prominent in the Pakistani theological discourse and local writers and theological students should be encouraged to pursue them. The researcher realizes that it can be dangerous to publicly discuss or publish critical Christian reflections on Islam or state policies in Pakistan. However, this should not be a reason for suppressing this discourse entirely. Pakistani theologians and students outside the country can play a role by exploring these topics in safer environments and better academic facilities.

5.3 Eid-al-Adha and Food Offered to Idols (Finding 3)

Paul's teaching on idol food in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 is crucial to the Pakistani Christian understanding of Eid-al-Adha. Some Christians in Pakistan recognize that 1 Corinthians does not apply to Eid-al-Adha because it discusses pagan sacrifices to idols, which Islam also condemns. This scriptural "clarity" on this issue, however, exists only at the surface level. For instance, how

do these Christians interpret the contrast of the Eucharist and the “cup of demons” in 1 Corinthians 10:21?

5.3.1 Conclusion

It is one thing to say that 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 do not apply to Eid-al-Adha, but does that mean Paul’s discussion on idol food has no relevance in Pakistan? That is a simplistic and dismissive stance. To avoid this, the researcher has tried to demonstrate how these texts may apply to contextual issues like the concept of God, the sharing of sacrificial meat, and the challenge of Christian identity.²⁹¹

5.3.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Contextual Hermeneutics

Reading Eid-al-Adha into Scripture may be eisegetical, but it does show that contextual awareness exists among Pakistani Christians. Generally speaking, they take the Bible at face value. When words or phrases of contextual relevance appear in the translation (e.g. قربانی کا گوشت), it is only natural that they make a correlation within the text and their environment. Local discourse on Eid-al-Adha reveals this aspect. Thus, intercultural hermeneutics need not be practiced in a vacuum. Exegetes and preachers can take cues from how Pakistani Christians read particular texts, and then find points of agreement, clarity, and correction. This can be done by listening attentively to voices in the community.

Local Commentaries on 1 Corinthians

The researcher could only find one complete commentary on 1 Corinthians published locally.

There is also an Urdu translation of William Macdonald’s commentary on 1 Corinthians, but that

²⁹¹ Section 3.4.4

does not qualify as local. This gap must also be filled with more full-length commentaries of this epistle, which is ripe for contextual applications. Meanwhile, the work of the Indian scholar Finny Philip on 1 Corinthians in the *South Asia Bible Commentary* provides value as a contextual resource, which has now been translated into Urdu as well

Lectionaries, Bible Studies and Sermons

Due to their relevance to the debate on Eid-al-Adha, texts from 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 can be added to church lectionaries in the weeks leading to the Islamic festival. This can enable preachers to systematically engage with the texts in the backdrop of Eid-al-Adha. Alternatively, there can be Bible studies on these texts for interested congregation members.

This is not to suggest that Pakistani preachers do not speak on this topic. It is just that their approach is utilitarian, i.e. to teach their congregations to eat or not eat sacrificial meat. This diminishes the hermeneutical possibilities of 1 Corinthians in the Pakistani context. For example, instead of focusing on sacrificial meat in 1 Corinthians, local exegesis can focus on the theme of “weak” Christians and how it applies to poverty and marginalization in the Christian community.

5.4 Neo-Calvinism and Eid-al-Adha (Finding 4)

This thesis is part of a study program where the researcher was exposed to neo-Calvinism and its contextual possibilities. Thus, one section of the thesis is based on the possibility of applying neo-Calvinistic concepts of worldview and directional pluralism to Eid-al-Adha. Four theologians in the neo-Calvinist tradition were used in this section to demonstrate a theological analysis of Eid-al-Adha.

5.4.1 Conclusion

A brief examination reveals three key themes within the Feast of Sacrifice: creation, fall, and redemption.²⁹² Eid-al-Adha also has elements of what Kuyper describes as “true religion.”²⁹³ Finally, Mouw and Griffioen's work on pluralism can potentially help Pakistan Christians to move beyond theological arguments about Eid-al-Adha to public engagement with the majority Muslim community.²⁹⁴

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Neo-Calvinism in Pakistan

Neo-Calvinism is a worldview based on God's sovereignty, where everything belongs (or should belong) to God. Yet Kuyper's neo-Calvinism promotes citizens' freedom in different spheres of society. These concepts have relevance for Pakistan. Firstly, they give room for contextualization. Secondly, they encourage non-hierarchical church structures. And thirdly, they encourage Christians to participate fully in public life and influence society and government for Jesus. Most Protestant theologians and clergymen in Pakistan are familiar with Louis Berkhof. The translation of his *Systematic Theology* in Urdu has been the main reference book in Protestant seminaries in Pakistan for many decades. However, the works of Kuyper, Bavinck, and other theologians in this tradition should be made available in local languages for broader dissemination of neo-Calvinism in Pakistan.

Worldview Comparison

Current Muslim-Christian engagement in Pakistan revolves around interfaith harmony and apologetics. It has been noted above that critically analyzing Islam from a Christian perspective

²⁹² Section 4.2.1

²⁹³ Section 4.1.2

²⁹⁴ Section 4.3

can be dangerous and counterproductive in Pakistan. In this scenario, a worldview analysis can be a constructive way to compare Islam and Christianity. It invites both Christians and Muslims to reflect on God's creational goodness, the reality of sin, and the potential of redemption in the light of their faith traditions.

Contextualization of Islamic Rituals

Neo-Calvinism also provides a way to "Christianize" Eid-al-Adha which is rooted in God's creational sovereignty and Christ's redemptive death. It is not based on a Christian reading of the Qur'anic story of Abraham's story of sacrificing his son, which seems to be the usual approach of missionaries and evangelists. It also allows room for Islam's internal claims while seriously considering its differences with the Christian worldview. Thus, Eid-al-Adha serves as a viable example of contextualization based on neo-Calvinism.

Public Engagement

Finally, neo-Calvinism provides a comprehensive framework to guide Christian public engagement in Pakistan. It allows Christians to make exclusive faith claims while advocating for minority rights on the one hand, while maintaining dialogue with the Muslim majority. There are historical examples where Pakistani Christians have navigated associational, cultural, and directional pluralisms to advocate for their rights and assert their identity. Sara Singha lists three examples where Christians have used the spheres/pluralisms of media and politics to assert their identity and influenced the state and society to

- Officially recognize Christian contribution to the freedom of Pakistan
- Use "Maseehi" (from *Maseeh* - Christ) instead of "Isai" (from *Isa* - The Qu'ranic name of Jesus) to denote Christians in official communications

- Add Easter to the list of official holidays in Pakistan (for Christians)²⁹⁵

Thus, Christian public action is a historical reality in Pakistan, and it has been done through joint efforts of churches, Christian organizations, politicians, and the media. These concrete examples of pluralism and sphere associations can further encourage Christians of Pakistan to continue efforts for social justice. In this regard, neo-Calvinism provides a viable method of public engagement that is not based on secularism, leftist politics, or wokeism, but on the Christian notions of creation and redemption. It helps Christians uphold their worldview without denying others while avoiding the temptations of secularism and syncretism. In this framework, Pakistani Christians do not have to give up their faith commitment to protect their political identity in the country.

5.5 Conclusion: Something more than “meats” the eye

Theological research on Eid-al-Adha was triggered by the issue of eating sacrificial meat in Pakistan. However, it revealed a broader story encompassing the past, present, and potential future of Pakistani Christians. It also tells something about Christian-Muslim relations in the country. This thesis is a call to realize and explore these broad possibilities revealed by an “easy” topic of theological research. It may not convince lay believers to change their stance on *qurbani ka gosht*. Hopefully, it may steer local church leaders, evangelists, and theological educators to explore broader contextual possibilities of spiritual formation, interfaith engagement, and evangelism by recognizing the multiple factors behind “simple” decisions such as eating or not eating Eid-al-Adha meat.

²⁹⁵ Singha, “Christians in Pakistan and Afghanistan” 246-249

Appendix

Publications by Pakistani Christian Authors

It is hard to collate an exhaustive list of theological publications by Pakistani Christian authors. There are, however, several lists of books and authors available online that are listed below. The purpose of listing these publications is twofold. First, it will help us get an overview of the official theological discourse in Pakistan, i.e. what topics are being published for local Christians. The second is to demonstrate, as much as I can, the lack of literature that directly speaks to the topic of Eid-al-Adha and sacrificial meat.²⁹⁶

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²⁹⁶ Keywords: Eid al Adha (عيد الأضحى), Īd al-ʿAḏḩā, Eid ul Adha, Feast of Sacrifice, sacrificial meat (فربانی کا گوشت), Isaac, Ishmael, sacrifice, Qurbani, Qorbani

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1.3 Individual Authors

Books by Charles Amjad-Ali, <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Charles-Amjad-Ali> (accessed 26th May 2024)

Books by Jamil Nasir, <https://cop-pak.com/portfolio-item/urdu-bible/> (accessed 27th May 2024)

Books by Michael Nazir Ali: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Nazir-Ali#Publications (accessed 26th May 2024)

Books by Pervaiz Sultan:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. مسیحی رسالت کے افکار | 4. Church & Development ²⁹⁷ |
| 2. غربت کے فرزند | 5. نئے موسم کے رنگ |
| 3. Small but Significant | 6. باون یا دیں |

²⁹⁷

Available online as scanned copy, <https://oro.open.ac.uk/57715/1/388301.pdf>

11. خدا کا دریا
7. عہد کے فرزند
12. - خدا کا پیار
8. خُدا ہمارے ساتھ
13. - اصلاح کے موتی
9. عورت اور اثر دہا
14. خدا کا عرفان
10. مسیحی روزہ کا اُسلوب

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1.5 Theological Journals

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