CHRISTIAN MUSLIM APPROACHES TO THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST
(AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF MODERN TRENDS)

Ph. D. Thesis Islamic Studies

2008AD/1429AH

Submitted by
Hafiz Aftab Ahmad
Roll No. 06-08

Supervisor
Prof. Dr. Ghulam Ali Khan

Department of Islamic Studies
University of the Punjab, Lahore.
In the name of Allah,
the Most Beneficent,
the Most Merciful
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Alphabets</th>
<th>English Transliteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>َ</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ْ</td>
<td>th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>j</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>kh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ْ</td>
<td>dh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>sh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>gh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُ</td>
<td>q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ٍ</td>
<td>å</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>ï</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ِ</td>
<td>Ź</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, survey of Christian Muslim literature has been presented and different modern trends have been described in a lucid manner. All the relevant sources related to Jesus came under discussion. The major focus was upon the Holy Qur’an, Ahadith and Christian sources.

In the second chapter, different issues of controversy between Christianity and Islam are presented and then those are analytically and critically evaluated in a comparative method. To substantiate Islamic viewpoint, frequent evidences have been presented from the Christianity as well.

In the third chapter, classical and modern Christian approaches to the life of Jesus have been discussed and presented in an impartial way. A historical evolution in the thought of leading Christian scholars came under discussion. There viewpoints are portrayed as they wanted to be understood without any prejudice and partiality.

Fourth chapter deals with Muslim representation of Jesus Christ. Most of the Muslim scholarship presented Islamic understanding of Christianity in general and Jesus Christ in particular. An analysis of classical and modern trends in Muslim thought was the major focus in this chapter.

In the fifth chapter, Christological issues in Christian Muslim literature have been identified. Different references have been quoted for the necessity of Dialogue between Christian and Muslim World. In this chapter, Dialogue has been defined effectively in the light of Muslim & Western scholarship. We have applied comparative method, in a descriptive and analytic way. A code of conduct has been suggested for the Provisions of Interfaith dialogue in Christian Muslim perspective. An attempt has also been made to clarify its scope, methodology and Principles keeping in view the Discourse of Islam and Christianity.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is with deep sense of gratitude to Allah Almighty my Creator and Sustainer that I admit of His uncountable favours on me, especially of guidance to Islam and of the pursuit of knowledge of the wonderful religion.

There are just too many people to thank after having completed this Dissertation and it would be next to impossible for me to do justice to all of them. A mere mention of their names with whose support I was able to complete this work would itself require a few pages. That includes people from Pakistan and numerous people abroad in particular the United Kingdom.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor Professor Dr. Ghulam Ali Khan for his steady and continues academic support, encouragement, and tremendous patience. This thesis would obviously not have been possible without his guidance, assistance, and every possible support one could conceive of.

I have to acknowledge with appreciation the opportunity given to me by University of the Punjab, Lahore- Pakistan and the teachers of the Department of Islamic Studies. In addition, special thanks to Muhammad Mansoor, Farooq Azam, Tanveer Ahmad, Dr. Ghulam Hussain and Dr. Muhammad Feroz -ud-Din Shah who helped me in one way or the other.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the continuous support, prayers and guidance if my blessed parents, my brothers, sister and other family members who have waited patiently for a long time to see this work see the light of day.

Hafiz Aftab Ahmad
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration  
Abstract  
Acknowledgement  
Introduction ................................................................. I  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: REVIEW OF CHRISTIAN MUSLIM LITERATURE ON THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Review of Literature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 An Analysis of the Sources on Jesus Christ (An Evaluation of Pre-Islamic Literature)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Representation of Jesus in Christian Literature</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) As Described In The Holy Qur’an</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) in the Light of Ḥadīth Literature</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II: CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DIVERGENCES ON PERSONA OF JESUS CHRIST</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Belief of Trinity</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The Divinity of Jesus</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Incarnation</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 The Belief of Crucifixion</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The Atonement</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Inherited Sinfulness</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 The Doctrine of Original Sin</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III: CLASSICAL AND MODERN CHRISTIAN APPROACHES TO THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Jesus Christ in the Thought of Paul</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Martin Luther’s Approach To Jesus Christ</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Jesus Christ in the writings of John Wesley</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Representation of Jesus Christ by David Friedrich Strauss</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

This is an established fact that Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) has a significant position in Muslim perception. However, this is not known to many people of Christian world. The shared reverence and honor for Jesus (peace be upon him) between Christians and Muslims can play a pivotal role in understanding the standpoint of each other. Moreover, the renewed interest in scholarship on Jesus, whether historical or theological, allows the Jesus traditions of Islam to become additional sources in scholarship. There is an argument that the founders of Traditional Christianity have painted Jesus (Peace be upon him) and his belief in colors drawn from the pagan sources. A lot of discussions have taken place in the present time for creating interfaith harmony between Christians and Muslims. This dissertation is an effort to analyze and evaluate these points in the light of modern researches and new tendencies found in Christian-Muslim Scholarship.

It is worth mentioning that many Christian scholars and thinkers of the modern period have pointed out that the disagreement about the personality of Jesus Christ is the major difference between Islam and Christianity. This divergence keeps the people of the two religions apart. Muslim concept of Jesus lies between two extremes. The Jews, who rejected Jesus (peace be upon him) as a prophet, called him fraud, while the Christians, on the other hand, considered him to be the son of God and worship him as such. Islam considers Jesus to be one of the greatest and most forbearing of prophets, in addition to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad (peace be upon them). Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) is also considered to be the Messiah as well. This is in compliance with the Islamic view of the Oneness of God, the Oneness of Divine guidance, and the harmonizing role of the subsequent mission of God’s messengers.

The present research work, which is the latest contribution of the researcher forms a message on Love from Islam to the Christian world and is being presented with the aim of
removing the misunderstandings which Christians generally have against Islam and with the hope that all honest and fair-minded researchers will give it the serious thought it fully deserves and will undertake dispassionate inquiry into the personality of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). It is worth mentioning that we have quoted reputed Christian divines for the better understanding of the Christian viewpoints related to the personality of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him).

Before we venture to dwell on Christian Muslim approaches to the life of Jesus Christ, it seems quite pertinent to mention a statement of Encyclopaedia of Britannica about Jesus in which it is said:

“Any attempt to write a “Life of Jesus” should be frankly abandoned. The material for it certainly does not exist. It has been calculated that the total number of days in His life regarding which we have any record does not exceed 50.”

Dean Inge stated:

“No real biography of Jesus can ever be written.”

Sajid Mir has said almost the same idea in his famous work on Christianity in the following words:

أجب أن تترك سينا وراء كتابة "سيرة يسوع"; ذلك لأن المادة الموثقة والمعتمدة لهذا الغرض لا توجد. أما يوجد لدينا من وثائق عن حياته التي يمكن الاعتماد عليها، فهي لا تزيد عن بيان سيرته خمسين يوماً فقط.

A researcher of the life of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) come across the dissimilar beliefs being found between Muslims and Christians related to his personality. Mostly these are:

1. The Belief of Trinity

---

1 Encyclopaedia Brittanica (1958), vol. 13, pp.16-17.
3 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyah, p. 23.
2. The Divinity of Jesus
3. The Divine Sonship of Christ
4. The Doctrine of Original Sin
5. The Blood Atonement.
6. The Crucifixion

It is unambiguous that all these beliefs are the consequence of over-exalting Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) more than what God desires him to be. These controversies focusing on the persona of Jesus (peace be upon him) have overshadowed the commonalities between Christianity and Islam. Some instances can be quoted from the moral system and of human philosophy. They have even overshadowed the beliefs that Muslims correlate with Jesus Christ such as the Virgin Birth of Jesus, being able to speak in the cradle, performing miracles, and the second coming of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him).

Scope & Need of the Work

This study aims at presenting an accurate representation of Jesus in Islam and clearing up why the Christians deviated from his original wisdom. This also indicates that many scholars and thinkers, who are still within the fold of Christianity, are gradually coming to agreement with the Islamic points of view about Jesus, (peace be upon him) in many cases without realizing it. This corresponds to our certainty that the more scientific and biblical studies advance, the more they will be in agreement with Islam. In other words, the Islamic truth will become clear with the passage of time.

Christian theologian Hans Kung claims that humankind is on the threshold of a fourth era of religious relations, one of “pro-existence,” where “we seem to be witnessing the slow awakening of global ecumenical consciousness and the beginning of serious religious
dialogue between both leading experts and broad-based representatives.” Kung predicts that interfaith dialogue would be the greatest phenomenon of the twenty-first century.⁴

**Sources and Methodology**

We have attempted in this research work to study all the relevant writings of the Christian Muslim scholars to be studied, pertaining to their approaches to the life of Jesus Christ. All the primary and secondary sources have been used to substantiate our standpoint. We have tried to apply comparative and analytical method throughout the study. For the purpose of appropriate presentation of transliteration ‘Islamic Studies font’ has been exercised throughout the thesis.

Research on Jesus (peace be upon him) within Christianity has exploded in the last few decades, sparked in part by the millenium and the rise of spirituality in the west. As Michel Desjardins notes, “the 1980s and 1990s have witnessed a breathtaking revival of historical Jesus studies. Recovering the first century Jesus matters more to Christian origin scholars now than it has for over a century.”

Numerous attempts have been made by Christian scholars to classify central trends in modern Muslim approaches to Christ and Christianity. Hugh Goddard, in his Muslim Perceptions of Christianity (1996), distinguishes between ‘polemical’, ‘eirenical’ and ‘intermediate’ literature. Kate Zebiri, in her Muslims and Christians Face to Face (1997), underlines the difference between popular, missionary and scholarly contributions on both sides. She highlights the different approaches found in Muslim popular literature on Christianity and in Protestant missionary literature on Islam on the one hand, and the study of Christianity by Muslim intellectuals and approaches to Islam by Christian Islamicists and theologians on the other.

⁴ Hans Kung, Christianity & World Religions (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), XV.
From the Muslim perspective, the Egyptian context represent a variety of approaches ranging from the apologetic approaches to Christian tradition and the polemical exegesis of the Bible developed in the school of al-Manar, to eirenical approaches to Christianity and ground-breaking ethical reinterpretations of the Gospels by prominent Muslim intellectuals. Besides the abovementioned study of Olaf Schumann (1988/1975), Egyptian and other Arabic contributions have been presented and discussed by Hugh Goddard (1987, 1990, 1996) and others.

In the 1950s and 1960s, several Egyptian writers and theologians wrote ‘Christ-biographies’ from a Muslim viewpoint. ‘Abbas Mahmud al-‘Aqqad (n.d./1953), M. Kamil Husayn (1954, 1994/1959), Khal┘d Muhammad Khal┘d (n .d./1958), Nagib Mahfuz (1981/1959) and Fath Uthm┐n (1961) deserve special mention. The issue of Christ, Muhammad and human conscience emerges as perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the contributions from modern Egyptian writers.

The work rendered by Oddbjørn Lievre\textsuperscript{5} titled “Images of Jesus Christ in Islam” gives an interpretation to the subject of Jesus Christ in Islam and a dialogical argument of this issue’s significance for Christian-Muslim dealings. Its uniqueness lies in its widespread appearance of relevant sources and research and its debate of Islamic images of Christ in the wider perspective of Muslim-Christian associations. Oddbjørn Leirvik presents a widespread elaboration to a breadth of Muslim background through an assessment of interpretations of Jesus all over history, whilst also probing remarkable tensions between Islam and Christianity. This book’s unique contribution lies in its dialogical perception in the persistent area of interest of Islam and Christian-Muslim dealings.

His foremost concern is to discover possibilities of a genuine dialogue between Christians and Muslims on Christology, not as a free subject but as it raises a number of

\textsuperscript{5} Leirvik, Oddbjørn, \textit{Images of Jesus Christ in Islam} (Uppsala: Studia Mission alia Upsaliensia, 1999).
inevitable anthropological and upright questions. This work is an attempt in showing why Jesus (peace be upon him) is important to Muslims as well as Christians, and also how he has set the faiths apart and might bring them closer. The diversity of approaches to Jesus it includes and the broad range of works on him it examines is useful for the researchers.

Hugh Goddard has also presented a study of modern Indian and Pakistani perceptions of Christ and Christianity (Goddard 1994). Recently, there has been a marked interest to examine the image of Christ as it can be found not only in the Islamic source material, but also in contemporary Muslim literature such as Persian and Urdu poetry. The poetical contributions including those from Arab poets kindle fresh reflections on the theme of miracles and the cross in Christology.

Apart from the works by poets and novelists as essayists referred to above, many of the most ironical contributions from the Muslim side come from authors with a Shiite background. One is the prolific author Seyyed Hossein Nasr. In a short essay on Jesus through the Eyes of Islam (Nasr 1981), he asserts that the only irreducible ‘fact’ separating Christianity and Islam is the question of crucifixion, and the related issue of redemption. He emphasizes, the pre-eminence given to Christ as ‘the seal of sanctity’ in Sufism, but still insists that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was foretold by Christ, as the final Prophet fulfilling the faith of Abraham, the law of Moses and the spiritual way of Christ. In a different context, he suggests that Christ and the Christian tradition represent the esoteric aspect of the Abrahamic tradition, the internal Dimensions of the primordial religion, which is a spiritual way rather than a law. Christ did not bring a new revealed law or (shariah) but a way (farihah) based on the love of God. Islam recognized the particular function of Christ, which thus differed from that of other prophets who usually brought a law or reformed a previous one,

---


by acknowledging his particular nature as the ‘spirit of God’ (rūḥ Allāh) and his ‘supernatural birth’, connected with the virginity of Mary.

Among the attempts at overcoming simplistic apologetics and establishing a Real dialogue about Christ, the contributions by the Muslim scholar Mahmoud Ayoub under the heading ‘Towards a Muslim Christology’ deserve special mention. In his studies, he examines the central Qur’ānic passages, the classical exegesis and the Shi’ite traditions concerning the teaching, suffering and death of Christ—all the time in search of possible bridges to the Christian image of Jesus Christ. This denies the expiatory sacrifice of Christ on the Cross as a ransom for Sinful humanity, but denies neither the actual death of Christ nor his general redemptive role in human history.

In more general terms, Ayoub’s approach may be characterized by the following citations: ‘Islam denies the divinity of Christ, but without denying his Special humanity.’ And: like the Christ of Christian faith and hope, the Jesus of the Qur’ān and later Muslim piety is much more than a mere human being, or even simply the messenger of a book. While the Jesus of Islam is not the Christ of Christianity, the Christ of the Gospel often speaks through the austere, human Jesus of Muslim piety. Indeed, the free spirits of Islamic mysticism found in the man Jesus is not only the example of piety, love and asceticism which they sought to emulate, but also the Christ who exemplifies fulfilled humanity, a humanity illumined by the light of God.

Ayoub has also published a meditation on the ‘Miracle of Jesus’ and a study on the terms *walad* and *Ibn* as used in the Qur’ānic and tafsīr discussions of the divine sonship of

---

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 187.
Christ. He argues that the Qur’anic denial of Christ’s sonship (as *walad*), should primarily be read as a rejection of the notion of divine offspring in the physical sense. As for Jesus as a miracle, Ayoub speaks of Jesus as a divine expression of the miracle of life: 'The miracle of life that is Jesus unfolds further as a life-giving and sanctifying divine force.' This does not imply, however, that Jesus was something other than human. Ayoub reminds Christians that the humanity of Christ was in fact one of the original Christological doctrines. It is as the word of God, in the sense of the servant of God and the messenger of God that Jesus stands forth as 'the miracle of life, of love and of healing. One who heals the sickness of the human soul, one who infuses life into dead spirits by his own life and spirit.

By his willingness to examine critically both Muslim and Christian sources and teachings, Ayoub is opening the field for a genuine dialogue about the divine word: ‘The miracle of Jesus, like the miracle of the Qur’ân, is not a once only event, but an everlasting source of blessing, guidance, and salvation.

Similar approaches can be found with another Muslim of Shiite orientation Asghar ‘Ali Engineer. In a paper from 1991, he examines Indian/Pakistani and Persian interpretations of Christ as well as their use of Christian symbolism:

“These thinkers and writers view a personality like Jesus Christ in their own way which appeals to emotion rather than to intellect. The theologians have revered and discussed Christ, but they have never been deeply moved by him. It is poets, creative writers and thinkers who seem to have been deeply moved by him and his humane personality. Most of the Muslim writers and thinkers have seen in him a soothing humanism, love and affection.”

Another most noteworthy contribution comes from the Indian Shi’ite writer Ḥasan

---

15 Ibid., p.227.
16 Asghar Ali Engineer in a paper published in 1991?
Askari. In an essay from 1972 on the dialogical relationship between Christianity and Islam, he cites a poem by Rumi:

For a friend to know the sign and mingle all his soul with mine.\(^{17}\) In the essay, Askari approaches Christ as a common ‘sign’ for Christians and Muslims. In the case of Christ the divine Word referred to by both the Qur’ān and the Bible is a Person and not a book. Accordingly, Christ reveals the deep relational character of religion: ‘To me, personally, Christ as Sign of God liberates man from the dead circle of monological religion and restores unto him his genuine dialogical relation. Askarī suggests that a dialogue about Christ as seen by the Bible and the Qur’ān might help Christians and Muslims “Alĭke to overcome the monological traps of their religions, and discover the true other of divine revelation such a discovery implies pain and anxiety, but should not therefore be eschewed’ it is right in the middle of this pain and anxiety that a Divine Sign is known.\(^{18}\)

M. ‘Alĭ Merad, a French Muslim of Algerian origin wrote a book about Christ in the Qur’ān in 1968\(^{19}\) also deserves special mention among those writing in a more explicit tone.

Not only has it mattered more for scholars of Christianity within the academic study of religion, but also it has become more important for Christian apologists, philosophers and believers in general. The question of who Jesus (peace be upon him) really was even finds the occasional call for contemplation by media and the average person on the street. Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) has captured the attention of many in western society, and the search for “real Jesus” has been given a boost by this cultural fixation. Often in this search for Jesus, other religious inclinations and traditions that also hold Jesus to be a significant teacher or prophet are ignored. Even more so, The Jesus traditions found within the religion of Islam receive far less attention. The Qur’ān, Ḥadīth and other Islamic writings seems to be too historically removed, and too much like the New Testament or ancient Christian fables to be taken seriously.


\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 486. For the prospective on interreligious dialogue, see also David Tracy, ‘The Hidden God: The Divine Other of Liberation’, in *Cross Currents*, vol.46, 1:1996, pp.5-16.

\(^{19}\) Merad. M. A. ‘Christ according to the Qur’an’. *Encounter* (Rome).
Nevertheless, Jesus (peace be upon him) also captures the minds of Muslim believers. To the Muslims the Jesus of Islam is the real Jesus, and the Jesus narratives found in the Islamic scriptures are historical. Jesus (peace be upon him) is given high honour in Islam and its scriptures, something that is often unknown to many in the west. As such, in seeking a dialogue between Christianity and Islam, the person of Jesus is a natural entry point for this dialogue. He is central to both faiths, and belief in him and his mission is essential for salvation in each faith.

This thesis will examine the Jesus of Islam and Christianity to discover what particular understandings about Jesus are present in both religious traditions.

**Plan of Work**

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, survey of Christian Muslim literature has been presented and different modern trends have been described in a lucid manner. All the relevant sources related to Jesus came under discussion. The major focus was upon the Holy Qur’an, Ahadith and Christian sources.

In the second chapter, different issues of controversy between Christianity and Islam are presented and then those are analytically and critically evaluated in a comparative method. To substantiate Islamic viewpoint, frequent evidences have been presented from the Christianity as well.

In the third chapter, classical and modern Christian approaches to the life of Jesus have been discussed and presented in an impartial way. A historical evolution in the thought of leading Christian scholars came under discussion. There viewpoints are portrayed as they wanted to be understood without any prejudice and partiality.

Fourth chapter deals with Muslim representation of Jesus Christ. Most of the Muslim scholarship presented Islamic understanding of Christianity in general and Jesus Christ in
particular. An analysis of classical and modern trends in Muslim thought was the major focus in this chapter.

In the fifth chapter, Christological issues in Christian Muslim literature have been identified. Different references have been quoted for the necessity of Dialogue between Christian and Muslim World. Interfaith Dialogue is an indispensable reality of the contemporary world. Global peace, security, religious tolerance, justice, human dignity and prosperity cannot be maintained without interreligious harmony. In this chapter, Dialogue has been defined effectively in the light of Muslim & Western scholarship. We have applied comparative method, in a descriptive and analytic way. A code of conduct has been suggested for the Provisions of Interfaith dialogue in Christian Muslim perspective. An attempt has also been made to clarify its scope, methodology and Principles keeping in view the Discourse of Islam and Christianity. Finally, a summary, findings and questions for further study have been described in an effective manner.

We are not and will not claim perfection or even of being exhaustive in this humble work. If the work has even in the least of measure, helped in discovering part of Muslims’ and Christians’ efforts and studying and comparing different religions of the world, our efforts could not have been in vain.

In the end, it is our hope that further researches be conducted on Jesus through which more understanding, peaceful co-existence and cordial working relationship between the adherents of two religions can easily be developed. Last but not least, I have to confess that this work would have not assumed its present shape without the assistance of Allah Almighty.

Hafiz Aftab Ahmad
CHAPTER 1

REVIEW OF CHRISTIAN MUSLIM LITERATURE ON

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST
1.1

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
REVIEW OF CHRISTIAN MUSLIM LITERATURE ON THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

Christian Muslim Scholars have produced a lot of literature about Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). However, this is interesting to note that it varies in its nature, purpose and in its contents. We do not feel any hesitation in admitting this fact that review of all the available literature is not possible in this thesis. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to cover the major representation of Christian Muslim Sources. In review of literature, this must be kept in mind that most of the time we have tried to present that literature which is closer to the Islamic beliefs about Jesus (peace be upon him). However, Christian representation of Jesus has also been discussed and significant place has been given wherever it was required for an objective research.

Rudolf Augustein\(^1\) explained in his book that most of what the Church depicts about Jesus has no foundation. He has tried to prove in his study through the Bible that it is adulterated with additions which neither Jesus nor the writers of the gospels uttered.

The Myth of God Incarnate\(^2\) written by seven theologian scholars in England claims that the problem with the present Christianity is the personality of Jesus which is completely misunderstood. Jesus’ nature, mission and claimed death and resurrection, are all challenged by studies in the field. The book concludes that Jesus was “a man approved by God, for special role within the divine purpose, and ... the later conception of him as God incarnate ... is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us.”

The biblical phrase ‘Son of God’ cannot be said to have ever come, realistically, from the mouth of Jesus himself. According to Hastings’ Dictionary of

---

\(^1\) Rudolf Augustein, Jesus Son of Man, published in Germany 1972 and translated into English 1977.

the Bible,3 “Whether Jesus used it of Himself is doubtful.” It is found in the New Testament most frequently on the lips of others. Even if Jesus had occasionally used such, or similar, a title, “Semitic idiom must be born in mind . . . In various (Bible) passages Israel is referred to as ‘God’s son,’ and in others the righteous are thus described . . . So a ‘son of God’ is a man, or even a people, who reflect the character of God”.

David Friedrich Strauss4 in his enormous work Das Leben Jesu, kritischbearbeitet5 challenged the Church’s supernaturalism and rationalism and described the church’s handling of the historical information about Christ as myth. Strauss agreed to bare historical framework of Jesus’ life that including events such as his baptism by John the Baptist, his teaching and making of disciples, as well as his death due to the hostility of the Pharisees. However, he believed that the early church made many additions to these historical facts and converted Jesus into something he was not building upon the community belief. He established that the church created myths and legends about Jesus and ‘was thus turned into the divine Messiah by the pious, but erroneous devotion of the church.” Strauss concluded that there was so much myth around the life of Jesus that a true biography of his life was nearly impossible to write.

Albert Schweitzer’s6 magnum opus, Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung, proved him as a significant biblical scholar that contributed to the study of the historical Jesus by highlighting that the nineteenth century seekers of

---

4 David Friedrich Strauss can be considered the best known scholar from this period who was born in 1808, held various teaching posts in his early life and remained as a freelance writer since conservative Christians protested and curtailed him from being appointed as Professor of Theology in Zürich in 1839.
6 Albert Schweitzer was truly a genius in his own right. He published his magnum opus, Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung, in 1906 at the age of 31. Not only did he prove himself to be an influential biblical scholar, he also distinguished himself in the field of music and medicine. It is well known that the last fifty years of his life were spent as a missionary doctor in Africa.
Jesus were minimizing or neglecting the eschatological dimension of Jesus’ words and actions in an attempt to make him more universal.

William Wrede, in his several books including ‘The Messianic Secret’ attacked all of Mark’s writing saying that it was written within the theological framework of the Messianic Secret; the author concocted the Messianic secret to explain how Jesus was recognized as the Messiah only after his death, not during his life. Thus Wrede removed the last support modern scholarship had for asserting that the New Testament contained any historically accurate writings. During the time before Wrede wrote, the majority of scholars believed that Mark was the first gospel to be written and that the author did preserve historical information.

The major periods for the historical Jesus Studies can be divided in different phases of the Old Quest, from 1778 to 1906; an interim period or “No Quest,” from 1906 to 1953; the New Quest, from 1953 to the present day; and the Third Quest, from the early 1980’s until the present day.

The first Quest for the historical Jesus, which is now generally defined as the Old Quest, received its name from the title given to the English translation of Albert Schweitzer’s book, Von Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung, published in 1906. The English translation was given the title The Quest of the Historical Jesus which came to be used for the pattern of study as a whole.

The starting point for this historical quest was Hermann Samuel Reimarus who was the first to reconsider substantially differently from the tradition and teaching received in the Church throughout the seventeen and a half centuries. Born in 1694, he was a professor of Oriental languages in Hamburg until his death in 1768.

---

He had never publically expressed his views on Christianity until he was alive. It was not until Reimarus’ works were published posthumously by Gotthold Ephraïm Lessing in fragments from 1774 to 1778 that his private views were made public. The most important fragment was the seventh one, published in 1778, entitled “Von dem Zwecke Jesus und seiner Jünger,” variously translated as “On the Intention of Jesus and His Disciples” or “The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples.” This was the writing that significantly ignited the quest for the historical Jesus. Albert Schweitzer halted the Old Quest so severely that it would not continue for another 50 years, yet he also set the stage for the Third Quest which would not start until 75 years after his writing and fifteen years after his death in 1965.

The period immediately ensuing the publication of Schweitzer’s decisive work was called the period of “No Quest” (1906-1953) when the pursuit into the historical Jesus was halted. Historical skepticism was the major feature of this period and its epitome is found in Rudolf Bultmann. A description of him and his views is sufficient for understanding this period.

The New Quest began on October 23, 1953 when Ernst Käsemann presented his lecture on “The Problem of the Historical Jesus” to a reunion of Bultmann’s students. The New Quest generally views scripture traced to the early Church and is useless in establishing any type of historical truth.

N. T. Wright is a major player within the Third Quest (Early 1980’s to the present day) worthy of note. He is currently Dean of Lichfield Cathedral in

14 Rudolf Bultmann lived from 1884 until 1976. Throughout his life, he held various teaching positions at different schools in Germany. He is most famous for his contributions to form criticism detailed in his work *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*. Bultmann contributed to this interim period between the quests by focusing the attention of history upon the early church, not the life of Jesus.
15 N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 13-6, points out the inability of Reformation theology to adequately deal with the life of Jesus as a primary factor for setting the stage for Reimarus. Harvey K.
Staffordshire, England. Wright is considered the ending point because of his positive approach, respect for history, interest in theology, and a sound use of methodology. Much modern critical study of the historical Jesus uses extra-canonical works for historical information. For example, the Jesus Seminar believes the Gospel of Thomas to be an independent source for information about Jesus.16

Before we venture to dwell further, it seems quite relevant to mention the significant contribution of the Christian and western scholars on this subject. Early contemporary hand-outs, from the nineteenth century, embody of Gerock (1839), Manneval (1867), Rosch (1876) and Sayous (1880). At the end phases of the nineteenth and the start of the twentieth century, during the first journey for ‘the authentic Jesus’ in the West, there was additionally some worry in the supposed logia et agrapha ascribed to Jesus by Muslim journalists, Resulting in accumulations by Margoliouth (1893-94) and Michael Asin et Palacios (1917, 1926). At some stage in twentieth century, three books from the Christian Side coming about the Muslim sources (Qurʾān, Hadith, discourses and legend)

So far as “Historical Jesus in Recent Research” edited by James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight concerned, Dunn and McKnight have collected and provided introductions to a wide cross-section of essays on the topic, ranging from classic essays by the likes of Bultmann, Cadbury, and Schweitzer to the most recent investigations of Horsley, Levine, and Wright. In this tour de force they worked through an endless volume of literature on this subject, from the start of the debate in the late 1700s until the present, to produce an introduction to the “quest of the historical Jesus” as well as to get to the heart of what this “quest” is all about.

From the 1960s, a chain of dialogically oriented presentations from the Christian standpoint have been published. In 1960, Henri Michaud published the

---

16 Funk et al., The Five Gospels, 16.
short study Jesus *selon le Coran*. His aspiration is that there should be a joint reverence of Jesus in a ‘community of hearts’ between the adherents of two monotheistic religions. In his thematic description of the Qur’anic image of Christ, he explains the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān. What he desires is a message that may transcend the substantial differences between Christians and Muslims in their dogmatic teachings about Christ.\(^{18}\) Michaud is of the view that if this purpose shall ever be reached, there must be a mutual respect between Christians and Muslims for the Bible and the Qur’ān.

The effort of the Franciscan missionary Guilio Basgitti-Sani, *The Koran in the Light of Christ* (1977), may be said to stand for a kind of its own. As the subtitle suggests, the author aims at a ‘Christian interpretation of the sacred book of Islam’.\(^{19}\) The author interprets his shift in orientation (to which Louis Massignon is said to have contributed) moving from a rather antagonistic approach to Islam towards a reading of Islam as a revelation that may prepare the way for Christ. Though positive in its approach, the ‘inclusivist’ theological propensity of the author and his ‘theology of history’ leave little room for the genuine otherness of Islam, and his understanding of the Qur’ān is clearly Christian.

Another book published in 1938 by the Egyptian Coptic Christian Ibrahim Lūqa, entitled *Al-Masiḥiya fi al-Islām* (Christianity in Islam), may be listed as another example of the inclusivist approach. The book, which tried to argue that the Qur’ān itself affirmed the Christian message, was not allowed to be reprinted in Egypt in 1967.\(^{20}\)

---


“Prophet Jesus in the Qur’ân” by Geoffrey Parrinder mentions that the Qur’ân time and again refers to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) as Isa, whereas the Gospels initially called him Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), but later changed and called him Jesus Christ or Christ. About the miracles, the Qur’ân confirms that Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) healed the blind, the lepers, and raised the dead to life. About his death, there has been debate down the ages by Muslims and Christians. The Qur’ân talks about “The day of my being raised up alive,” whereas, according to John, Juda was crucified in Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) Jesus’ place, then God caused Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) to die or raised to heaven also. Among the commentators and Muslim scholars, the author considers, Al-Ṭabarî (d. 923), Al-Zamakhshari (d. 1144), Al-Baidawi (d. 685), Sayyid Ahmad Khân etc. He describes their analytical approaches and analyses their views about Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), his birth, tides and miracles. Muslim commentators, according to Parrindar dismissed the arguments of Christians regarding the origin of the name of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). As for the miracles, the Muslim modernist Scholars tried to minimize miraculous elements in the Qur’ân. They try to find natural explanations for the healing miracles as well as for others. Interestingly enough, the early Christians highlighted the miracle of the Reading of the five thousand people at the Last Supper. John, however, denies that manna: Hebrew, manhu, Arabic, Ma’buwa. Meaning, as a small round thing, as small as the boar frost on the ground or any other material food really came down from heaven or from God. As far as the death of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) is concerned, the author says that traditional Muslims interpretation has been that the Jews tried to kill Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) but were unable to do so. The four Gospels, however, concur in the real death of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) on the cross. The author concludes by saying that in Islam, there is clearly a mystery among commentators, the author considers scholars like Al-Ṭabarî (d. 310), Al-Nassaf

---

22 Al-Qur’an 19:33, 34.
23 John 8.59.
Among the modern scholars, he includes Alm’ī (1802-1854), Sayyid Ahmad Khān (1817-1898). Allāma ʿIqbl (1877-1938) and Sayyid Amīr ʿAlī.

In 1975, the German scholar Olaf Schumann brought his thesis Der Christus der Muslim: Christologische Aspekte in der arabischislamischen Literature (enlarged and re-edited in 1988). He argues for including the question of Christ in the dialogue with Muslim, not because of its significance in a Muslim context, but for its centrality in Christian religious studies. He also argues that a serious study of the Christ of the Muslims can do away with some Christian misperceptions, and even lead to a fuller understanding of the Islamic articles of faith. At the time of its publication, no other all-inclusive study had been presented of the actual image of Christ among modern Muslims (i.e. not only in the Islamic sources). His study consists of two parts.


- Secondly: a presentation and discussion of modern Egyptian writers from Muhammad Abduh onwards - focusing on the Shaltūt al-Ghumārī controversy about the return of Christ, and the books on Christ by ʿAbbas Maḥmūd al-Aqqād and Fathī Uthmān (from the 1950s and 1960s). He ends his study with a discussion on concepts of God and man at issues in Muslim Christian differences about Christology.

Shirley Jackson Case25 wrote a book titled “Jesus: A New Biography” a sincere endeavor to recover the information about Jesus. It is written with clarity, simplicity and outspokenness. It earnestly aims to follow scientific methods and to establish objectively the real person underlying the gospel records. Case’s Jesus differs not only from the conventional orthodox Christian Messiah, but also from the so-called liberal

portrait of Jesus. The author will of course be disliked by the orthodox and there is no hope of reconciliation between them. Moderate scholars will examine his volume with some surprise and dislike, but they will have to think with this book or with the standpoint that it represents.

Some of its distinguishing advantages are:

1. The information of the documents and of the times is based on good research. The author has used Josephus independently and to good advantage and in his use of rabbinical material he is not as second-hand as most Christian biographers of Jesus.

2. Concentration is rightly given to the pre-documentary history of the material in the gospels. The independent nature of the units could hardly be better described than is done on pages. This means that the events of Jesus’ life cannot be arranged chronologically. Professor Case simply does not go far enough, for he retains the conventional view that the anecdotes of Mark II-13 really recall a single final week at Jerusalem.26

3. The economic situation of Judaism is appraised more positively27 than in the current monograph on the subject by F. C. Grant. Case avoids the modern excess of making the acceptance or rejection of a political program the key toward an understanding of Jesus.

4. The emphasis on the urban character of life in Palestine and on the urban influence upon Jesus constitutes an interesting and original contribution. The rural traits of the gospels are not denied28 as a primitive and genuine element in the teaching of Jesus, but he cannot be regarded any longer as “a small town man.”

26 Ibid., 17, 269.
27 Ibid., 122, 123, 132.
28 Ibid., 404.
5. The Jewishness of Jesus is recognized, and the essential agreement of his position with that of the scribes. At the same time there is an adequate and careful presentation of the seemingly minor points of disagreement which led to the extreme mutual hostility between them and Jesus.

6. The apocalyptic element in Jesus’ message has full justice done to it. It is not, however, overdone. Case points out that its ethical implication rather than its speculative character interested Jesus. We are not sure, however, that Jesus identified the ethics of the future kingdom with the ethics of his teaching of preparation, or indeed that he thought of the former at all. This book will be a real help to the scholars or intelligent laymen whose desire to see Jesus is matched by the patience necessary for their slowly maturing grasp of obscure historical probabilities. We may safely imagine that more sermons will be preached against the book than from it. But the sermon that should be preached to all its critics, who will so boldly defend or reject it, might well be based on the text, “No one known the Son save the Father.”

Christine Schirrmacher (1992), a German scholar has analysed two specific aspects of modern Christian-Muslim differences on the Bible and Christology. In the first section of Mit den Waffen des Gegners (‘with the weapons of the adversary’), she deals with the Indian roots of modern polemics, with reference to the 19th century controversy between the Indian Muslim Rahmatullâh al-Kairânvî and the Christian missionary Karl Gottlieb Pfander. In the second section, she analyses the twentieth century controversy over the Gospel of Barnabas.

From 1970s onwards, many studies on Christ in the Qur’ân have been discussed by scholars working within Western and Christian context. These include the works of Heikki Raisanen (1971), Claus Schedl (1978), Gunther Risse (1989) and

---

29 Ibid., 305.
30 Ibid., 419-429.
31 Ibid., 439.

“The Quest of the Historical Jesus” is a tribute in historical Jesus studies. In this book Albert Schweitzer\(^{32}\) describes and criticizes eighteenth and nineteenth century attempts at retrieving the “Jesus of history” and stands at the crossroads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to bring closer to the former, and to open the latter for New Testament scholarship. Schweitzer saw the problems of historiography, theology, and politics in the ways the issues were formulated - and the answers proposed - and refocused attention on Jesus’ “eschatology” in a way abandoned by his predecessors. Issues of the messianic secret, the nature of the kingdom of God, and Jesus’ mission are addressed. Because of the new rejuvenated study of Jesus in his first-century context, informed readers will desire Schweitzer as a reference-point for the mistakes of the past and the possibilities of new directions.

“Jesus and the Muslim: An Exploration” by Kenneth Cragg,\(^{33}\) is an introduction to the New Testament that takes into account the issues of central interest to Muslims. Exploring the significance of the figure of Jesus (peace be upon him) not only in the Christian Bible, but also in the Qur’an, Muslim poetry and Muslim devotion. Kenneth Cragg, a significant writer also published a book on this subject in 1985, with the title *Jesus and The Muslim*, as a follow-up and sequel to his book *Muhammad and the Christian*, published in 1984. Cragg’s Jesus and the Muslim presents not only the relevant Muslim sources for the Christian, but also the New Testament for the Muslim the preceding Muhammad and the Christian aims at a nuanced appreciation of Muhammad’s prophethood from a Christian perspective. His

---

32 Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. While still a young man he established strange abilities in a wide range of pursuits, including science, theology, and music. In 1908 he published his magisterial study of the life and works of Johann Sebastian Bach. He studied medicine from 1905 to 1913 at the University of Strasbourg, then founded a hospital in French Equatorial Africa, where he spent most of the remainder of his life. Schweitzer used his Nobel Prize stipend to expand the hospital and to build a leper colony.

main perspective is thus not historical, but mildly apologetic and with a call to genuine dialogue.

During the 1980s two comprehensive studies on Islamic Christology have been presented by Roger Arnaldez; *Jesus fils de Marie prophètes de l’Islam* (1980-cf.1986) and *Jesus dans la pensée musulmane* (1988). In his first work, Arnaldez focuses on Christ in the Qur’ān, as viewed by various Qur’ān-commentaries. In the latter work, Arnaldez focuses on images of Jesus in Sūfism. He pays special attention to the Sūfi commentary to the Qur’ān of al-Qushayrī, the references to Christ in the works of Abū Ṭālib al-Makki and al-Ghazālī, the image of Christ in the esoteric Sūfism of Ibnal-Arabi and the case of al-Ḥallāj. The book also contains chapters on the images of Christ in the works of the Mu’tazilite theologian al-Jāḥiz34 and in Shi‘ī Islam.

In 1996, Maurice Borrmans published a survey of the images of Jesus among Muslims of today, entitled *Jesus et les musulmans d’aujourd’hui*. After referring to the Meccan and Medinan revelations pertaining to Jesus, Mary and the Christians, he describes the image of Jesus in some modern textbooks for Islamic education. He then proceeds to deal with four influential commentaries on the Qur’ān and from the twentieth century, and the images of Jesus that can be found in some other works by modern Muslim theologians. The last part of his presentation focuses on modern Muslim literature, more specifically Jesus-biographies by Egyptian Muslims, and Muslim poetry that includes Jesus-symbolism. Borrmans concludes his book with a dialogical chapter, entitled, Jesus, enigma or mystery? These are some studies mentioned in English, French and German, there are of course many works relevant to the issue in other languages, some of them in the form of general introductions relying on internationally recognized research.

Another noteworthy work “*Christ in Islam and Christianity*”35 by Neal Robinson36 is an exploration of the different Christian approaches to Jesus (peace be

---

34 Schumann, Olaf, *Jesus the Messiah in Muslim Thought*, ISPCK/HMI, 2002.
Review of Christian Muslim Literature on the Life of Jesus Christ

The author presents contentious suggestions about the application of the Qur’ānic representation of Jesus and Mary to Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his ménage. Included are extensive translations of extracts from classical Muslim commentaries including Sunni, Mu’tazilite, Shīa, and Sūfī. Much of the Muslim material which the author translates has not previously been translated into English. This must be the first work of the sort which takes the extremely important commentary tradition into account. It presents the complexity of the subject, the great diversity of interpretations, the input from Christian polemics and apologetics, and the common ground of Muslim beliefs. There is a common concern in the topic and this book fills a very significant gap. However, at some places the partiality of the author is very evident which can be judged easily.

“The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature” by Ṭarīf Khālīdī is a significant work in the studies of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). Khālīdī’s acknowledged intention in producing the collected sayings of the “Muslim Jesus” is to “introduce an image of Jesus little known outside Arabic Islamic culture.” To this end, he has gathered documents from works of ethics, popular devotion, adab (belles-lettres), Sūfī treatises, anthologies of wisdom, stories of the prophets (qīṣāṣ al-anbiyā’), and lives of the saints. In an extensive introduction, he traces earlier studious research on the subject, from Margoliouth through Asin Palacios, and remarks the need for a widespread updating to take account of more recently discovered Arabic manuscripts, as well as Gnostic writings of Nag Hammadi and the sectarian Jewish treatises of Qumran. Khālīdī has sought to provide just such an update in this volume. Thus, he offers a sketch of Jesus as presented in the Qur’ān and

---

38 Ṭarīf Khālīdī is the editor of this work. He is professor of Arabic and fellow of King’s College, Cambridge University. Born in Jerusalem and educated at the American University of Beirut, Ṭarīf Khālīdī has authored many studies on themes of Arabic literature and brings to this study broad scholarship and ease in the use of classical Arabic sources.
39 Ibid., 3-45.
differences between the Qur’anic teachings about the prophet ‘Iṣa and that of the Bible and Christian belief.

He then moves to his central topic, the post Qur’anic sayings of Jesus found in classical Arabic literature. Examining the early historical context in which such sayings arose and their function in the religious teaching and theological differences of the time, he next treats the changing perceptions and significance of Jesus for Muslim writers, in which earlier images of Jesus often were replaced by diverse emphases in light of new issues and theological debates. The earliest sayings of Jesus that circulated among Muslims were eschatological and biblical Ḥadīths. Many sayings concerning the Second Coming of Jesus were accepted as sound by the compilers of Ḥadīth collections, but the others generally were deemed as unsound. Khālidī comments, “When the Ḥadīth texts came to be edited and standardized in authoritative Collections, such as those of Bukhārī and Muslim in the mid-third ninth century, the Jesus of the eschaton survived, but not the Jesus of the ‘biblical’ materials”. The latter did not disappear but continued to circulate in Muslim circles and were available for reference as the occasion arose. Khālidī divides the early sayings into four categories: the eschatological, quasi-Gospel sayings, ascetic sayings and stories, and sayings that echo intra-Muslim polemics.

The image of Jesus in Arabic literature did not remain stagnant, but evolved with the passage of time. In the earliest sayings, Jesus is seen mainly as the ascetical saint, the model of freely chosen poverty, and one who would not allow earthly possessions to distract him from total devotion to God. Later, he is seen, in paraphrases of Gospel verses, as the lord of nature with power over cosmic forces, the miracle worker who healed and expelled demons by God’s permission. In later centuries, Jesus came to be regarded mainly as the teacher of ancient and perennial wisdom and, finally, as the model of social and ethical behavior. In bringing together

---

40 Ibid., 25.
41 Taʾrif Khālidī, 32.
42 Taʾrif Khālidī, 41.
these sayings and providing the historical context in which they must be read, Tarif Khâlidi has done a great job for all who inquire about to understand the development of Islamic thought.

The Messiah in the Qur’ân, the Bible, and Historical Sources” by Louay Fatoohi fills a gap in the literature on the historical Jesus by taking the unique approach of considering together the Qur’ân, the Gospels, and other religious and historical sources. This genuinely new contribution to the scholarship on the historical Jesus shows that, unlike the New Testament accounts, the Qur’ânic image of Jesus is both internally consistent and reconcilable with known history. While showing that our understanding of how the New Testament was formed and our growing knowledge of history confirms that the Christian Jesus is unhistorical, this study makes a strong case for the historicity of the Jesus of the Qur’ân.

The book under review called ‘The Mysteries of Jesus: A Muslim Study of the Origins and Doctrines of the Christian Church by Ruqaiyyah Wärith Maqşûd, a leading British Muslim scholar examines the most recent research and its implications for Jesus scholarship and for the churches, as they seek to reinterpret Jesus for the new age. Her conclusions are that the historical Jesus emerges as a figure far more glorious than the Christ defined in the formulas of medieval Christianity, which were influenced heavily by Greek philosophy and mystery religions whose beliefs hold little appeal for the modern mind. In Ruqayyah’s own words, her study ‘is an attempt to look again at the origins of the Christian Church, in the light of the insights that

---


44 Louay Fatoohi was born in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1961. He obtained BSc in Physics from the College of Science, University of Baghdad, in 1984. In 1992, he and his wife Shetha moved to the United Kingdom where they have settled. He obtained his PhD in Astronomy from the Physics Department, Durham University, 1998. He is the author of several books and many articles in Arabic and English, Dr Fatoohi is particularly interested in Qur’ânic exegesis (Tafsîr), history in the Qur’ân, and comparative religion. His books include Jesus the Muslim Prophet: History Speaks of a Human Messiah Not a Divine Christ, Luna Plena Publishing, 2010; The Mystery of the Crucifixion: The Attempt to Kill Jesus in the Qur’ân, the New Testament, and Historical Sources, Luna Plena Publishing, 2008; The Prophet Joseph in the Qur’ân, the Bible, and History and Jihad in the Qur’ân: The Truth from the Source.
have recently been coaxed from the obscure corners of scholarly journals to become knowledge available to any believer – namely, the conclusions of Gospel form-criticism and a study of early Christian, Jewish and Muslim source material. The book also seeks to discuss theories such as those of Kamāl Salībī, and Kertsen and Gruber which have provoked controversy and which may have hit upon insights of relevance to the case which we present. Pulling together these discussions, the objective is to ask in all seriousness and humility, whether the churches have, in fact, got it all wrong’.

A comparative Study of Christianity and Islam”, 45 by Ulfat Azīz-us-Samad tried to prove that the Gospels were written forty eight years after the resurrection of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) and that these scriptures were not written by the disciples of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him). Thus, Mark was written in 70CE. Luke in 100 CE. The Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke are called the “synoptic Gospels”. There are four ancient manuscripts as. The Codensisinaicicus, (1844 A.D.).The Codenvaticanus (1481 A.D.), The Coden Alexanderinus, (1677A.D.) and The Coden Bezae, (1611 A.D.). The fundamental doctrines of Christianity are the Trinity, the Divinity of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) the Divine son ship of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him).

“The Muslim view of Christianity with special reference to work of Ibn Hazm”46 by Muhammad Abulaylā is an important piece of work focusing primarily on the personality of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), his mission, resurrection of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and his death. According to the author, Ibn Ḥazm carried out balanced scholarly investigation of the Christian textual materials. The author evaluates Ibn Ḥazm’s criticism of Christianity, and agrees that the saying that both the Jews and Christians have distorted the Torah and the Gospels. These were not transmitted in an unbroken succession (tawatur). The Christians received through

agents namely Paul, Mark and Luke. Ibn Ḥazm develops his arguments from three main angles:

(1) The genealogy in Matthew with that in the Old Testament

(2) He provides a critical account of the internal inconsistencies in the Matthew,

(3) And he studies Matthew in comparison with Luke. Ibn Ḥazm also comments on a disparate number of items in the New Testament revealing internal and external contradictions. Finally, Abulaylā critically examines the Christian doctrines of crucifixion, Atonement, Trinity and evidence for these doctrines. He ignores to discuss about birth of Mary.

Norlain Dindang Mababaya’s “Jesus, A man Not God”\(^{47}\) tries to prove from The Gospels and the Qur’an that Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) was a man and a prophet of God. The author analyses verses of the Gospels and The Qur’an dealing with Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) and shows the contradiction in the four Gospels.

It is worth mentioning that a lot of literature has been produced in the subcontinent related to Christians in general and to the life of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) in particular. This kind of literature was the result of Christian missionary activities and because of the propaganda of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qādīyānī. Muslim scholars of the subcontinent played a very significant role in refuting the beliefs of Christian missionaries and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qādīyānī.

Below we will list only those renowned books that are either just related to the life of Jesus (peace be upon him) or descent of Jesus (peace be upon him).

---

\(^{47}\) Norlain Dindang Mababaya, “Jesus A Man Not God.” (Philippines Wisdom Enteriemene Foundation Mindanao State University, 1988.)
“Al-Ḥaq al-Sarḥî fī Ithbāt Ḥayāt al-Masiḥ” by Maulānā Muḥammad Bashīr Sehswānī (d. 1326 A.H.). This book is actually a detailed account of the written debate on the topic of life and death of Jesus (peace be upon him) that took place between Allama Sehswani and Mīrzā Qādiānī. This debate took place in 1891.

“Al-Khiāb al-M’Aliḥ fī Taḥqiq al-Mahdī wal-Masiḥ” by Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwi is very informative and subject matter is lucidly presented.

“Al-Taṣrīḥ bermā Tawātara fī Nuzūl al-Masiḥ” by Allama Anwar Shāh Kāshmīrī, which got published few years ago, was published and distributed from Beirut by a great Scholar named Shaykh Abdul Fattāḥ Abu Ghuddah of Allepo, Syria. There is no doubt that this is an important book on the life and descent of Prophet ‘Īsā (peace be upon him).

“Aqīdat al-Islām fī Ḥayāt Isā Alayhi al-Salām” and “Taḥayyat al-Islām fī Ḥayāt Isā Alayhi al-Salām” by Allama Anwar Shāh Kāshmīrī. These two books of Allama Kāshmīrī are unique about Jesus Christ (peace be upon him).

“Kalimātullāh fī Ḥayāt Ruḥ Allāh” (Urdu) by Maulānā Muḥammad Idrīs Kāndahalvī. Allama Anwar Shāh Kāshmīrī has written side notes on this book.

“Masiḥ Mow’ūd ki Pehchān” by Maulānā Muftī Muḥammad Shāfī (former Grand Muftī of Pakistan).


Former President International Islamic University, Islamābad Dr. Mahmūd Ahmed Ghāzī has written a nice book on this topic in English, its title is “Second Coming of Jesus Christ.”
“Kasr al-S’Alib” by Maulānā ʻIbrāhīm Mīr Sīālkoṭī. This is also a very significant book in this respect.

*Jesus, Prophet of Islam (Revised Edition)* by Muhammad ‘Aṭ’ur-Raḥīm and Ahmad Thomson this is a unique study of the life of Jesus (peace be upon him) and the history of Unitarian and Trinitarian Christianity. It includes references to Jesus (peace be upon him) in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadith as well as a critical study of the Gospel of Barnabas. This is an enormously well-researched and interesting book. This book examines Jesus (peace be upon him) as a prophet teaching the Unity of God, and the historical collapse of Christianity as it abandoned his teachings. The authors draw the dramatic picture of the original followers of Jesus (peace be upon him) who affirmed Unity. What emerges is that “Christianity” is the fiction that replaced their truth. A work that covers the Gospel of Barnabas, the Gospel of Hermes, the Shepherd, early and later Unitarian Christians, Jesus in the Gospels and in the Qur’ān and Ḥadith. The authors clearly show the idea of Jesus as part of a Trinity was a Greek Pagan idea adopted by early Christian mission-arise to gain converts among the Greek, and did not become a widely accepted Christian doctrine until after the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.

*“Christian-Muslim Dialogue in 20th century* by Aṭ‘ullah Siddiquī. In this book, the writer has objectively analyzed the efforts of Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians for dialogue. He has analyzed the relationship of church and the new population.

---

48 Muhammad Ata ur-Rahim, a Colonel from Pakistan died in London, where he had come to complete his Studies on the Life of Isa (AS), he had also traveled half way around the world solely in order to be able to complete the book on Jesus, peace be on him, that he had always longed to write.

49 Ahmad Thomson was educated both in Zimbabwe and England, and having travelled widely, he was fortunate enough to escape having too rigid a cultural molding or social conditioning, and accordingly, although brought up as a Christian, recognized and embraced Islam for what it was. He is currently practicing as a barrister and is deputy chairman of the Association of Muslim Lawyers (AML). He has written widely on a number of Islamic issues, particularly the history of Muslim Spain. “Islam in Andalus”, “For Christ’s Sake”, “Dajjal the Antichrist”, “Blood on the Cross”, and many more.


51 The writer of this book is a Pakistani Muslim settled in England. He got MA and Ph.D. from there.
It is important to note that some Qādiānī writers have also written books on Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). These books are very misleading and some people may be confused and misguided by reading these books. This is why a brief review of some significant books is presented here to avoid deviation from the right path.

Khwajah Nazir Ahmad has written huge book in English language, its name is “Jesus in Heaven on Earth”. This book was first printed in 1952 and since then it has been reprinted repeatedly all over the world. Khawaja Nazir Ahmad was the son of the well-known Qādiānī preacher Khawaja Kamaluddin Lahori, who had significantly contributed towards spreading Qādiānism all over the world. Above-mentioned Khawaja Nazir Ahmad has put in a lot of efforts to compile this book and has used all devilish methods in an attempt to misguide the reader. That is why, this book is an extremely misleading book and due to this reason Qādiānīs are trying to propagate this book on a larger scale all over the world. Several educated people have been impressed by this book which includes names of several so-called intellectuals. On the same topic, Sufi Muť-ur-Rahmān Bengāli has also written a book named: “The Tomb of Jesus”. This book has been published in 1946 from New York.

Molvi Jalāluddin Shams Qādiānī has written a book by the name of “Where did Jesus die. MirzaWasim Ahmad Qādiānī has also written a book by the name of “Latest Findings about Jesus”. In 1976, a German philosopher Mr. Andreas Faber Kaiser wrote a book named “Jesus Died in Kashmir”, in which he agreed with the Qādiānī stand and wrote that Prophet ‘Īsā (PBUH) came to Kashmir and passed away and later on he was buried in Roza-e-BalKhaniyar. After the publication of this book many discussions regarding Prophet ‘Īsā (Peace be upon him) started to rise within the Christians of the world. Thus many Christians started to visit this tomb in Khaniyar. A Russian tourist, Notovich Nicholas has also written a book by the name of “The Life of Saint ‘Īsā” that was published in New York in 1890.

Editor of newspaper ‘Roshni’ Sirinagar, Aziz Kashmiri has written two books, “Mashi Kashmir Mein” in Urdu and the other “Christ in Kashmir” in English. But
actually all the arguments of both of these books have ultimately been derived from books of Mufti Muhammad Sadiq and Khwajah Nazir Ahmad. Apart from these two books, this person has taken out several special editions of his newspaper “Roshni” on this topic.


Payam Shahjahānpuri has published a book on this topic, named “Mashi ki Hindi Injil” (“Indian Gospel of Jesus”).

Muslim scholars all over the world decided to merge their intellectual and profound abilities to counter the phony activities and malicious intention of the Christians. The Christians had to run head over heels by the resulted statement engraved by the Muslim scholars. The reply was not only a thorough response to the limitless strikes but was successful in implementing a firewall of love and peace around the religion Islam.

Moreover the Muslims condemned, any sort of insult or disrespect towards Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), in a loud and clear expression. The scholars and intellectuals of Muslim world are anxious to debate on any issue in the light of freedom of speech, however unfortunately the immature debaters lacking rational proofs and evidence wind up in disrespectful behavior. Unfortunately this aspect has now become more of a trend only due to the downfall of Muslims. The pristine scholars of the Subcontinent who countered the vindictive Christians through motivational speeches, debates, arguments and writings include the famous names such as Maulānā Syed Al-e-Hassan Muhani, Maulānā Raḥmat Ullah Kairānwī, Maulānā Ināyat Rasūl Chiryākotī, Maulānā Syed Naṣirud Din Muḥammad Abul
Manṣūr, Maulānā Muhammad Qāsim Nānautvī, Maulānā Syed Muhammad ‘Alī Maungirī, Dr. Wazīr Khān, Maulānā Sharfulhaq Siddiqī, Maulānā Abu Muhammad Abdul Ḥaq Ḥaqānī, Maulānā Sānūullah Amratsārī and Maulānā Ibrāhīm Siālkōtī.

The Muslim writers and philosophers of the subcontinent wrote several research articles for various magazines and newspapers. Mujāhid Molānā Bāqir ‘Alī regularly wrote articles called as “Urdu Akhbar” (News in Urdu). The respected writer was martyred by death sentence.

**ROLE OF NEWS PAPERS IN COMBATING WITH MISLEADING NOTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY**

Moreover the following are the newspapers that were specifically working to promote the religion Islam and to remove wrong notions of Christianity: “Syed ul Akhbar” (Dehli 1838), “Sirajul Akhbār” (Dehli 1839), “QuṭbulAkhbār” (Agra), “Nūrun ‘Alā Nūr” (Ludhiana)” AminulAkhbār” (Alahbad) “Punjābī Akhbār” (Lahore) “Rahbar e Hind” (Lahore) “Nāsir ul Akhbār” (Dehli) “Mehr e Drakhshān” (Lucknow)” Al-Mustanşar” (Dehli) “Ḥabl e Matin” (Calcuta), “Nūr ul Islām” (Sialkot), “Manshūr e Muḥammad” (Bingor), “Mahnāmah Ḥassan” (Hyderabad) and “Khairul Mawā’īz” (Dehli).

Indian scholars kept a keen eye over the malicious activities of Christianity and always replied in an immaculate exemplary tone. For instance, Maulānā M. Qāsim Nānautvī in 1977 delivered a speech on the perception of Islam in “Maylah Khudā Shnāsī” Similarly his writing named “Mubāḥitha Shḥ Jahan Pur” (Debate of Shah Jahan Pur) is saved in the history. In addition to that his debate about Christianity and Hinduism named as “Taqrīre Dilpazīr” is also reserved in history.

Maulānā ‘Ināyat Rasūl Chiryākōtī spent several years with Jews in order to grasp a command over Hebrew language. He wrote a detailed book including the prognostication of Prophet (peace be upon him) being the last Prophet named “Al-Bushrā”
Maulānā Syed Nasirud Dīn Muhammad Abul Maṣūr composed a book named “Navīd-e-Ījāvida” in which he brilliantly quotes bible i.e “God blessed me with the insight converse properly with the fatigued and exhausted”. The 150 years old ancient book can be rewritten to produce an enormous amount of knowledge.

Maulānā Syed Muhammad ‘Alī Maungirī played a significant role in refuting Christianity and Qāḍyāniat. He responds to the book “Nayāz Nāmah” written by a priest Safdar ‘Alī by publishing an immaculate book called “Mir’at al-Islām”. In addition to that he also composed a book “Mir’at al-Yaqīn” as a reply and response to a tergiversator Father ‘Īmād ud-Dīn, who wrote “Hidāyat al-Muslimin” using an insulting and disrespectful tone. The reply of Maulānā to the Father remained within the boundaries of respect and esteem.

From the beginning of the century, the Journal “The Moslem World” has exhibited more diminutive studies and remorseful treatises on the subject. More recently, the Rome-based “Islamiochristiana” and additionally the Journal “Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations” have distributed articles significant to the subject. From the mid-1950s, critical commitments to this subject have been distributed in the ‘Melanges de l’institut Dominicain d’etudes Orientales’ (Mideo), in Cairo. The magazine “Al-Mushīr” of the Christian Study Center in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, additionally merits exceptional mention. Moreover, Roman Catholic Journal like “Encounter (‘Documents for Muslim-Christian Understanding” distributed by the Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi, Rome) and Encuentro IslamoChristiano (Madrid) have distributed shorter presentations and studies relating to the subject of Christ in Islam & Christianity.

---

Maulānā Abu Muhammad Abdul Ḥaq Ḥaqānī is one of those intellects who critically studied the Bible in his Qur’ānic commentary “Fatḥul Mannān” (Tafsīr-e-Ḥaqānī) included a complete comparison of Christianity in the light of the Holy Qur’ān. The explanation included a thorough debate in the very beginning of the Qur’ānic commentary that is titled “Al-Bayān fi ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān” that focuses on evaluating Judaism and Christianity.

Maulānā ‘Abdul Mājid Daryābādī has very scholastically studied judo-Christian sources and presented his observations in his Qur’ānic commentary (Tafsīr-e-Majīdī).

Several other Muslim scholars of the subcontinent dedicatedly wrote different books such as:

- Maulānā Faqīr Mohammad Jehlāmī wrote “Zubdatul Aqwāl fi Tarjīḥ al-Qur’ān ‘alā al-Anājīl”
- Maulānā Muhammad ‘Alī Murad Abādī composed “Tā’īd al-Furqān” and “Kashf al-Awhām”

In short, Muslim scholars of the subcontinent played a pivotal role in presenting the true beliefs of Christianity. Their contribution is of great significance in the field of comparative religion.

Arab natives never accepted Christianity in their entire history. Despite these tussles many valuable books were published from time to time in Arabic language regarding the analysis of Christianity.
Shaykh al-Islām Taqiuddīn Ibn e Taymiyah wrote a book named “Al-Jawāb al-Saḥīḥ li- Man Baddala Dīn al-Masīḥ” that was translated in Urdu by Maulānā Shams Tabraiz Khān Lakhnavī.

He also responded through a book titled “Al-Risālah al-Qabrasiyya” against the debate of Christian called “Kitāb al-Mintiqī”. His renowned writing also includes “Izhār Tabdīl al- Yahūd wal-Naṣārā ʿalā al-Taurāt wal-Injīl”

Ḥafīz Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jauziyya composed a book named “Hīyāt al-Hīyārā f i Ajwibah al-Yahūdwal-Naṣārā”. Although this book is outstanding but still requires certain additions. The translation of this Arabic book to Urdu language was successfully done by Maulānā Mukhtar Ahmed Nadvī with the title “Yahūd-o- Naṣārā Tārikhke Aiynay Mein”

Similarly, the famous scholar Abul Barkāt Naumān ʿAlī Wāsī who is the son of Allama Alūsī publishd a book “Al-Jawāb al-Faṣīḥ”. This book is of a significant nature.

Imām Rāzī and Imām Qurṭubi in their Tafsīr (Qur’ānic Commentaries) have discussed very important analysis and information regarding the personality of Jesus Christ in particular and Christianity in general.

Ibn Ḥazm and al-Shahrastānī contributed by writing two separate books entitled “Al-Milal wal-Nihal”. These two books are unique in style and a lot of research has been taken place on these books.

The services of Maulānā Raḥmatullāh Kairānwī are of great importance in the analytical study of Christianity. Some of his significant works are “Izhār al-Ḥaq” (Arabic), “T’ījāz-e- ‘Īsvī” (Urdu) and “Izālah al-Awhām” (Persian). Many of his books are translated into different languages of the world.

Muslim scholars of the contemporary world have also published books in English language on Christianity. Some of the famous books are: “The Sources of Christianity” by Khawaja Kamālud Din, “Christianity and Islam” by Dr. Shafqat Ahmed; “What is Christianity” by Yousuf Salīm Chishti; “Trends in Christianity” and “Islam and Christianity” by Dr. Fazlur Raḥmān Anṣārī and “Islam and Christianity” by Dr Muḥammad Ḥamidullāh.

Shaykh Ahmad Dīdāt, a scholar of modern era and a devotee to Maulānā Raḥmatullāh Kairānwī has published more than 20 books regarding the topic of Christianity. Several of his writings are translated in different language of the world.

This detailed review of literature demonstrates the impact and scope of this topic debating its different aspects and angles both in Muslim and Christian scholasticism. However, the most significant point is not to mention only bulk of relevant material rather its value lies in evaluating and analytically reviewing the sources which have been applied in the research. In this sequence, the proceeding discussion covers the same.
1.2

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOURCES ON JESUS CHRIST
AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOURCES ON JESUS CHRIST

(AN EVALUATION OF PRE-ISLAMIC LITERATURE)

The sources of the life of Jesus vary in origin, language and importance. The primary sources are the Canonical Gospels, Acts and Epistles. Hebrew sources must, however, come first, since Jesus lived among Jews. And the Canonical Gospels must come last. They sum up the events of the life of Jesus and his teachings. Pagan sources, the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts and Epistles and the writings of early Christian Fathers must come in between. We will deal with the facts as given in the Holy Qur’ān and the Hadith last of all.

PORTRAIT OF JESUS IN HEBREW LITERATURE

It might be supposed that the earliest mention of Jesus and his teachings ought to be found in the Talmud. But such is not the case. Except for a few references found in them, which are of a later period, and rather in the nature of vituperations and polemics against the founder of a religion which the Jews hated, we find hardly anything in them. These Talmudic references, it appears, were deliberately intended to contradict events as recorded in the Gospels. For example, the Gospels said that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit: the Talmud retorted that he was born without a father but as the result of an irregular union; for he was, according to the Talmud, a “Sinner in Israel.” In the Talmud and Midrash Jesus is identified as ben Stada and ben Pandera. But now it is admitted on all hands that ben Stada was the Egyptian false prophet referred to by Josephus, who is also mentioned in the Acts; and Yeshu ben Pandera is an appellation resulting from a calumny which need not be repeated here, though Klausner gives it in full detail on the strength of Origen and suggests, in light vein, that it originated from the word Panthera, a leopard. Again, reference is made

53 Barnes, Bishop E. W., The Rise of Christianity, 89.
55 Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, 23.
to the “uncleanness” of Mary, which is nothing but a malicious defamation of Maryam, mother of Jesus.

The silence of Jewish writers regarding Jesus is still more striking. There is, to begin with, Philo of Alexandria, who interested himself in the welfare of Israel and was born about thirty years before the Christian Era and did not die until it had lasted fifty-four years. Yet in his more than fifty works which have come down to us it is impossible to find even a single reference to Jesus or his followers. Justus of Tiberias was himself born in Galilee about the supposed date of the crucifixion, and lived in that country amongst men who, it is natural to suppose, were still powerfully stirred by the Gospel preaching. Yet in his two great works, a history of The War of Independence and a Chronicle of Events from Moses to Agrippa II, who died in 100 C.E., he makes not the smallest reference to Jesus.

It has been asserted that we are in a better position with Josephus, the great Jewish historian, who was born in 37 C.E. and died towards the end of the first century, and who thoroughly knew the history of Galilee. In his remarkable history of the Wars of the Jews he speaks of twelve persons bearing the name of Jesus, who are other than Jesus of Nazareth, but he does not mention him at all. In his Jewish Antiquities, however, the following remarkable passage occurs:

At that time there lived Jesus, a holy man, if man he may be called, for he performed wonderful works, and taught men, and they joyfully received the truth. And he was followed by many Jews and many Greeks. He was the Messiah. And our leaders denounced him. But when Pilate had condemned him to the Cross, those who had loved him at first did not deny him. For he appeared to them after having risen from death on the third day. The holy Prophets had, moreover, predicted of him those and many other wonders. The race of the Christians takes its name from him and still exists at the present time.56

56 Josephus, Antiq., 18: 3.
RELATED TO THE LIFE OF JESUS

So far as the Jewish literature is concerned, the lack of Pagan testimony also seems incredible. Only a firm resolve and an intense desire to extract information from a witness who has nothing to tell could discover a few passages from Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger and Celcus. They tell us nothing beyond that in Judaea there had existed a Jew named Jesus, sometimes called Christo, who taught people and did wonderful works and was killed by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius and that he had a special sect which also existed in Rome fifty years after his death, and that, on account of this community, the Jews were expelled from Rome.

It is worth mentioning that the alleged report of Pilate which he is supposed to have sent to Tiberius regarding the death of Jesus, and the notorious Letter of Lentulus, the so-called Governor of Jerusalem, addressed to the Senate and People of Rome concerning the personal appearance and teachings of Jesus. Both these documents are now admitted to be forgeries, and Dobshutz styled the first as “an obvious fabrication” and the second “a preposterous forgery of medieval origin.”
1.3

REPRESENTATION OF JESUS IN CHRISTIAN LITERATURE
REPRESENTATION OF JESUS IN CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

THE EPISTLES

The earliest of all Christian sources are the Epistles of Paul. Of about the same period are the Epistles of Peter, James and others contained in the New Testament. The authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the three Pastoral letters (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) are no longer attributed to Paul. Indeed, their authenticity is not even maintained. They have been excluded by a majority of independent critics from the Pauline Canon.

Paul or Saul, was one of the contemporaries of Jesus; but he did not know him and had not seen him. He, however, testified to having seen him in a vision on his way to Damascus.\(^ {57} \) Three years after, he went to Jerusalem for fifteen days and during this time met Peter and James the Just, brother of Jesus, but did not come in contact with any other of the Apostles.\(^ {58} \)

It would, therefore, be not difficult to conceive that Paul could, and perhaps did, obtain information concerning the life and teachings of Jesus. He knew, by hearsay, of the life of Jesus. Paul, therefore, is a trustworthy witness as to the existence of Jesus, but nothing beyond this. If we bring together all the allusions and references from all of his writings, without examining their truth, we learn from him that Jesus was a Jew,\(^ {59} \) that he was \textit{made of the seed of David, according to the flesh,}\(^ {60} \) that he was \textit{born of a woman, born under the jaws},\(^ {61} \) and that he had brothers,\(^ {62} \) one of whom was James; that he preached only to Israel,\(^ {63} \) and was a humble and obedient servant of God;\(^ {64} \) that he chose twelve Apostles;\(^ {65} \) that he was reviled\(^ {66} \) and crucified\(^ {67} \)

---

\(^ {57} \) Acts, 9:2-5.
\(^ {58} \) Gal., 1:17-19.
\(^ {59} \) Gal. 3:16.
\(^ {60} \) Rom., 1:3
\(^ {61} \) Gal. 4:4.
\(^ {62} \) Cor., 9:5.
\(^ {63} \) Rom., 15: 8.
\(^ {64} \) Phil., 2:8.
by the Jews because of their malice against him and, finally, that he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and showed himself to Peter and the twelve Apostles and others and to Paul himself; and that he now sits on the right hand of God awaiting the Great Day when he shall come again.

The incompleteness of this reconstructed life of Jesus which Paul gives us becomes all the more apparent when we contrast it with the full Christology contained in his Epistles. The conclusion is forced on us that Paul deliberately sacrificed Jesus to Christ. This becomes all the more conspicuous when we realize that he not only ignored the historical Jesus for the mythical Christ, but that he also maintained his apostolic independence of those who lived with and saw Jesus; and held himself aloof from the teachings of Jesus as contained in the Gospels. What Jesus may have said and done on earth became almost a matter of indifference to him. Brought up and influenced by the syncretistic mysteries of the Pagans, Paul conceived Christ as the savior-god, to whom his followers had been united by a powerful rite — his redeeming sacrifice on the cross. Paul set up a creed, of which Jesus knew nothing.

Dr. Arnold Meyer, Professor of Theology of Zurich University, while discussing the original efforts of Paul to reconcile Gnostic speculations and Rabbinical arguments, points out that, by gradually developing his doctrine of Justification, Paul has forever shut out the simple faith of Jesus. The Christological and Eschatological system of Paul, he says, has blocked the approach of many simple souls, and of many nations, to the childlike piety of Jesus. Dr. Meyer puts a question to himself: Who is the founder of Christianity? And in unequivocal terms he furnishes the answer:

“If by Christianity we understand faith in Christ as the heavenly Son of God, who did not belong to earthly humanity, but who lived in the

---

65 1 Cor.. 15:5.  
66 Rom.. 15:3  
67 1Cor..15:3.  
68 1 Thess., 2:15.  
69 1 Cor., 15:4.  
70 1 Cor., 15:5-8.  
71 Rom., 8:34.  
72 Gal., 1:11-18.
Divine likeness and glory, who came down from Heaven to earth, who entered humanity and took upon himself a human form through a virgin, that he might make propitiation for men’s sins by his own blood upon the Cross, who was then awakened from death and raised to the right hand of God, as the Lord of his own people, who believe in him, who hears their prayers, guards and leads them, who, moreover, dwells and works personally in each of them, who will come again with the clouds of Heaven to judge the world, who will cast down all the foes of God, and will bring his own people with him unto the home of heavenly light so that they may become like His glorified body — if this is Christianity, then such Christianity was founded by St. Paul and not by our Lord.”

Dr. Meyer goes on to say that:

“Paul, it is true, wrought a work of tremendous historical importance in that he raised Jesus from the position of a Jewish Messiah to that of the Divine Redeemer of the Gentiles and of the whole world.”

Dr. Johannes Weiss, of Heidelberg University, also remarked in similar strain, that to Paul, Jesus was not only the prophet but the object of religious veneration, and came to the conclusion:

“Hence the faith in Christ as held by Paul was something new in comparison with the preachings of Jesus; it was a new type of religion.”

Wrede says that Paul was not the disciple and servant of Jesus, which he professed to be, but of another, the heavenly Christ. He adds:

“The teachings of Jesus is directed entirely to the individual personally. Man is to submit his soul to God and to God’s will wholly and without reserve. The central point for Paul is a divine and supernatural action. He who believes in these divine acts... The point which was everything to Paul was nothing to Jesus.”

But we cannot leave this discussion, like these three eminent scholars have done, by merely pointing out the difference between the teachings of Jesus and the creed which Paul introduced into the world. We must go deeper and probe the basis

---

73 Meyer, Jesus or Paul. 122.
74 Ibid.
75 Weiss, Paul and Jews. 130.
76 Wrede, Palaus. 6.
of his belief, the reasons for it and the extent to which Paul did create it out of his own imagination. Paul himself relied on a vision which he had when he was near Damascus. In his vision, his hallucination as some call it, Paul merely heard a voice saying unto him: “Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me?” In this vision Paul was further asked not to kick against the pricks. The man who was with Paul and other bystanders saw nothing, heard nothing. So terrified was Paul that he could neither hear nor see anything for three days. To cure him Jesus had to appear to Ananias and to direct him to go to Paul:

“For he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and Kings and the children of Israel.”

It is most extraordinary that neither of these incidents is mentioned by Paul himself. If Paul was in fact the chosen vessel surely Jesus could have announced it to him at the time he appeared to him or he should have appeared again. But supernatural events, as they say, happen in a manner beyond the understanding of man. This much is certain, that Paul never had any direct revelation from Jesus..., because he did not see Jesus again even in his dreams. The audacity and shamelessness of Paul has no parallel in history. He resorted to falsehood, and being conscious of it, protested most vigorously against those who dared charge him with the lies he had told. In his Epistle to the Romans, he wrote “For through my lie abounded unto his glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?” Such, then, is the foundation upon which Paul built his creed.

Paul’s character can be judged from the following incidents. In Jerusalem he was attacked by the Jews. To save himself, and to win their sympathy, he pleaded that he was a Jew of Tarsus; but when he was taken in custody by the Chief Captain, who had him bound with thongs and ordered his examination by scourging, Paul, with a view to escape the punishment, did not hesitate to tell him a lie and pretend

77 Acts. 9:3-7.
78 Acts. 9:15.
79 Rom. 3:7-Revised Version. 1244.
80 Acts, 22:3
that he was a Roman.\textsuperscript{81} Later in the day, he addressed and declared to the crowds that he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee,\textsuperscript{82} but when produced before Festus he once again urged his Roman citizenship. The Governor had, therefore, to send him to Rome to stand his trial before Augustus.\textsuperscript{83} In Rome Paul was twice imprisoned for misdemeanor.

From the very beginning, the other Apostles of Jesus were all afraid of Paul and “believed not that he was a disciple,”\textsuperscript{84} but they received him for a short while on the intervention of Barnabas\textsuperscript{85} whose Gospel, it may be mentioned, Christians disown to this day. But, leaving these considerations aside, if Paul did wrongly attribute to Jesus are legion other than the ones which Jesus preached, we ought to find some Apostolic denunciation of the Pauline creed, or, at least, some indication that the Apostles disapproved of his ideas. If we wade through the Epistles for such information we shall not look in vain. Therein we will find a tripartite fight going on between James, brother of Jesus, Peter and Paul, in which Jude also takes a part. Of course, as fellow-workers in the same cause, they objected in the first instance to each other’s point of view and did not mention names. Gradually, however, not only were names mentioned but the opposite view was styled as heretical. When, however, the Apostles failed to check by these methods the activities of Paul, they actually after fourteen years summoned him to a Council, held at Jerusalem, to explain his conduct and to account for his misdeeds. He attended with his supporters and defied them. They had no control over him, their appeals in the name of Jesus failed, and they were left with no alternative but to dissociate themselves from him. Thus came about the first dissolution of the integral faith and different sects of Christianity, each diametrically opposed to the other, saw the first light of the day.

\textsuperscript{81} Acts, 22:25.  
\textsuperscript{82} Acts, 23:6.  
\textsuperscript{83} Acts, 25:10-12.  
\textsuperscript{84} Acts, 9:26.  
\textsuperscript{85} Acts, 9:27.
Paul did not believe in the observation of the law for he said that “if righteousness comes by the law then Christ died in vain.” Paul pointed out that those who were of the Works of the law were under a curse. The propagation of these views had a three-fold objective first, to preach that a man is justified by faith alone, without the deeds of the Law; secondly, it was a gibe at James, brother of Jesus, who held the opposite view; and, thirdly, it won on Greek soil many licentious adherents to the Pauline creed, for they were assured of salvation without any good deeds. In fact to such, by way of encouragement, Paul had said;

“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”

And Paul also told them:

“A man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” In the same Epistle he further encouraged his followers to stand fast to the liberty for which Christ had made them free, and he advised them to “be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Paul boasted that he had neither written any Gospel, nor had he used any of those which had been written. Nay, to the contrary he boldly asserted: “I give my own judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord.”

Paul, it is true, did claim inspiration in a roundabout way. He claimed that he had it from the Holy Spirit, but he also claimed that it had been given to many, nay, to most of the Apostles, though in different degrees. But no one else claimed it. Paul, however, at places spoke of his own judgment and also of what he said on authority, which he predicated with the assertion: “The Lord says, not I” He also distinguished his judgment by phrases like: “I, not the Lord” or “This I given by permission, not

---

86 Rom., 2: 14, 18.
87 Gal., 2:21.
88 Gal., 3:10.
89 Rom., 3:28.
90 1 Cor., 15:32.
91 Gal., 2:6.
92 Gal., 5:1.
93 1 Cor., 9:15.
94 1 Cor., 7 : 25.
95 I Cor., 2: 10-16; 1 These., 4: 8.
96 I Cor., 12 : 4-12, 28-30.
commandment.” It has, therefore, been construed that all his writings which are not thus qualified are inspired. But Paul naively pointed out that his *Gospel* was something different from “the preachings of Jesus Christ.”97 He never stressed these preachings, but at times expressly, though falsely, declared himself to be “speaking by the word of the Lord” when he manifestly was giving out only his own ideas. To give but one example, Paul, while expressing his own belief regarding the approaching end of the world, falsely alleged that he was “speaking by the words of the Lord.”98 We do not, therefore, know which portions of his Epistles are the result of a revelation from Jesus and which are his own inventions and blunders. How can we be certain that the very texts on which the Christians rest their dogmas, their faith and their hopes are not the human and uninspired portions? This is one of the reasons why early Christians rejected the Pauline Canon.

In these circumstances and since the doctrines of Paul were against the teachings of Jesus, the other Apostles, as already mentioned, denounced Paul and his views. Thus James, brother of Jesus, the head of the Church at Jerusalem, was the first to challenge the views of Paul. We find in his Epistle:

> “Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a *doer of good works*, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”99

James further pointed out that “for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”100

He raised the question: Whether faith alone, without deeds, could save a man?101 And himself gave the answer that “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”102

---

97 Rom., 16:25.
98 Thes., 4:15-17.
99 Jas., 1:25
100 Jas., 2:10.
101 Jas., 2:14.
102 Jas., 2:17.
Then we come across James’ polemics against Paul:

Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well, the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead.  

And condemned the Pauline creed of Justification “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” And finally he said to Paul: 

“Ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil. We now turn to Peter. His character is well-depicted in his denial of Jesus thrice in one night before the cock crowed. Likewise, here we find him adopting the line of least resistance. In his Epistle he advised his “beloved brother” Paul to be sober in habits and to “watch unto prayer” and be charitable. For such a meek attitude James had to dub Peter aptly as “double-minded.” But as Paul began to exceed all limits Peter had to style him, of course not by name, as a “false teacher,” who had introduced into the faith “damnable heresies,” and “pernicious ways.” But when the divergence of their views became too apparent Peter not only attacked his “dearly beloved brother Paul” but also warned his followers against him. Referring to the Epistles of Paul he said: 

“As also in all his Epistles speaking in them of these things; in which are some hard to be understood. . . Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with error of the wicked fall from your own steadfastness.” 

Jude was equally vehement in his denunciation of Paul. He said: 

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God unto lasciviousness. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speketh great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit.
There is another incident which throws some light on the subject. The original name of Mark was John, and he is, as such, referred to in the Acts. Paul and Barnabas had taken him\textsuperscript{108} from Jerusalem to Antioch, to act as their minister and scribe. After passing through Cyprus, Mark suddenly left them\textsuperscript{109} because of his dislike of Paul’s inclination towards preaching to the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{110} In the opposite camp were John, the Evangelist, and Paul. John, who was always a step ahead of Paul, was the first to attack those, Corinthus in particular, who did not believe in the son-god theory. He wrote:

“Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-Christ that denieth the Father and Son.”\textsuperscript{111}

Referring to those who held the opposite view he said:

“And this is that spirit of anti-Christ whereof you have heard that it should come and even now already is it in the world.”\textsuperscript{112}

Now let us turn to Paul in this connection. He, as one would expect, could not stand this onslaught quietly. In the first instance he contented himself by a simple warning. “Let no man deceive you with vain words ... Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them.”\textsuperscript{113}

As a result of these divergent views, divisions arose, and in Corinth a sect came into being whose followers rejected Paul.

He styled them as “thorn in the flesh,” “the messengers of Satan,” and wrote:

“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren that there are contentions amongst you. ... I thank God that I baptised none of you.”\textsuperscript{114}

To the Galatians he said:

\textsuperscript{108} Acts, 12:25.
\textsuperscript{110} Dummelow, \textit{Commentary on the Holy Bible}, 722.
\textsuperscript{111} 1 John, 2 : 22.
\textsuperscript{112} I John, 4 : 3.
\textsuperscript{113} Ephes., 5 : 6-7.
\textsuperscript{114} 1 Cor., 1: 11-14.
“I marvel that ye are soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.”

To the Romans he appealed:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learnt; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

In another place he questioned his disputants:

“Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? Mine answer to them that do not examine me is this: Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?”

We have already mentioned that, after fourteen years, when matters reached a climax James, as head of the Church at Jerusalem, summoned a Council. The proceedings of this meeting are detailed in the Acts and Paul’s version is to be found in his Epistle to the Galatians. Paul tells us that on this occasion he was accompanied by Barnabas and Titus. He was taken to James who was sitting in company with the Elders. James charged him with preaching to the Gentiles and for forsaking Moses, i.e., the Law. They asked him to refrain in future from doing so. Paul says that their appeals were so forceful that even “Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulations.” But he goes on to say:

“When Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.”

Paul concluded his version of the meeting of the Council, by saying:

---

117 1 Cor., 9 : 1-6.
118 Gal., 2: 13.
119 Gal., 2:11.
“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all. Compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners.”

Paul then rebukes the Galatians:

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?”

Thus Paul tried to impress the belief on others that his creed was more important than that of James or Peter. To Paul’s mind the center of interest was not the teacher, the worker of miracles, the companion of publicans and sinners, the opponent of Pharisees, but it was the crucified son of God raised from the dead and none other. Paul, therefore, is the least reliable for our knowledge of the real life of Jesus. Similarly, the remaining Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude do not add anything of importance to our knowledge, except that Peter makes Jesus descend into hell to preach to the dead and the Transfiguration is recalled.

THE ACTS

The authorship of the Acts of the Apostles has long been in question. Eusebius placed them among his third class of spurious literature. The authorship of the Acts is attributed to Luke, the companion of Paul, and although this assertion has been only recently confirmed by the Papal Biblical Commission of 1913, yet it is curious that we find him totally ignorant of the Epistles of Paul. He even contradicts them. The truth is that we do not know who wrote them, nor when they were written. The first edition might have been written by Luke, but the various mutilations, interpolations and dislocations, which it subsequently suffered at the hands of the unscrupulous early Fathers of the Church, have altered it to such an extent that it is impossible to pick out the original portions.

120 Gal., 2:14. 17.
121 Gal., 3:1.
122 1 Pet., 3:19.
123 2 Pet., 1:17.
The *Codex Bezae* and certain other ancient authorities generally called the
*Western Manuscripts* exhibit a text so different from that of the Canonical version that
they may almost be said to constitute a different edition of the Acts.\textsuperscript{124}

Loisy places the Acts in the second century of the Christian Era. Hamack
dates them back to between 78 and 93 C.E. whatever the date be, the Acts tell us little
or nothing about Jesus. The author is totally ill-informed. He hardly mentions Jesus,
an omission for which he excuses himself at the outset. However, the few references
which he makes in the course of his narrative to Jesus are not without significance.
He says that Jesus, the *Nazarene*, was a *man* approved of God among Jews to be a *man chosen of God*\textsuperscript{125} and that Jesus was born of the *seed of David*,\textsuperscript{126} *i.e.*, the fruit of his loins
according to the flesh.\textsuperscript{127} Later, he describes the punishment meted out to Jesus by his
enemies. The main emphasis, however, is laid on the resurrection, and it is mentioned
that Jesus thereafter did eat and drink\textsuperscript{128} and we are thus told that Jesus had a human
existence both before and after the resurrection. It is, however, evident that the
author, under Pauline influence, believed that the Messianic elevation of Jesus had
been made manifest by his resurrection. Luke, however, dates it back to his baptism\textsuperscript{129}
and even earlier still, before the birth of Jesus, in his account of the Annunciation.\textsuperscript{130}

In the Acts the whole career of Jesus from his baptism to crucifixion is
summarised in three verses.\textsuperscript{131} No spoken words of Jesus are recorded anywhere
except in one verse.\textsuperscript{132} The Acts, therefore, do not give us any help in reconstructing
the life of Jesus.

---

\textsuperscript{124} Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible, 815-816.
\textsuperscript{125} Acts, 2: 22.
\textsuperscript{126} Acts, 13: 23.
\textsuperscript{127} Acts, 2: 30.
\textsuperscript{128} Acts, 10: 41.
\textsuperscript{130} Luke, 1: 35.
\textsuperscript{131} Acts, 10 : 38-40
\textsuperscript{132} Acts, 20: 35.
THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS, ACTS AND EPISTLES

There were many ancient “Lives of Jesus” which have been excluded from the New Testament. They have survived in fragments, and sometimes little is known of them except their title. But this much is certain, that most of them arose contemporaneously with the New Testament and some are admitted to be even older. Paul was the first to convey the information that even in his time some Gospels had already been written. The first Canonical Gospel that of Mark, was, however, written after the death of Paul. Therefore, the Gospels to which Paul had referred must have been among those which had been rejected by the Church.

Of all the Apocryphal Gospels, the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites are of particular importance and merit our special attention. They were, according to Hamack, written about 65 C.E. They are, therefore, not later than the Canonical Gospels; and can rank with them. Nay, in many respects, they are superior to them. They were written in Palestine, in Aramaic, for the benefit of Jewish Christians who were still alive to the spirit of Jesus and knew details of his life. These Gospels were rejected by the Church and consequently they retained their originality to a very large extent. It has sometimes been asserted that one is only another edition of the other. They, however, seem to have suffered the disadvantage of being in a language which Jesus spoke. They were, therefore, used in the first instance in congregations in Palestine and Syria only. Subsequent translations did not suit the growing needs of Christianity and they were rejected. They portray the earthly life of Jesus and speak of him as a man.

The other Apocryphal books also rehearse in their own way the deeds and words of Jesus. Unlike the Canonical Gospels, they do not betray a constant desire to interpret anew, to different groups of readers and to varying types of minds, the latest interests of the expanding Christianity, and rarely contain argumentative material which was obviously inserted in the Canonical Gospels as a reply to the sceptics of

---

133 1 Cor., 9: 14-15
the time. Further, lack of Canonical dignity does not prove their worthlessness, and these books must be judged by the character of their contents.

Tradition has handed down twenty-six Apocryphal Gospels, seven Acts and ten Epistles. Some of these are admitted to be forgeries. Some have been rejected by the Church as heretical and as the works of Satan: others have just been brushed aside as they did not suit the new tendencies of the Church. The uncanonical Gospels, however, were accepted by, and read in, various Churches. Of these, apart from the two already mentioned, we know the Gospel of Barnabas, the Gospel of Peter - the Preachings of Peter, as it is sometimes called - the Gospels of the Egyptians, etc. We have already mentioned the Gospel of the Ebionites, whose leader was James the Just, brother of Jesus. The Ebionites believed Jesus to be a man born, in a normal manner, of Joseph and Mary. From these Gospels, as also from compilations like Protovangelium Jacobi, generally known as the Gospel Relating to the Birth and Infancy of Christ, through Evangelium de Nativitate de Maria - The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, The Gospel of Mary, The History of Joseph the Carpenter, etc., we gather some important material to check and compare the facts and the legends contained in the Canonical Gospels. The first-mentioned is sometimes called: The Gospel of James, or The Book of James. In it the birth, education and marriage of Mary and birth of Jesus are described in some detail.

The Apocryphal narratives were for a long period held as historical by the Church, and were explained equally with the Canonical Gospels. These Gospels “continued to be used, some in outlying communities in public worship, and in some ordinary church circles.” They are, therefore, entitled to share with the New Testament the benefit of natural explanation.

---

134 For their names and full particulars the reader is referred to Hastings' Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, and James' Apocryphal New Testament.
It is true that they also show traces of the Pauline creed and at places give way to imaginary and fantastic legends contained in the Canonical Gospels; but the additions and interpolations are so obvious that they can be easily distinguished and separated from the original texts. The early Fathers were too much concerned with putting the Canonical Gospels in order to suit their own views; they, therefore, were not very artistic in committing forgeries in the Apocryphal Gospels and for this reason they can be readily detected.

In reconstructing the life of Jesus from these sources, we have to be very careful, for we have to distinguish facts from the legends which prevailed among the Christians of those days; and also to pick out the original pieces. In drawing from these sources, we must be cautious and ignore Gnostic Gospels, such as the Gospel of Phillip, and the Gospel of Eve, of which, in any case, we have only a few scattered fragments.

The Agrapha, the name given in 1776 by Korner to the uncanonical sayings of Jesus, at the most give us occasional light on the details of the teachings of Jesus. They make no contribution to his biography. It is now almost universally admitted that they are not genuine.

We must also mention here the writings of early Christian Fathers, who wrote before the Canonical Gospels became the prevailing standard. They to some extent aid us in tracing the history of the Canon and the legendary life of Jesus. Justin Martyr composed his Dialogus cum Trypho Judaeo in about 135 C.E. In this we find a statement about “Jesus, the son of the Carpenter, making ox goads and ploughs.”137 The statements of Papias, the Bishop of Hierapolis, who wrote his Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord about 140 C.E., are also of some help. They survive only in fragmentary quotations of Origen and Eusebius.

---

137 Justin Martyr. Dialogus cum Trypho Judaeo, 88.
SOURCE OF THECanonical Gospels about Jesus

These Gospels, “good news,” were written in Greek and were in existence, in some form or another, in the second century of the Christian era: Mark about 65-70 C.E., Matthew about 85 C.E., Luke about 90-95 C.E., and John about 110 C.E. Early Christians believed that the end of all things was at hand, and this belief, for a considerable time, prevented them from setting up any written standard of authority. So much so that Papias, writing in the middle of the second century, expressed his preference for the spiritual gifts of Jesus as superior to any written testimony. Justin Martyr also, about the same time, speaks only of the Memories of the Apostles, but nowhere does he refer to them as Gospels. Gradually, however, a lot of material was reduced to writing for the benefit of rich patrons, and not for humanity at large; and a good deal of spurious material was introduced. Eusebius, writing about 325 C.E. divided the New Testament into three classes: those acknowledged with authority, those whose authority was disputed and the spurious. He included the Acts and a few other books of the New Testament in the third class. In the East, opposition to the Revelations lingered even in the fourth century; while in the West the books whose authority was challenged included Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews. The subject was much discussed at many councils of the Church, and it was not till the Third Council of Carthage, at which Augustine was present, in 397 C.E., that the Canon of the New Testament was finally settled. The naive impudence with which the proceedings of this Council are described provokes a smile.

The system of chapters of the New Testament, now in use, was invented by Cardinal Hugo De S. Caro in 1236 C.E. The Cardinal also divided each chapter into paragraphs marked by letters, but this was superseded by the Verse-System introduced by Robertus Stephenus in 1551 C.E.

This first redaction must have undergone many changes. There are three ancient manuscripts: the Codex Sinaiticus, otherwise known as the Alpha, found by

\(^{138}\) These dates are taken from Peake’s Commentary on the Bible, S 681, 700, 724 and 744.

Tischendorff on Mount Sinai in 1859, said to be of the fourth century; the Codex Alexandrinus known as (A) found by Cyril Luker, Patriarch of Constantinople, in 1621, which is traced to the fifth century, and the third, the Codex Vaticanus, otherwise known as (B), said to be of the fourth century. It needs hardly be mentioned that they are incomplete and differ from each other in as much as some contain such portions of the New Testament as are missing in the others. The Manuscripts now known as Codex Ephraemi Syri (C) and Codex Bezae (D) merely complicate matters further, for they also differ in material particulars.

The Latin Versions, including the Vulgate, fall into two main groups, African and European. Codex Babiensis, Codex Palatinus and Codex Floriacenis, along with the Catholic Epp and Speculum, are conspicuous among the African group. The European group includes, among others, Codex Vercellensis, Codex Veronansiis, Codex Monacensis, Codex Amianitus and some other 8,000 MSS. The Syriac Versions are known chiefly through MSS - the Curetonian, the Sinaitic, the Philoxenian and the Harklean. The Egyptian Versions have Bobairic and Sahidic divisions. There are other numerous versions like Armenian, Gothic, Ethiopic, etc.

The New Testament in Greek was not printed till 1514 C.E. This was the work of redactors working under Cardinal Ximenes. Erasmus produced in 1516 a different edition, and the so-called revised text with verses was the work of Stephenus in 1551 C.E. It was printed in 1624 C.E. Then started a search for the ancient manuscripts and, apart from those already mentioned, two more manuscripts saw the light of day - that of Westcott and Host (1881) and that of Nestle (1901); and they caused all the more confusion.

The first English translation by Wycliff appeared in 1382 C.E. He based his translation on the Latin Vulgate. Various other versions also appeared. In 1604 C.E. a conference was called by James I at Hampton Court “to set in order things amiss in the Church,” and one of the things which had to be put right was the Bible. The Authorised Version thus appeared in 1616 C.E. The appearance of the various manu-
scripts rendered a revision necessary. The work was taken in hand at the suggestion of the Convocation of Canterbury and the Revised Version appeared in 1884. In it such changes were introduced in the text as were required by the new sources of information that had come to light.

The Gospels are entitled “according to Matthew,” “according to Mark,” and so on. From the time of St. Augustine, some people have interpreted this “according to” as if the books were the work of unknown authors merely utilizing information handed down from and traced to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This “according to” is now admitted as coming from some copyist or other. The clue, it has been suggested, is given by the second line of the Canon of Muratori, which runs: “The third book of the Gospel according to Luke.” Thus it is said that there was only one Gospel, though the traditions in the four parts differed according to alleged original sources. Tucker, relying on the Greek Papyri of Oxyrhynchus, says that the Gospels were written by so and so on behalf of so and so, as most of the alleged authors “did not know letters.” He refers, by way of illustration, to the fact that all Epistles of Paul were written by others and Paul merely “set his hand” to authenticate them; and that when Paul did not set his hand the name of the scribe was mentioned.

No one can deny that the early Christians treated the Gospels alike with the Epistles and the Acts, that is, as mere narratives and expression of opinion of authors, and not at all as sacred. Nor even in the later centuries do we find any scrupulous regard for the word of God. Prof. Dummelow of Cambridge, in his Commentary on the Holy Bible, a work in the preparation of which forty-two Christian divines and scholars of fame assisted, while commenting on the authenticity of the text of the New Testament, says:

“A copyist would sometimes put in not what was in the text, but what he thought ought to be in it. He would trust a fickle memory, or he would make the text accord with the views of the school to which he

141 iCor., 16:21; Col., 4:18; 2 Thes., 3:17-18.
142 Rom., 16:22.
belonged. In addition to the versions and quotations from the Christian Fathers, nearly four thousand Greek MSS. of the New Testament were known to exist. As a result the variety of reading is considerable.”

We have already quoted Tucker. In another place he says:

“Thus Gospels were produced which clearly reflected the conception of the practical needs of the community for which they were written. In them the traditional material was used, but there was no hesitation in altering it or making additions to it, or in leaving out what did not suit the writer’s purpose. An excellent example of such amended Gospel is found in the Gospel of Marcion, which apart from minor changes was the narrative of Luke, with everything omitted that revealed the true humanity of our Lord and his connection with the religion of the Old Testament.”

We refrain from citing many other authorities to show how early Christians changed the original texts to suit their purpose. The object of some of the glaring but pious forgeries will be made clear when we deal with the subject-matter of this dissertation.

The chief and also the most difficult question connected with the Synoptic Gospels is their relation to one another and to their original source. The prolonged investigation of modern critics, extending over more than a century, has not yet reached any final results. Mark is said to be the oldest of the Synoptists. It is also now settled that Matthew and Luke borrowed freely from Mark, and put forward their Gospels according to their beliefs. These conclusions are chiefly based on the fact that Eusebius has preserved to us the following words of Papias, which are the earliest testimony regarding Mark:

And the Presbyter said this: Mark, the interpreter of Peter, wrote down exactly, but not in order, what he remembered of the acts and sayings of the Lord, for he neither heard the Lord himself nor accompanied him.

Papias goes on to say:

---

143 Dummelow, Commentary, on the Holy Bible. 16.
144 Tucker The History of the Christians in the Light of Modern Knowledge. 320
Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language and each interpreted them as best he could.¹⁴⁶

Papias was quoting John, the Presbyter, who was certainly not referring to “the Gospel according to Matthew” which was written in Greek. So it has been construed that he must either be referring to “the Gospel according to the Hebrews” or something else.

Prof. Weiss agreed that Mark was the oldest of the Synoptic Gospels, but he refused to style Mark as “the original source,” and remarked: “It is not a source, but a basin into which other sources flow.”

Mark certainly contains some material which is not found in the other two Gospels. Besides, though Matthew and Luke contain all the essentials of Mark, yet they also contain, in common and otherwise, considerable fresh material not to be found in Mark. It must accordingly be concluded that if they did not copy one from the other, they must have borrowed from a common source. This source has been distinguished as the Logia, or Discourses or Sayings of Jesus, since its contents are more didactic than narrative. The Logia is usually referred to as Q from the word Quella - source. Another source is named the Urmarcus. It is now almost universally admitted that the Synoptic Gospels drew freely from these sources and in the words of Papias “each interpreted them as best as he could.”

Dummelow after taking these facts into consideration, and dealing with the authorship of Matthew says:

It is evident that the direct authorship of this Gospel by the Apostle Matthew is impossible. If St. Matthew had been the author, he could have probably given his own account of the transactions, and not have laboriously occupied himself with collecting and transcribing from other sources.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Dummelow, Commentary on The Holy Bible, 620.
If Matthew, the evangelist, was the Apostle, he could not have recorded many of the events which he does, for he was not present. Such are the stories of the Magi, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the prayer in Gethsemane, the denials of Peter, the dream of Pilate’s wife, the conversation between Judas and the priests and that between Pilate and the priests and, finally, the talks at the trial and at Calvary.

Matthew alone could have claimed to have seen and heard Jesus, but he is not the author of the First Gospel. The other three Gospels really lose their importance because Mark was converted by Peter, and Luke, a native of Antioch, was a Gentile and was converted by Paul, and neither of them saw or heard Jesus. Of John no one knows who he was or from where he came. He has been, no doubt, confused with one of the disciples and there are passages in the Gospel bearing his name which lend support to this inference. But why should he have kept his identity a close secret and styled himself as one “whom Jesus loved”? Christian writers are compelled to say that the fourth Gospel was, “by whosoever written, composed in the end of the first century.”

All the Synoptic Gospels have their doublets: Matthew, the Gospel according to the Hebrew; Mark, the Gospel of Peter and Luke, the Marcion edition mentioned by Justin Martyr; they all have their editorial additions which reveal mutilations, modifications and dislocations of the main traditions: a peculiar circumstance which is unexplainable save on the theory of two sources in each case giving in substance the same account in different forms.

Be that as it may, we have yet to explain the existence of so many Gospels and Epistles. We have already referred to the internal struggle, which started soon after the crucifixion, between James and Paul, and between Peter and Paul, a struggle which left its everlasting mark on Christianity. As a result of this struggle the Ebionites, under James, set themselves against the Samaritans and the Gentiles, the followers of Paul. Thus the Gospel to the Hebrews, which is attributed to Matthew, was written for the Jewish Christians. The Gospel of Luke was written for the
followers of Paul and Mark for the followers of the “double-minded” Peter. When the Ebionites succumbed to the opposing and increasing influence of the Gentiles, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, with a good deal of modifications, alterations and additions, became the Gospel according to Matthew. Similarly, the Gospel of Peter became the Gospel according to Mark. Jesus the Nazarene was thus sacrificed for the glorified Christ; Jesus, the man, disappeared and gave place to Jesus, the son of God. Thus the first Christians, who thought it necessary to put the Gospel in writing, had to diminish the traditions in one direction and to enlarge in another. Their motives were not historical, but rather cultural and ethical. The necessity of extreme precautions for correctness of the texts was not felt. The copyists and writers, who had no scruples about altering them and fitting them to suit their own views, had a free hand.

It would be extending the scope of this research if we were to point out the innumerable discrepancies of the four Gospels. We will content ourselves by mentioning two significant facts only. Whatever is attributed to John by the Synoptic Gospels is omitted by John himself in the Fourth Gospel. Secondly, although churches have been named and festivals kept in honour of the twelve Apostles, and although bishops and priests have all along professed to derive special authority from these first ministers of the Church, yet an effort has to be made, by the Christians themselves, to reconcile and harmonize the original lists, containing the names of the Apostles as given in the Gospels.\footnote{Cf. Matt., 10: 2-4; Mark, 3: 16-19 and Luke, 6: 14-16; Acts, 1 : 13.} John, however, strikes an entirely discordant note by making the first nucleus of these Apostles as having been furnished by the followers of John the Baptist.\footnote{John, 1: 35.}

It is legitimate, therefore, to question the trustworthiness of the letter of the text of the Gospels. We do not possess the originals, not even the text of the Canon; we know them only as copies of copies. The accuracy of the manuscripts is doubtful, and the carelessness, the ignorance, the conceit and the deceit of many a copyist
worked havoc with the texts. We must not overlook the mischief done by the intentional “correction” of the texts made by those who deliberately, under this pretext, modified them in one direction or the other to suit and advance their religious beliefs. The redaction of the most important episodes of the Gospels, the Passion for example, was especially influenced by cultural conditions. As soon as Jesus became Christ, an object of worship, a cultural legend regarding his virgin birth and resurrection became necessary, and the Gospels show a steady progress towards this end. Besides, every attempt was made to establish the fulfillment of all the prophesies of the Old Testament in the person of Jesus. The Gospels were rewritten to serve the purpose of instructing controversial apologetics and organised worship and, strictly speaking, it is to these matters that they owe their birth. The development of Christology raised problems concerning the relations of Jesus to God and to the cosmos. They had also to meet and counteract the vigorous Jewish revival resulting in calumnies heaped against Jesus and his mother: thus were set forth, with a complete absence of restraint or good taste, the edifying legends of popular beliefs.

It is evident that the attempt to adopt the Gospel tradition to the liturgical requirement has most effectively contributed to the introduction of the mythical and the suppression of the historical elements. What is surprising is not that the Synoptics contain so little of the actual life and authentic teachings of Jesus, but that they appear still to preserve some fragments of it. Perhaps this was due to the rivalry, already indicated, of the three Apostles and their followers. And to this must also be attributed the fact that we have three Gospels instead of one blended Gospel like that of John, which really is a religio-philosophical book and which likewise is of little help in reconstructing the life of Jesus. The object of John was to interpret Jesus as Logos 150 the “Word of God” in its extreme philonic sense. The value of the Gospels is more theological than testimonial. Referring to this aspect Wernle says:

“The fourth Gospel derived its importance, lasting long beyond the time of his birth, from its having bridged over the chasm between Jesus and

150 The origin of Logo is attributed by Justin Martyr to mythu.
Paul, and from its having carried the Pauline Gospel back into the life and teachings of Jesus. It is only through this Gospel that Paulinism attained its absolute dominion in the theology of the Church.”

And he goes on to say:

“The significance of the fourth Gospel consists in the fact that it refers the teachings of Paul back to Jesus Himself. This constitutes its value and its worthlessness, its force and its fatality.”

The more thoroughly we study the historicity of the Gospels the less certain we are about their authenticity; but in spite of this we cannot cast wholesale doubt upon them. If we study the Gospels with full knowledge of the mythical and dogmatic atmosphere in which they were written, we can learn what in the Gospels to accept and what to reject; what is early and what is late; what they attribute, under influence of the Pauline creed, to Jesus, and what they have unconsciously preserved of the real Jesus. Only after such a process of selection and elimination can we come to recognize the historical Jesus, the son of man, the Prophet of God, who was born, lived and died like any other man.

This, then, is the history and worth of the New Testament which “contained the Infallible Word of God, nay, is the word of God.” The claim that it was revealed and, therefore, infallible or was inspired has no foundation or justification. Rev. Professor J. W. Donaldson, after discussing the various arguments in support of this claim, comes to the conclusion:

“We see, there, by a mere statement of the reasoning used in support, that the hypothesis of an infallible literature is as baseless as the fabric of a dream... The question of inspiration of the New Testament is of dogmatic, not of historical import.”

The very idea of God having inspired four different men to write different and irreconcilable records of the same events, or rather of many different men having

---

152 Ibid., 276.
153 Revised Version, 15.
154 Donaldson, The Christian Orthodoxy, 156.
155 Ibid., 165.
undertaken to write different records, of whom God inspired four only to write, let me suppose, correctly, leaving the others to their own unaided resources and giving us no test by which to distinguish the inspired from the uninspired, certainly appears to be unbecoming of God and anything but natural. Where was the necessity, one might ask, for God to have inspired four different men to differ and cause confusion? In view of the notorious differences only one of them can be correct and perhaps inspired. But which one? Further, as William Greg has pointed out in his *The Creed of Christendom*:

The Gospels nowhere affirm or even intimate their own inspiration, a claim to credence which, had they possessed it, they assuredly would not have failed to put forward. Nor do the apostolic writings bear any such testimony to them.

We must point out that the New Testament presents the paradox of a literature born of a protest against the tyranny of a Canon yet ultimately canonizing itself. Jesus set himself to free religion from the deadening influence of the scribes. Little did he know that his followers in name would create a worse system whereby a new set of scribes would attribute to him discourses and acts which he never dreamt of saying or doing?

We have so far endeavored to discuss Christian sources for the biography of Jesus. We have examined the New Testament and rejected its authority as an authentic or a contemporary record. We have enquired into the origin and history of the Acts and the Epistles and shown that they hardly contain any element of truth. I have referred to those early biographical compilations which can alone be regarded as worthy of some attention; and have pointed out that they also cannot be accepted in their entirety. We have ventured to indicate that genuine passages should be picked out and separated from the innumerable forgeries and that facts should be distinguished from legend and fiction. It would perhaps be safe to accept all such passages, found in the New Testament and other early Christian literature, as go against the popular Christian dogmatic beliefs. If we follow this and the other rules of
caution with sagacity, perseverance and impartiality, we shall be able to arrive at a fair
approximation of the real facts. Thus the ground work of the career of Jesus will be
laid with some confidence and the leading features of his life will become discernible,
though many problems will still remain unsolved and many paradoxes will vainly
excite curiosity and baffle explanation.

Before dealing with Islamic sources, we would like to quote a few verses from
the Holy Qur’ān which disclose the real worth of the Bible. It is very significant that
what modern researches have only recently established was in fact disclosed by the
Holy Qur’ān about fourteen hundred years ago. The Holy Qur’ān has repeatedly
exposed the corruption of the Biblical texts. There are numerous such references but i
will quote only a few of them.

Addressing Muslims and speaking of Jews, the Holy Qur’ān says:

母校ْ مَن أَهْتَّمَ مَنْ أَهْتَّمَ لَمْ يُعْلَمْ مَا عَلِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَ لَمْ يُعْلَمَ مَا عَلَّمَ

Do you then hope that they would believe in you, and a party from
among them indeed used to hear the Word of Allah, *then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (this).*

Referring again to Jews, the Holy Qur’ān says in another place:

ذَلِكَ بَيْنَاهُمَا قَالُوا لَنْ نَخْلِسَنَا النَّارَ إِلَّا أَيَامًا مَّنْعُونَتٍ وَ غَرَّبُمُ فِي دَيْمِ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ

This is because they say: The fire shall not touch us but for a few days;
and what they have *forged* deceives them in the matter of their
religion.

Speaking of Jews and Christians alike, the Holy Qur’ān says:

وَ مَنْ مَخَافَهُمُ فَرِيقًا يُعْلَمُ مَا يَتَخَلَّصُوْنَ مِنْ الْكِتَابِ وَ مَا نُوُّرَ مِنْ الْكِتَابِ وَ يُعْلَمُونَ بَعْدَهُ وَ يُعْلَمُونَ مَنْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَ مَا نُوُّرَ مِنْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَ يُعْلَمُونَ

---

156 Qur’ān 2:75.
And most surely there is a party of them which lie about the Book, that you may consider it to be (a part) of the Book while it is not (a part) of the Book,

and they say it is from Allah, while it is not from Allah; and they tell a lie against Allah whilst they know.\textsuperscript{158}

And again:

But on account of their breaking the Covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard; they altered the words from their places and they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of; and you shall always discover treachery in them excepting a few of them; so pardon them and turn away; surely Allah loves those who do good to others.

And with those who say we are Christians, We made a Covenant, but they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of; therefore, We excited among them enmity and hatred to the day of resurrection; and Allah will inform them of what they did.

O Followers of the Book! Indeed Our Apostle has come to you, making clear to you much of what you have concealed of the Book, and passing over much: indeed there has come to you light and a clear book from Allah.\textsuperscript{159}

And finally:

Woe, then to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say: This is from Allah, so that they may take for it a small price; therefore, woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn.\textsuperscript{160}

The discussion covers the analyses of sources on Jesus Christ while classifying it into two major parts:

\textsuperscript{158} Qur’an 3:78.

\textsuperscript{159} Qur’an 5:13-15.

\textsuperscript{160} Qur’an 2: 79.
Pre-Islamic Sources

Islamic Sources

In pre-Islamic sources the pagan and Hebrew literature, Epistles, Canonical and non-canonical literature on Jesus has been analysed. In Islamic sources, the Qur’ān has fundamental status and presents an authentic guidance regarding the life of Jesus. For this purpose, the next section has been constantly specified.
1.4

JESUS CHRIST (PBUH) AS DESCRIBED IN THE HOLY QUR’ĀN
JESUS CHRIST (PBUH) AS DESCRIBED IN THE
HOLY QUR’ĀN

The Holy Qurʾān presents Jesus (whom the Qurʾān calls with different names: Isa, Ibn Mariam, Son of Mary) in a respectful way. In fact, Islam is non-Christian religion that acknowledges the teachings and miraculous birth of Jesus. The Qurʾān speaks about Jesus in 14 sūrahs, 4 from the Meccan period when Muhammed (peace be upon him) was opposed by the Qurayish tribe and 10 from the Medinan period when the Jews and Christian challenged the origin of his message. Jesus (Peace be upon him) according to the Qurʾān, was Allah’s Prophet, and was sent with a message to the Israelites, the people of Jesus’ time. Jesus, the messenger of God, is introduced in the Qurʾān as the Messiah, a Spirit, a Mercy, and a Word from God who owed existence to God’s command. The Qurʾānic material on Jesus is found mostly in six sūrahs of the Qurʾān (2-6 and 19); thereafter, statements on Jesus are sporadic and brief. This section will first survey the significant references to Jesus (Peace be upon him) placing the references in their context, so as to illuminate the information on Jesus. Then, we will outline the key themes or the person of Jesus.

The Qurʾān presents Jesus only as a human being who was empowered by God and “fortified with the holy Spirit”. It denounces the divinity of Jesus without denying his special humanity.

The Holy Qurʾān states in the following words:

161 Qurʾān 2:87.
Formerly Gods spoke to Jesus the son of Mary, saying, remember my favour toward thee and your mother. At times I helped you with the pure spirit. You spoke to men in the cradle and when grown up.

At that time I taught you the book, wisdom and law and gospel. At that time, with my permission, you made the likeness of a bird from clay and breathed upon it. With my permission you healed the blind and the leprous. At that time you brought forth the dead with my permission.

And assuredly we vouchsafed unto Musa the Book and we followed him up by the apostles after him, and unto ‘Isa, son of Maryam, We vouchsafed evidences and aided him with the Holy Spirit. Then as often as there came unto you an apostle with that which your souls desired not, ye waxed stiff necked; and some ye believed and some ye slew.

Say: we believe in Allah and that which hath been sent down unto us and that which was sent down unto Ibrahim and Isma’il and Ishaq and Ya’qub and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Musa and ‘Isa, and that which was vouchsafed unto the prophets from their Lord; we differentiate not between any of them, and unto Him are submissive.

We have preferred some of them above some others: of them are some unto whom Allah spike, and some He raised many degrees. And we vouchsafed unto Isa, son of Maryam, the evidences, and we aided him.

\[\text{Qur'an 2:253}\]
\[\text{Qur'an 5:109.}\]
\[\text{Qur'an 5:111.}\]
\[\text{Qur'an 2:87.}\]
\[\text{Qur'an 2:136.}\]
\[\text{Qur'an 2:253.}\]
with the Holy Spirit; and had Allah so willed those who came after them had not fought among themselves after the evidences had come unto them but they differed; then of them some believed and of them some disbelieved. And had Allah so willed, they had not fought among themselves, but Allah doth whatsoever He intendeth.

Therefore we find three affirmations concerning Jesus in the second Surah, in the context of rejection of God’s revelation to the children of Israel. The first affirmation is that Jesus was an apostle and divine sign from God to humanity. Second, Jesus reflected this divine election by displaying clear signs, likely miracles. Third, he was strengthened with the Holy Spirit.

The Qur’ânic narrative then moves to the story of Mary and Jesus.\textsuperscript{168} It begins with the announcement to Mary, where angels inform her that she has been Chosen by God “above the women of all nations,” since she bows down in prayer those who do the same.\textsuperscript{169} The angel proceed to give Mary “Glad Tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus”\textsuperscript{170}. Her son will be held in honour in “this word and the hereafter, and of the company of those nearest to God.” The angels continue by saying that Jesus will speak to the people as a child and adult, and will be part of the “company of the righteous”\textsuperscript{171}. However, Mary questions how her pregnancy could happen, because she is a virgin, and the same answer given before to Zakariyyâ\textsuperscript{172} is given to Mary that whatever God wills happens.\textsuperscript{173}

The third surah contributes a large amount of material in describing Jesus, one realizes that an Islamic representation of Jesus is inadequate if the Qur’ânic affirmations about Mary are ignored. Mary is an integral part of the Jesus narrative in Qur’ân, and both are bound to each other. A woman receiving such honor from God is unlike any other account in the Qur’ân. The miraculous birth of Jesus is seen in

\textsuperscript{168} Qur’ân 3:427
\textsuperscript{169} Qur’ân 3:42-43.
\textsuperscript{170} Qur’ân 3:45.
\textsuperscript{171} Qur’ân 3:46.
\textsuperscript{172} Qur’ân 3:39.
\textsuperscript{173} Qur’ân 3:47.
light of the miraculous birth of Mary. Mary is a woman chosen above all others; she is miraculously provided for as a child and as a woman in the pains of labor.

إذ قالت الملائكة يا مريم إن الله يبشرك بكلمة منه اسمك المسيح عيسى ابن مريم وجبها في الذئبا والأخرة ومن الوعزيز

Recall what time the angels said: Maryam! Verily Allah announceth unto thee a word from Him: his name shall be the Masih, Isa, son of Maryam, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter and one of those brought nigh.

فلما أحس عيسى منهم أنفر قال من أنصارى إلى الله قال الحواريون نحن أنصار الله أمنا بالله وانتبهناfä« مسلمون

Then when 'Isa perceived in them infidelity, he said: who will be my helpers unto Allah! The disciples said; we are helpers of Allah; we believe in Allah and bear thou witness that verily we are Muslims.

In the Qur’an, the crucifixion of Jesus is presented as a challenge and judgment. They devised and God devised, and God is the best of devisers. 

“And whosoever disputes with you concerning him (Jesus) after the knowledge which has come to you, say: ‘Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then we will pray humbly and invoke the curse of God upon those who lie”

The Qur’an attests that Jesus was raised up alive and was saved from death so that people might believe in him before his death. When he is in Allah’s presence, God purifies Jesus to be a righteous judge and righteous Imam. Allah prepares the people of the world for his coming again, for the Qur’an itself witnesses “I am purifying you (Jesus) those who disbelieved”.

As discussed earlier, one unwavering message of the Qur’an about person of Jesus is that he was a human being and sent out to be a servant of Allah. Jesus’

174 Qur’an 3:45.
175 Qur’an 3:52.
176 Qur’an 3:54.
177 Qur’an 3:61.
178 Qur’an 3:55.
mission as a messenger of Allah is emphasized in the Qurʾān. When he asked his disciples, “Who shall be my supporters Allah?”, and when they were vacillating with doubt and unbelief, they pledged their allegiance to Allah and replied, “We shall be God’s supporters; we believe in God, so bear witness that we are Muslims”. \(^{179}\) Again, when Jesus was asked if he had said to his listeners, “take me and my mother as two gods beside God”, he answered:

I did not say to them save that which you command me, “Worship God, my Lord and Your Lord! I was a witness over them, as long as I was among them, but when you took me “You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness over all things.”\(^{180}\)

The Qurʾān testifies that Jesus was sinless and pure. At the end of his mission he was taken to heaven to be with Allah.\(^{181}\) His disciples would rule over the unbelievers until the day of resurrection. “Behold! Allah said: O Jesus, I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of resurrection; Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein you dispute.”\(^{182}\) The Qurʾān says Jesus was exalted to the presence of Allah without having been killed at hands of the Jews. Muhammad Ayoub argues that Jesus was not saved from death but saved through death by Allah by raising (rafāʿa) Jesus up Himself as he did with the earlier prophets as mentioned in the Qurʾān.\(^{183}\) To many Muslims, the phrase “raising up” means “letting him die” as Allah’s favoured prophet. All the prophets will join Allah on the last day for judgment.

The Qurʾān accuses the children of Israel for killing prophets unjustly and attempting to kill Jesus unfairly.\(^ {184}\) Jesus was sent to the children of Israel but they ventured to slay the Messenger in vain. The following verses constitute Allah’s challenge to the enemies of His Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him):

---

\(^{179}\) Qurʾān 3:52.

\(^{180}\) Qurʾān 5:17.

\(^{181}\) Qurʾān 19:33.

\(^{182}\) Qurʾān 3:55.

\(^{183}\) Qurʾān 2:253.

\(^{184}\) Qurʾān 3:49.
And for their saying: “We have surely killed the Christ, Jesus son of Mary, the messenger of God”. They did not kill him nor did they crucify him; rather it was made only to appear so to them. And those who have differed concerning him are in doubt regarding him; they have no knowledge of him, except the following of conjecture. They did not kill him with certainty. Rather God took him up to himself, for God is mighty and wise.  

Recall what time Allah said: O ‘Isa! verily I shall make thee die, and am lifting thee to myself and am purifying thee from those who disbelieve, and shall place those who follow thee above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection; thereafter unto Me shall be the return of you all, then I shall judge.

Verily the likeness of ‘Isa with Allah is as the likeness of Adam: He created out of dust, thereafter He said unto him: Be, and lo! He becomes.

Say thou: we believe in Allah and in that which is sent down unto us, and that which was sent down unto Ibrahim and Isma’il and Is-haq and Ya’qub and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Musa and ‘Isa and other prophets from their Lord: we differentiate not between any of them, and unto Him we are submissive.

Additionally we find that Jesus is a person highly honored by God, both in this life and the next. These are statements of veneration for the Prophet Jesus, and we find that Jesus will be a part of two different groups of holy ones in the other World: the companies of the righteous and those closest to God. It would seem that being part of the company closest to God sets Jesus apart from at least some of the righteous, thus establishing the even higher honour Jesus will receive from God.

---

185 Qur’an 4:157-158.
186 Qur’an 3:55.
187 Qur’an 3:59.
188 Qur’an 3:84.
Reference to Jesus does not arise again until the fourth surah, which is a thematic continuation from the previous surah. Stating that the Jews have been deceitful in their actions with the Muslims, the Qur’ān calls on them to believe now these revelations. Those who set up partners with God will not be forgiven; this sin is unpardonable sin, and those who reject the signs of God will be sent to the Hellfire.

It is intriguing to note the context for the Qur’ānic brief and only statement denying of the crucifixion event, given the tremendous amount of focus it receives in the above examined scholarly accounts. It is found in a charge that the Jews blaspheme against God by rejecting and uttering false claims about God’s apostles. One of these blasphemies is the boast that they crucified Jesus. The Qur’ān claims that this is an error, however, for Jesus was not murdered, but rather was saved from death.

And for their saying: verily We have slain the Messiah ‘Isa son of Maryam, an apostle of Allah, whereas they slew him not, nor they crucified him but it was made dubious unto them. And verily those who differ therein are in doubt thereof, they have no knowledge thereof; they but follow an opinion; and surely they slew him not.

But Allah raised him unto Himself; and Allah is ever Mighty.

Another difference between the two religions is their belief about the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Qur’ān teaches Muslims that Jesus did not confront death; thus there is no need for the resurrection. According to the Qur’ān, Jesus was neither killed nor crucified. Instead, he was raised up by God until the

---

190 Qur’ān 4:55-56.
192 Qur’ān 4:158.
Judgment Day, not confronting death. In Christianity, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ serve as the most important aspects of the Gospel. All four Gospels contain records of the crucifixion and the resurrection.

وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلاَّ لَيَوْمَ يَومِ الْمَوْلُودِ فِي بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَيَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ لَيُؤْمِنُ نَّفْسَهُ بِاللهَ ۖ وَيُؤْمِنُ عَلَيْهِ شَهِيدًا ١٩٣

And there is none among the people of the Book but shall surely believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Judgment he shall be a witness against them.

يا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَكُونُوا فِي بَيْنِي وَلا تَكُونُوا عَلَى اللهِ إِلاَّ أَلْحَقُ إِنَّا نَعْلَمُ أَنْ الْمُسَيْحُ عِيسَى بُنِيِّ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ وَرَسَّلَهُ وَرُسُلُهُ لَا تَكُونُوا ثَلَاثَةَ أَنْفُسًا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ إِلَيْهِ وَاحِدُ سُبْحَانَاهُ أَنْ يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللهِ وَكِيلًا١٩٤

O ye people of the Book; exceed not the bounds in your religion, and say not of Allah save that which is the truth. The Messiah ‘Isa, son of Maryam, is but an apostle of Allah and His word. He cast it upon Maryam and a spirit from Him. Believe wherefore in Allah and His apostles, and say not three. Jesus (peace be upon him) that it may be well for you. Allah is but the One God: hallowed be He that there should be unto Him a son! His is whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth, and suffice Allah as a Trustee.

لاَنْ يَسْتَطِيعُ الْمُسَيْحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عِبَادُ اللهِ وَلاَ العَلَّاَمَةُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَمَنْ يَسْتَطِيعُ عَنْ عِبَادَهُ وَيُسْتَفْكِرُ فِي خَيْرٍ مِّنْهُ يَجْمَعُهُ١٩٥

The Messiah disdained not that he should be a bondman of Allah, nor do the angels brought near. And whosoever disdained serving Him and stiff-necked, anon He shall gather them all unto Him.

This surah provides a key to the Qur’anic representation of Jesus Sura 3:55: balance. All of humanity is required to believe in all the prophets, for they were all part of the succession of God’s prophetic work among humanity. Therefore, to reject any one of God’s prophets is essentially to reject God himself. Jesus was one of these prophets and rejecting him, as one would in boasting about his death, is tantamount to rejecting God. Jesus then did not die; rather, he was exalted by God.

١٩٣ Qur’ān 4:159.
١٩٤ Qur’ān 4:171.
١٩٥ Qur’ān 4:172.
Nevertheless, even if one does accept Jesus as a man sent from God, that person can blaspheme God by over-venerating Jesus by referring to him as the Son of God or claiming that he is one of a Trinity. Committing either extreme dams a person to God's punishment for being an unbeliever.

The information on Jesus in the fifth surah is quite extensive, and recounts much of the material found in the previous surahs. The Qur’an insists that Jesus should not be considered divine, and that it would be blasphemy to say that he was. Jesus denied ever telling people to worship him and his mother as gods, insisting that his message was dependent on God's revelation, and therefore directing all worship to God alone. Jesus and his mother were, rather, human beings who therefore have no power outside of God.

God divinely worked through Jesus Peace be upon him by strengthening him with the holy spirit, protecting him from violence, and granting him the power to perform miracles, or, clear signs, such as the Table of Food. Jesus was also divinely taught the Book and wisdom, the one divine revelation as manifested in the Law and the Gospel, which contains proper guidance and light in other words, the divine knowledge revealed to humanity.

The miraculous events that are stated to have taken place are key to this narrative. The birth of Jesus was surrounded by miracles, aside from the actual virgin birth. The miracles given were to counter any unchastely behavior that could have been changed against Mary, as well as to show the divine favour Mary possessed in God’s eyes.

One sees, however, that Jesus' virgin birth makes him a rare phenomenon among Qur’anic prophets. Along with this is the ability to speak as an infant, a power not attributed to anyone else in the Qur’an. Yet the Qur’an ends this narrative by adding: “it is not befitting to the majesty of God that He should beget a son”.

For God is sovereign and God only needs to say “Be” and such a thing occurs. So despite

\[196\text{ Qur’an 19:35.}\]
the miraculous nature of Jesus’ birth, we are reminded that it cannot be said that God fathered a child.

Christian representations of Jesus are refuted in a number of other places, even though the name of Jesus is not mentioned. All these references reaffirm the Qur’ânic denial that Jesus could be conceived of as a god next to God, and that God spawned offspring. For example,\(^{197}\) the Qur’ân warns against those who assigned partners to God among those God has created.

\[
وَقَفِينَا عَلَى أَهَامَهُمْ يُعِيسِي ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ مَعْصِدًا لَّمَآ بَيْنَ يَدِيهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةَ وَاتِّبَاعَ الْإِنْجِيْلِ فِيهِ هَذَى
\]

And in their footsteps We caused ‘Isa, son of Maryam, to follow, confessing to that which had preceded him, the Taurat, and We vouchsafed unto him the Injil wherein was a guidance and a light, confirming that which had preceded it, the Taurat, and a guidance and an admonition unto the God-fearing

\[
وَلَيَحْكُمُ أَهْلُ الْإِنْجِيْلِ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكُمُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَسَاطِفُونَ
\]

And let the people of the Injil judge by that which Allah hath sent down therein; and whosoever judged not by that which Allah hath sent down, then those! They are the transgressors.

\[
لَقَدْ كَفَرُ النَّزِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهُ هَاوَيُ مَسِيحَ بْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَقَالُ مُسِيحَ بْنِ مَرْيَمَ يُبْنِيِ إِسْرَائِيلَ السَّيِّدَةَ مَرْيَمَ اسْتَبْنَى اللهُ رَبَّي
\]

Assuredly they have disbelieved who say: verily God: He is the Masih, son of Maryam, whereas the Masih had said: Children of Isra’il! Worship Allah, mine Lord and your Lord; verily whosoever associated aught with Allah, Allah shall surely forbid the Garden unto him, and his resort is the Fire; and for the wrong-doers there shall be no helpers.

\[
لَقَدْ كَفَرُ النَّزِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهُ ثَلَاثَ تَلَاثًا وَمَا مِنْ إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاحِدًا وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُ عَمَّا يَقْوَلُونَ
\]

\[
لَيَمَسُّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْيَمِينِ
\]

\(^{197}\) Qur’ân 13:16.

\(^{198}\) Qur’ân 5:46.

\(^{199}\) Qur’ân 5:47.

\(^{200}\) Qur’ân 5:72.

\(^{201}\) Qur’ân 5:73.
Assuredly they disbelieve who say: God is the third of the three; whereas there is no god except the One God. And if they desist not from that which they say, there shall surely befall those of them who have disbelieved a torment afflictive.

Therefore turn them not toward Allah and ask His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

The Masih, son of Maryam, was night but an apostle; surely there passed away apostles before him and his mother was a saintly woman; both of them were wont to eat food. Behold! How we expound unto them the evidences! Then behold! Whether they are deviating!

Cursed were those who disbelieved from among the Children of Isrā’īl by the tongue of Dāūd and ‘Isa, son of Maryam. That is because they disobeyed and were ever transgressing.

The Qur’ān attests to some of the miracles Jesus performed from his childhood. The more prominent of his miracles are the creation of birds out of clay, healing of the blind, cleansing of the lepers, and raising of the dead. At one time, in answer to his prayer, Jesus received from heaven a table filled with bounteous food. The Qur’ān insists that Jesus himself denied his divinity and claimed he was only Allah’s servant and a messenger.

And when Allah says: O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say to mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? He says: Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then you know it. You know what is in my mind. You, only you, are the Knower of hidden things. I spoke to them only what you commanded me, (saying) Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I

---

202 Qur’ān 5:74.
203 Qur’ān 5:75.
204 Qur’ān 5:78.
205 Qur’ān 5:12, 114.
was a witness of them and when you took me you were the Watcher over them. You are Witness over all things. If you punish them, they are your slaves, and if you forgive them (they are your slaves). You, only you are the Mighty, the Wise. 206.

And call to mind what time Allah will say: ‘Isa, son of Maryam, remember My favor unto thee and unto your mother when I aided thee with the holy spirit so that thou spoke unto mankind in the cradle and in maturity, and when taught thee the Book and wisdom and the Taurah and the Injil, and when thou foremost out of clay as though the likeness of a bird by My command, and thou breathed thereof and it became a bird by My command, and thou headrest the blind from birth and the leprous by My command; and when thou causeless the dead to come forth by My command; and when I restrained the Children of Isra'il from thee when thou didst come to them with evidences, and those of them who disbelieved said: this is but magic manifest.

And recall what time I revealed to the disciples: believe in me and My Apostle, they said: we have believed and bear thou witness that verily we are Muslims.

And call again to mind what time Allah will say: ‘Isa, son of Maryam, said: O Allah, our Lord send down unto us some food from the heaven, that it may become unto us an occasion of joy, unto the first of us and the last of us, and a sign from Thee. And provide us Thou; and Thou art the Best of providers.

---

207 Qur’an 5:110.
208 Qur’an 5:111.
209 Qur’an 5:114.
210 Qur’an 5:115.
Allah said: verily I am going to send it down to you, but whosoever of you disbelieved thereafter, verily shall torment him with a torment wherewith I shall not torment any other of the worlds.

And call to mind what time Allah will say: O ‘Isa, son of Maryam! Was it thou who said to the people: take me and my mother as two god beside Allah! ‘Isa will say: hallowed be Thou! it was not for me to say that to which had no right; had I said it, Thou would have surely known it; Thou knowers that which is in Thy mind. Verily Thou! Thou art the Great Knowers of the things hidden.

I space not unto them aught save that for which Thou boldest me: worship Allah, mine Lord and your Lord. I was a witness over them as long as abide amongst them: then when Thou took up Thou hast been the Watcher. And over everything Thou art a Witness.

Such is ‘Isa, son of Maryam: this is the word of truth wherein they are doubting.

Thereafter in their footsteps we caused our apostles to follow, and we caused Isa, son Of Maryam, to follow them, and we vouchsafed unto him the Injil, and We placed In the hearts of those who followed him tenderness and mercy. And asceticism! They innovated it- We prescribed it not for them only seeking Allah’s pleasure yet they tended it not with tendency due thereto. So we vouchsafed unto such of them as believed their hire, and many of them are transgressors.

211 Qur’an 5:116.
212 Qur’an 5:117.
213 Qur’an 19:34.
214 Qur’an 57:27.
And recall what time Isa, son of Maryam, said: children of Isra’il! Verily I am Allah’s apostle unto you, confirming the Taurat which was before me, and giving the glad tidings of an apostle who cometh after me: his name will be Ahmad. Then when he brought unto them evidences, they said: this is magic manifest.

O ye who believe! Be Allah’s helpers, even as ‘Isa, son of Maryam, said unto the disciples: who shall be my helpers Unto Allah? The disciples said: we are Allah’s helpers. Then a part of the Children of Israil believed, and part disbelieved. Then we strengthened those who believed against their foe; wherefore they became triumphant.

Recall what time the wife of ‘Imran said my Lord verily have vowed unto Thee that which is in my belly to be dedicated; accept Thou then of me. Verily Thou art the Hearer, the Knower.

Then when she brought her forth, she said: my Lord verily have brought forth a female — and Allah knew best that which she had brought forth, — and the male is not as the female, and verily have named her Maryam, and verily seek refuge for her and her progeny with Thee from the Satan the accursed.

The Qur’an acknowledges that Jesus was conceived and born of a pious virgin, who was “a token for (all) peoples.” Mary was chosen by God because she was humble, obedient, and the Spirit of God dwelt within her. Jesus is addressed as Al-Masih, the Messiah. Most importantly, the Qur’an says, the Prophet Jesus (Isa); is only a messenger of Allah, not a Redeemer; a servant not a Saviour. “Not one of the beings
in the heavens and earth must come to (Allah) most gracious as servant”. After all, Allah is Supreme.

His name (the name of the Word) is Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, honourable in this world and the next, and being among those who are near to God.

The Qur’anic narration of Jesus begins with the story of mother of Mary, the wife of Imran. As soon as Mary was born, she was entrusted by the parents to Zechariah, a priest, who raised her in the closed enclaves of the temple called Mithrab. The word Mithrab could be translated as sanctuary, cell or niche.

The Qur’ân stresses the virginity of Mary and the miraculous birth of Jesus without a biological father. The birth of Jesus begins chronicle of Mary’s life along in the desert, far away from any human habitation. After her child was born, Mary returned to the community where her fidelity was questioned. In order to clear his mother, the infant Jesus spoke from the cradle and defended his mother.

(Jesus) said: I am indeed a servant of God. He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet. And he hath made me blessed where over I be, and hath enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. (He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable. So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again).

Recall what time the angels said: Maryam! Verily Allah announced unto thee a word from Him: his name shall be the Masih, Isa, son of Maryam, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter and one of those brought nigh.

221 Qur’an 19:93.
222 Qur’an 3:40.
223 Qur’an 19:93.
224 Qur’an 19:30-33.
225 Qur’an 3:45.
And he shall speak unto mankind from the cradle and in maturity; and be one of the righteous.

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَا يُكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ لَا يُضْرِبُنِي بَشَرٍ قَالَ رَبٌّ كَذَٰلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلَقُ ما يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَى أَمْرًا فَيَفْعَلُ لَهُ كَلِمَةً

She said: my Lord! In what wise shall there be unto me a son whereas no human being hath touched me. Allah said: even so. Allah created whatsoever He will, When He hath decreed a thing, He only saith to it: Be, and it becomes;

وَيَعْرُضُ النَّبَاتَاتُ وَالجَُكْهَةُ وَالثُّورَةُ وَالإِنْجِيلُ

And He shall teach him the Book and wisdom and the Taurat and the Injil:

وَرَسُولًا إِلیَّ إِسْرَائِيلِ أَنْيَا قَدْ جَنِنَكُمْ بَاتِئًا مِنِّي رَبِّي أُخْلِقْ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيْنِ كَهِيْنَةً الطَّيْرِ فَأَخْلَقْهُ فِي قُرْءَانٍ علىٌ بِذَٰلِكَ اللَّهُ وَأَرْضَ الْأَكْفَرِينَ وَاللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ مَا تَأْتِكُمْ وَمَا نَذِرْكُمْ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَا يَنْفِرُ لَكُمْ إِلَّا كَرَمَانِ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And an apostle Unto the children of Isra’il with this message: verily have come unto you with a sign from your Lord, verily I form for you out of clay as though the likeness of a bird and then I breathe thereunto, and a bird it becomes by Allah’s command. And heal the blind from birth and the leprous and quicken the dead by Allah’s command. And I declare unto you that which ye have eaten and that which ye have stored in your houses. Verily herein is a sign for you if ye are believers.

وَمَصْدِقُوا لَمَا بَيَّنْ بَيْنَنِى مِنَ الْثُّورَةِ وَالْأَحْلَامِ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي حَرَّمَ عَلِيَّكُمْ وَجَنَّتُكُمْ بَاتِئًا مِنِّي رَبِّي فَأَقْلَوْا

And I come confessing to the Taurat that was before me, and to allow unto you some of that which was forbidden unto you. So I have come unto you with a sign from your Lord therefore fear Allah and obey me.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرِيَّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صَرْطُ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

Verily Allah is my Lord; and your Lord, wherefore worship Him; this is the straight path.

فَلَمَّا أَخْسَنَ عِيسَى بُنِّيَّةَ ابْنِيَّةَ الْكَفَّارِ قَالُوا مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالُوا الطَّوْفَانُ وَغَيْرَ مَنْ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ أَنْصَارُهُ بَيْنَاهَا وَالْمُسْلِمُونَ مُسْلِمُونَ

225 Qur’an 3:46.
226 Qur’an 3:47.
228 Qur’an 49:
229 Qur’an 3:50.
230 Qur’an 3:51.
Then when ‘Isa perceived in them infidelity, he said: who will be my helpers unto Allah! The disciples said; we are helpers of Allah; we believe in Allah and bear thou witness that verily we are Muslims.

اذْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَا عَبْسَى إِنِّي مُتْحَفِقٌ وَرَافَعَتِيُّ وَمَطَهْرَكَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ الْبَعْكُوَاتُ فَوْقَ الْذِّينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَيْ الْقِيَامةِ تَمَّ إلىٌ مَّا رَفَعَكَ فَأْخَذَكَ بِثُلُومِكَ فِي ما كَانَ فِيهِ تُحِتَّافُونَ.

Recall what time Allah said: O ‘Isa! verily I shall make thee die, and am lifting thee to myself and am purifying thee from those who disbelieve, and shall place those who follow thee above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection; thereafter unto Me shall be the return of you all, then I shall judge between you of that wherein ye were differing.

فَأَمَّا الْذِّينَ كَفَرُوا فَأَعْدَبْنَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرينَ.

Then as for those who disbelieved, I shall torment them with a severe torment in the world and the Hereafter, nor have they any helpers.

إِنْ مَثَلُ عِيسَى عَنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ إِدَمْ خَلَصَهُ مِنْ ثَرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ مَنْ قَالَ لَهُ عَنْ فِي كُونِ

Verily the likeness of ‘Isa with Allah is as the likeness of Adam: him He created out of dust, thereafter He said unto him: Be, and lo! He becomes.

The Qur’ân acknowledges the miraculous birth of Jesus (peace be upon him), which as explained above, is compared to that of Adam. Adam was born by Allah’s Divine decree as a sign of God’s care for the world. The angel who came from God announced the birth of Jesus to Mary (Miriam) before she conceived the child. He told her she would bear a son who would be “a revelation for mankind and a mercy from us”. Both Jesus and Mary are sinless and they would be “a sign of blessing from God” to the whole world. There is only a slight and passing reference about the place of his birth, “We made ‘Isa (Jesus) the son of Mary and his mother our (great sign). And we provided them a comfortable and facilitated abode on a pleasant, elevated ground fit for living with ease and comfort, and there was flowing water.”

231 Qur’ân 3:52.
232 Qur’ân 3:55.
233 Qur’ân 3:56.
234 Qur’ân 3:59.
237 Qur’ân 23:50.
And mention thou in the Book Maryam, what time the retired from her people to a place eastward.

Then she took beside them a curtain; then we sent unto her Our Spirit, and he took unto her the form of a human being sound.

She said: verily seek refuge with the Compassionate from thee if thou art God-fearing.

He said: I am but a messenger from thy Lord that I may bestow on thee a boy pure.

She said: in what wise shall there be a boy unto me, whereas not a human being hath touched me, nor have I been a harlot?

He said: even so! Thy Lord saith: it is With Me easy, and it is in order that we may make him a sign unto mankind and a mercy from us, and it is an affair decreed.

When she conceived him, and she retired with him to a place far-off.

Then the birth-pangs drive her to the trunk of a palm-tree; she said: would that had died before this and become forgotten, lost in oblivion!

Qur’ân 19:16.
Qur’ân 19:17.
Qur’ân 19:18.
Qur’ân 19:19.
Qur’ân 19:22.
Qur’ân 19:23.
Then one cried unto her from underneath her, that grieve not, thy Lord hath placed underneath thou a rivulet.

_And shake toward thee the trunk of the palm-tree it shall drop on three dates fresh and ripe._

So eat and drink thou, and cool than eyes; and if thou be oldest the human beings anyone, say: verily I have vowed to the Compassionate a fast, so I shall not speak today to any human being.

Then she pointed to him. They said: how shall we speak to one who is in the cradle, a child?

He Said: verily I am a bondman of Allah; He hath vouchsafed me the Book and made me a prophet.

And an apostle Unto the children of Israi'l with this message: verily have come unto you with a sign from your Lord, verily I form for you out of clay as though the likeness of a bird and then I breathe thereunto, and a bird it becomes by Allah's command. And heal the blind from birth and the leprous and quicken the dead by Allah's command. And I declare unto you that which ye have eaten and that which ye have stored in your houses. Verily herein is a sign for you if ye are believers.

He is naught but a bondman: him we favoured, and him we made an ensample Unto the Children of Israil.

---

247 Qur'an 19:25.
249 Qur'an 19:29.
250 Qur'an 19:30.
251 Qur'an 3:49.
252 Qur'an 43:59.
And when Isa came with evidences, he said: of a surety I have come Unto you with Wisdom, and to expound Unto you some of that wherein ye differ; so fear Allah and obey me.

Verily Allah! He is my lord and you're Lord, so worship Him: this is the straight path.

O ye who believe! Be Allah’s helpers, even as ‘Isa, son of Maryam, said unto the disciples: who shall be my helpers Unto Allah? The disciples said: we are Allah’s helpers. Then a part of the Children of Israil believed, and part disbelieved. Then we strengthened those who believed against their foe; wherefore they became triumphant.

Despite the fact that Jesus is not God in Islam, he still holds tremendous importance. The disagreement on the nature of Jesus Christ causes the two religions to interpret various events in different ways; and they differ in accordance with their belief.

253 Qur’an 43:63.
254 Qur’an 43:64.
255 Qur’an 61:14.
1.5

JESUS CHRIST (PBUH) IN THE LIGHT OF ḤADĪTH LITERATURE
JESUS CHRIST (PBUH) IN THE LIGHT OF ḤADĪTH LITERATURE

It is worth mentioning that Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) is an important eschatological character in the Ḥadīth attributed to Muhammad (peace be upon him). His sayings present an interesting view on the Islamic view of Jesus. Hadith literature is another source of knowledge about Jesus (peace be on him) about which many students of Christianity have been kept in the dark.

A SURVEY OF MATERIAL ON JESUS IN SAHI AL BUKHĀRĪ

Muhammad bin Ismā’il bin al-Mughīrah al-Bukhārī²⁵⁶ is a famous Ḥadīth codifier. Bukhārī’s collection gained so much repute and respect that “it has been unanimously agreed that Bukhārī’s work is the most authentic and unique of all the other works in Ḥadīth literature”. He has mentioned some important narrations about Jesus in his volume, approximately, forty different Ahadith have been part of al-Bukhārī’s collection.

A PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF JESUS

At this place, it is seems quite pertinent to elaborate the attributes, qualification and even physical features of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him); here his garments, style of dress and hair-cut has been mentioned in detail. It is very important and significant to note that in all these aḥadīth, his proper name Jesus Christ along with the name of his mother Mary has been mentioned rather than his epithet Messiah. This shows that the Holy Prophet had in mind the possibility of any confusion or misunderstanding if the epithet Messiah was used.

²⁵⁶ Bukhārī was born in the year 194 A.H. (ca. 826 C.E.), in West Turkistan. Imam Bukhārī was a devout and diligent scholar, traveling throughout the Islamic world before collecting any Ḥadīth. Shifting through more than 300,000 Ḥadīth, Bukhārī settled on a compilation of 7,275 Ḥadīth. After his death in 256 A.H. (ca. 888 C.E.), Bukhārī’s collection gained so much respect that “it has been unanimously agreed that Imam Bukhārī’s work is the most authentic of all the other works in Ḥadīth literature put together.”
Another important aspect of these hadith is that the bodily features of Jesus Christ, as mentioned in these hadith, are exactly those which have been referred to in other hadith about the life of the Israelite Prophet.

Apart from bodily features many other important details have also been given. The words used in these hadith for the second coming include descent, return, coming out, being raised etc. In one of the reports it has been said that death is yet to come to him as he has not yet died.

A physical description of Jesus recurs in the fourth volume of Bukhari’s collection: “I saw Jesus, a man of medium height and moderate complexion inclined to the red and white color and of lank hair.” This physical description of Jesus is found again in, where the edition of Jesus having a “red face as if he had just come out of the [bath] was added. In 4:60:3438, one finds the description again, but with another edition: “Jesus was of red complexion, curly hair and a broad chest.” Again in 4:60:3440, a lengthier description of Jesus is given.

While sleeping near the Ka’bah last night, I saw in my dream a man of brown color, the best one can see among brown color, and his hair was so long that it fell between his shoulders. His hair was lank and water was dribbling from his head and he was placing his hands on the shoulders of two men while circumambulating the Ka’bah.

This difference between Jesus having a red complexion or brown is seen in the Hadith, for the very next Hadith notes, “No, by Allah, the Prophet did not tell that Jesus was of red complexion or a man of brown complexion”. What is important about this fixation on the physical description of Jesus is that an Islamic representation of Jesus includes specific physical characteristics. That Jesus was so and so high and of such and such complexion is found in several places of al-Bukhari’s collection. This representation is not discussed in any of the scholarly or polemical

---

257 Al-Bukhari, 4:60:3394, 3437.
258 Al-Bukhari, 4:60:3441.
representations of Jesus. Here we find a disjunction between polemicists and academics representations of Jesus and the representation found in the sources they use.

"Abū Hurayrah has narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (a) said: what will be the state (of your joy) at the time when ‘Īsā Ibn Maryam will descend (from the heavens) and your Imām will be from among you.”

JESUS AND THE NIGHT JOURNEY

The honor placed upon Jesus in the sayings of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is also found in Muhammad’s (Peace be upon him) statements on his Night Journey to the heavens. Paralleled in the Bukhārī collection, this narrative accounts for seven of the twenty-nine sayings of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) mentioning Jesus in Muslim. In book one, saying 313, one finds the first account of the Night Journey. Here Muhammad (Peace be upon him) recounts that at his house in Mecca the roof was opened and Gabriel entered the house, opening Muhammad’s (Peace be upon him) chest and washing it with Zamzam water. Gabriel then empties a golden basin of wisdom and faith into Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) chest, thereby closing it back up again. Gabriel then takes Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the hand and leads him to the first heaven, where Muhammad (peace be upon him) meets Adam. As Muhammad (peace be upon him) reaches each level of heaven; he meet some of the prophets who had gone before him. Different to other accounts, Jesus does not seem to be found at the second heaven; rather, He (Muhammad (peace be upon him) mentioned that he found in the heavens Adam, Idrīs, Jesus, Moses and Abraham, but he did not ascertain as to the nature of their abodes except that he had found Adam in the lowest heaven and Abraham in the sixth heaven... Gabriel and the Messenger of Allah passed by Idrīs. Then I passed by Moses. Then I passed by Jesus

259 Bukhārī related it in as-Sabīḥ, b. of ambiyā’ (prophets) 3:1272 (#3265); Muslim, as-Sabīḥ, b. of imān (faith) 1:136 (#155); Ibn Hibbān, as-Sahih (15:213#6802); Ahmad bin Hambal, al-Musnad (2:336); Abdur-Razzāq, al-Musannaf (11:400#20841); Ibn Mundah, al-Imān (1:516 # 415, 416); Abū ‘Awānah, al-Musnad (1:99#315); Baghawi, Sharh-us-sunnah (15:82#4277); ‘Asqalānī,
and he said: Welcome to the righteous apostles and righteous brother’. Then I went to Abraham.

“Narrated by Ibn Jurayh: Abū Zubayr reported to me: He heard Jābir Ibn ‘Abdullāh (k) saying: I heard the Messenger of Allāh (a) saying: A section of my people will not cease fighting for the Truth successfully till the Day of Resurrection. He said: ‘Īsā Ibn Maryam would then descend and the leader of the Muslims will say: come and lead us in prayer, but he will say: “No, some amongst you are leaders over others. This is the honour from Allāh for this nation” (i.e. prophet ‘Īsā (e) will decline the offer of leading the prayer due to the high status given by Allāh to this Ummah).”

The question of the second coming of Jesus Christ has been elaborated at length in a large number of Aḥādith which reach the degree of Tawatur. These Aḥādith have been reported by more than thirty companions and narrated by almost all the major compilers of Aḥādith including the Sihah Sittah or six most authentic collections of Aḥādith.

The total number of reports collected by Maulānā Muhammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri in his book, Al-Tašribbima Tawtara fi Nuzūl al-Masih and its editor reach a total number of 111. There might be some other reports missed by the learned author or his editor. A survey of these reports shows that these clearly and unequivocally tell that Jesus Christ, son of Mary, the Messenger of God, who was sent to the Children of Israel along with Gospels, some two thousand years back, will come again to perform a specific assignment before the close of the world.

261 Muslim narrated it in as-Sahih, b. of imān (faith) 1:137 (#156); Ahmad bin Hambal, al-Musnad (3:345,384); Ibn Hibbān, as-Sahih (15:231,232#6819); Abū Ya’lā, al-Musnad (4:59#2078); Ibn Mundah, al-Imān (1:517#418); Ibn Jārūd, al-Muntaqa’ (1:257 #1031); Abū ‘Awānah, al-Musnad (1:99 # 317); and Bayhaqī in as-Sunan-al-kubrā (9:180).
“Ja`bīr Ibn ‘Abdullāh narrates that the Messenger of Allāh said: when Islam (i.e. the state of the Ummah) becomes weak, Dajjal will appear — and after giving details about Dajjal — he said: After some time, ‘Īsā Ibn Maryam will descend (from the heaven) and in the morning (that is, at pre-dawn) he will call out: O people! What is stopping you from fighting with this evil pretender (Dajjal)? People will say: he appears to be a supernatural creation (jinn), but as they will move forward they will see ‘Īsā. Then it will be time for prayer, so their leader will say: O Allāh’s Spirit: come forward (and lead the prayer). He will say: “Your Imam should lead you” (and at that time the Imam will be Mahdi). When the people will finish their Dawn prayer, they will leave (under the leadership of ‘Īsā e) to fight Dajjal. When ‘Īsā will see the Liar (Dajjal), he (i.e. Dajjal, out of fear) will start melting as salt melts in water.”

“Abū Umāmah Bāhili has related (a long tradition) from the Messenger of Allāh in which a female Companion Umm Sharik bint ‘Abi al-‘Akar said: O Messenger of Allāh! Where will the Arabs be at that time, (why will the Arabs not come out in support of the Ummah)? The Messenger of Allāh said: the Arabs will be in small number, and most of these will be in the Sacred House and their Imam will be a highly pious person (named Mahdi). When their Imam will come forward for Dawn prayer, at that time ‘Īsā will descend (from the heaven). The Imam will retreat and give way to him so that ‘Īsā can lead people in the prayer. ‘Īsā placing his hand between the Imam’s shoulders will say: step forward and lead the prayer because the iqāmah was said for you. Then their Imam (Mahdi) will lead the prayer.”

262 Ahmad bin Hambal related it in al-Musnad (3:367,368); Haythami, Majma‘-uz-zawa‘id (7:343,344); Hindi, Kanz-ul-‘umāl (14:325, 326#38819); and Suyūṭi in ad-Durr-ul-manhūr fit-tafsīr bil-ma’thūr (2:242, 243). Hākim gradid it sahīh (sound) according to the conditions of Muslim in al-Mustadrak, (4:530#8613).

264 Related by Ibn Majah in as-Sunan, b. of fitan (turmoils) 4:446, 447 (#4077).
“Uthmān Ibn Abī al-'as directly narrates that the Messenger of Allāh (a) said: prophet Ḥaḏī Ibn Marīyām will descend (from the heaven) at the time of Dawn prayer (fājr) and the leader of the people will request him: O Allāh’s Spirit! (Come forward and) lead us in prayer. Ḥaḏī will say: “you are the people of Muhammad’s Ummah. Some amongst you are leaders over others. So move forward and lead us in prayer.” The leader of the Muslims will come forward and lead the prayer.”

'Abdullāh Ibn 'Amr says that Ḥaḏī will descend after Mahdī and will offer (one) prayer behind him.”

The accounts of the eschaton in Muslim’s collection do not end with the events of Jesus’ second return. As found in Bukhārī, Muslim includes sayings that speak about the event where all people stand together, or rush madly around in another account (1:377), on the Day of the Resurrection. These people will Ask: if we “could seek intercession with our Lord, we may be relieved from this predicament of ours” (1:373). They will go to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, all who will remember their own faults and say that they cannot intercede for them. Moses will then say, “You better go to Jesus, the Spirit of Allāh and His word.” Upon going to Jesus, he will admit no sin, but say, “I am not in a position to do that for you; you better go to Muhammad (peace be upon him), a servant whose former and later sins have been forgiven.” Muhammad (peace be upon him) will be the person who can intercede for the people. This narrative is recounted in a briefer form in 1:377 and 1:380, where a number of titles are attributed to each prophet, and the reasons for their rejection of the request are omitted. In 1:378, the narrative is expanded with Moses saying you better go to Jesus. They would come to Jesus and would say: O Jesus, thou art the messenger of Allāh and thou conversed with people in the cradle,

---

265 Hākīm narrated it in al-Mustadrak (4:478#8473); Ahmad bin Hambal, al-Musnad (4:217); and Tabarānī in al-Mu'jam-ul-kabīr (9:60#8392). Haythami said in Majma‘uz-zawa‘id (7:342,343) that Ahmad and Tabarānī had related it and the men of Ahmad were those of sound Ḥadīth.

266 Ibn Hammād narrated it in al-Fitan (1:373#1103); and Suyūtī in al-Hāwī lil-fatāwā (2:78).
thou art His Word which He sent down upon Mary, and thou art the Spirit from
Him, so intercede for us with thy Lord. Don’t you see the trouble in which we are?
Don’t you see the misfortune that has overtaken us? Jesus would say: Verily, my Lord
is angry today as He had never been angry before or would ever be angry afterwards.
He mentioned no sin of him. He simply said: I am concerned with myself... you go to
someone else: better go to Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Though Jesus has no sin to inhibit his intercession for the people, it is
interesting to note how Muhammad (peace be upon him) attributes the words “I am
concerned with myself” to Jesus. Jesus (Peace be upon him) here is concerned with his
own placement at this time, and cannot be concerned with the troubles of others. Yet
Muhammad (peace be upon him) is then able to intercede for them after going to the
throne of God and having God reveal mysteries to him that never been revealed
before (1:378).

“Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī narrates that the Messenger of Allāh (a) said: there
will be a person from this Ummah and ‘Īsā Ibn Maryam will pray
behind him.”

“Hudhayfah relates that the Messenger of Allāh said: When Mahdī will
appear ‘Īsā Ibn Maryam will descend and it will seem as though water is
dropping from his hair. At that time Mahdī, addressing him, will say:
please come forward and lead the people in prayer. Prophet ‘Īsā will
say: the iqāmah was said for you; therefore, you will lead the prayer.
Accordingly, ‘Īsā will offer this prayer behind a man from my family
(Mahdī).”

It has been related by Abu Hurayrah (may God be pleased with him) that the
Prophet Muhammad, (may God bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘The Prophets

---

267 Ibn Qayyim transmitted it in al-Manār-ul-munīf (1:147 # 337); and Suyūṭī copied it in al-Ḥāwī lil-
fatāwā (2:64).

are like brothers: they have different mothers but their way of life is one. I am the closest of all the people to Jesus son of Mary, because there is no other Prophet between him and myself. He will come again, and when you see him, you will recognize him, He is of medium height and his colouring is reddish-white, He will be wearing two garments, and his hair will look wet. He will break the cross, kill the pigs, abolish the jizya and call the people to Islam. During his time, God will end every religion and sect other than Islam, and will destroy the Dajjal. Then peace and security will prevail on earth, so that lions will graze with camels, tigers with cattle, and wolves with sheep; children will be able to play with snakes without coming to any harm. Jesus will remain for forty years, then die, and the Muslims will pray for him.  

Ibn Sīrīn relates that (Imām) Mahdī will be from this Ummah and will lead ‘Īsā Ibn Maryam (e) in prayer.”

Artāh has narrated that a person (Mahdī) will appear from the Prophet’s family who will fight in the city of Rome and he will be the last leader (Imām) of Muhammad’s Ummah. Dajjal will appear in his time and in his time also ‘Īsā will descend (from the heaven).”

It is reported from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “By Him in Whose Hands is my soul, the time is coming when the son of Mary will descend among you as a just arbitrator. He will destroy the cross, kill the swine and put an end to the battle. Wealth will abound to such an extent that no one will accept it. One prostration (before Allah) will be better than the world and what is in it”. After narrating this Abu Hurairah used to say: You may recite if you like: “and there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his

270 Ibn Abī Shaybah narrated it in al-Musannaf (7:513#37649); and Ibn Hammād in al-Fitan (1:373#1107).
271 Ibn Hammād narrated it in al-Fitan (1:402,408#1214, 1234); and Suyūtī in al-Hawā lil-fatāwā (2:80).
death: and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them”. (Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim). In another narration reported by Muslim, the following words have been added on the authority of Ata: “Mutual hatred, jealousy and grudge will disappear”.

The Hadith collection by Abūl-Hussain ‘Asakiruddīn Muslim bin Ḥajjāj Al-Qushairī Al-Naisapurī (c. 206-261 A.H. [d. 875 C.E.]) contains many parallel accounts to the representation of Jesus (peace be upon him) found in Bukhārī. Imam Muslim, however, includes new information about Jesus in Islamic eschatology from the sayings of Muhammad (Peace be upon him). The sayings of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) on the person of Jesus in this collection can be grouped into four areas: Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and Jesus (Peace be upon him) and the night Journey (physical description), Jesus (Peace be upon him) and the Last Hour, and Jesus and the Day of Resurrection. As seen in Bukhārī, Muslim collects a number of sayings attributed to Muhammad (Peace be upon him) speaking about the relationship between the two prophets. According to this collection, there is no doubt that Muhammad (Peace be upon him) revered Jesus very highly. For example, in book thirty Muslim collects three sayings of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) that reflect this closeness: “I am most akin to the son of Mary among the whole of mankind and the Prophets are of different mothers, but of one religion, and no Prophet was raised between me and him” (30:5834). The next two sayings restate, with a variation in wording the same ideas. One states that “I am most akin to Jesus Christ” (30:5835), another saying “I am most close to Jesus, son of Mary among the whole of mankind in this worldly life and the next... Prophets are brothers in faith, having different mothers. Their religion is, however, one and there is no Apostle between us.”

272 Al-Bukhārī, Al-Sahih; Kitāb Al-Buyū’ vol.2, p.774, Hadith No.2190.
273 Al-Bukhārī, Al-Sahih; Kitāb Al-Mazlim wa al-Ghadab vol.2, 875 Hadith No.2344.
JESUS AND THE LAST HOUR

Jesus’ involvement in the Islamic eschatology is key in the Ḥadīth collections. A discussion on Jesus’ involvement on the Day of the Resurrection has been noted in Bukhārī, and is discussed in Muslim as well. However, a discussion of Jesus being a sign of the Last Hour, or of the eschaton, is particularly found in Muslim.

In this collection, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is recorded as giving ten signs of the Last Hour, including landslides in the East, West and Arabia, smoke, the Dajjāl, the beast of the earth, Gog and Magog the rising of the sun in the West, fire from the lower part of ‘Adan (Yemen), and the descent of Jesus Christ (41:6932; cf. 41:6931, 6933).

Though Muhammad (Peace be upon him) in this saying does not say which particular sign (e.g., one or ten) the Second Advent of Jesus was to be, a later Ḥadīth, 41:6934, notes that the return of Jesus is the tenth and last sign of this event. The Last Hour is the Islamic event where al-Dajjāl, or the Antichrist, will rise into power, causing much turmoil in the world. After ruling for a period of forty days, months or years, an army of Muslims will be the only group left to fight against al-Dajjāl. God will intervene at this time:

The time of prayer shall come and then Jesus son of Mary would descend and would lead them in prayer. When the enemy of Allah would see him, it would disappear just as salt dissolves itself in water and if he (Jesus) were not to confront them at all, even then it would dissolve completely, but Allah would kill them by his hand and he would show them their blood on his lance (lance of Jesus). (41:6924)

God will unilaterally act in the Last Hour to rid the world of evil, manifested particularly in al-Dajjāl. Jesus will be key to this unilateral action by God, being the instrument of God’s justice.

The person of Jesus is then a key figure in Islamic eschatology, being the last sign of God’s ultimate culmination of history. Jesus will act decisively in returning from heaven to kill the al-Dajjāl and establish an Islamic rule over the earth, which
includes leading Hajj and Umra. These Ḥadīth contain further physical descriptions of Jesus and include the exact place where Jesus will descend (outside Damascus), and what he will wear to be recognized by the Muslims.

If we cast a glance over the relevant Aḥādīth reported on this subject, we will find the following information which is very important as far as the second coming of Jesus is concerned:

He is the same Jesus, son of Mary, who was sent to the Children of Israel as a Messenger of God along with the Gospels, some two thousand years ago. He was the same personage who was miraculously born without a father and whose mother was Mary, daughter of Imran. He and his mother were born in Palestine. His mother was an extraordinary lady given a high spiritual status by God. Jesus miraculously spoke while still in the lap of his mother. He was a middle-statured man with a beautifully reddish white complexion. He had shining black hair. He resembled in his appearance Urwah Ibn Masʿūd, a companion of the holy Prophet (peace be upon him).

He used to perform extraordinary miracles, such as, giving life to the dead, curing the blind and the leper and breathing in the earthen models and they became flying birds. The Jews of Palestine failed in their efforts to execute or crucify him as he was raised by Allah to Himself. While coming again he would be wearing two yellow garments. His main duty will be the elimination of the Dajjal. He will come down on the white minaret towards the east of Damascus, Syria, at the time of Fajr prayer. He will kill the Dajjal near the gate of the city of Lydda. The incumbent Muslim leader will ask him to lead the prayer which he will decline and ask him to lead the prayer. After coming again to this world he will live for 40 years. He will

---

274 Muslim, Al-Saḥīḥ; Kitāb Al-Fitan wa Ashraṭ Al-Sā’ah, vo.4: 2225.
marry and will have children. He will abolish the cross and eliminate Christianity. He will eliminate the Jews and all other religious traditions except Islam.

With the disappearance of all non-Islamic religious beliefs he will have no need to continue the Jihad or his age will witness an unprecedented abundance of wealth so much so that no one on the surface of earth will be there to accept charity. He will perform pilgrimage to Makkah and will pass by the place known as Fajj-al-Rawha. All mutual hatred, jealousy and grudge will disappear.

Peace, prosperity and security will prevail so much so that camels will not fear lions, cows will not fear tigers and sheep will not fear wolves. The Dajjal will be a contemporary of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and will be killed by him. The Dajjal is a definite person who has specific characteristics. After passing away, Jesus will be buried near the grave of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him).

These minute details leave no doubt as to what the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) wanted to foretell in the coming again of a definite person and not the birth of someone who would claim to be the replica of that definite person. Any reasonable man who goes through this material will find that there is no scope of any metaphorical or figurative interpretation of these details.
CHAPTER 2

CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DIVERGENCES ON PERSONA OF JESUS CHRIST
CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DIVERGENCES ON PERSONA OF JESUS CHRIST

The first and foremost thing to be said about the Christian Muslim divergences on the persona of Jesus Christ is to discuss the major beliefs of both the religions. Both religions have a different approach regarding Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). It seems quite relevant to mention the viewpoint of Archbishop who says: "He (i.e., the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had picked up, as well as he coiled, leading ideas from Jews and Christians, but he was too ignorant to pass them on without distortion."

In view of the aim which the Archbishop has in view, i.e., a sympathetic presentation of the Christian faith," the above allegation may be divided into two parts:

(1) The Holy Prophet borrowed "leading ideas" from the Old Testament and Christianity;

(2) The Holy Prophet was "too ignorant" of the teachings of the Bible and the intrinsic worth of Christianity.

As to the first, here are a few points of contrast between the teachings of Christianity and Islam: The first and the foremost thing to be said about the Christian Muslim divergences on the personality of the Jesus Christ can be seen in the light of theological approaches of both the religions. In the beginning, we will see Christian doctrines related to Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). In Christianity there is the concept of Triune God; Jesus was ‘the only begotten son of God’; Eve was the first to be deceived in the Garden of Eden, and she in her turn was responsible for tempting Adam. To eat the forbidden fruit, Thus the curse of God rests on woman, and she is the organ of the Devil’, the foundations of the arms of the Devil, whose voice is the hissing of the serpent’, 'the gate of the Devil', 'the road of iniquity', 'the sting of the scorpion', 'a daughter of falsehood', a sentinel of hell, the enemy of peace and of the wild beasts the most dangerous’, etc. According to St. Bernard, St. Anthony, St. Bonaventure, St. Cyprian, St. Jerome, St. John Damascene and others, the sin of Adam and Eve was not forgiven. Hence every child is born in sin. The mission of Jesus was to redeem the sins
of humanity through his blood. Man can attain salvation by belief only- by the belief that the Jesus was the only begotten son of God and that he gave his blood for washing the sins of mankind in a mysterious way. We cannot approach God without the mediation of a priest. Ascetic life is a saintly life-the lives of Jesus and the saints being models in this respect-and the state of celibacy is preferable to the married state for the attainment of spiritual eminence. Conception of dualism-“give unto God what is God’s and unto Caesar what is Caesar’s.” The Bible contains “irrational beliefs, crude science and indecent tales” (Canon Barnes). As example of obscenity, we may refer here only to the stories of Lot and David-to personages to whom the Bible attributes saintliness and immorality at the same time. Islamic beliefs which are contradictory to Christianity are mentioned here as:

**PURE MONOTHEISM**

Jesus was nothing else than human; he was a divinely inspired teacher and a great holy man: Adam and Eve both were simultaneously deceived. Woman therefore enjoys equal status with man. We have discussed in some detail the blessings conferred on woman by Islam as also the treatment which she received from other religions and cultures; the sin of Adam and Eve was forgiven. Every child is born sinless. Sin is an acquisition and not a heritage; the mission of Jesus was to teach the way of leading upright life. The Doctrine of atonement is untenable; the one essential condition for the attainment of salvation is that we combine righteous action with right belief. Mere passive belief is meaningless. The Islamic system, which comprehends all problems of mankind—spiritual, moral, social and political, must be followed in its entirety; every man and woman is his or her own priest or priestess and can approach God without the mediation of anyone; Asceticism is unnatural. The natural way of attaining eminence in the 'Kingdom of God' is to endeavor persistently for leading an upright life in the midst of temptations which challenge man in the social environment; Islam does not recognise any form of Dualism. Every action, whether 'religious' or 'secular', is a truly religious action when performed in the light of God’s commands. Thus the whole life of a true Muslim from the mosque to the market and from the school to
the battlefield is a religious life; The Qur’ān is essentially rational, scientific and modern in its spirit. With a view to give instances of practical ethics, it has narrated several stories which occur in the Bible, but it cleanly leaves out all irrational, obscene and contradictory accounts of those stories.
2.1

THE BELIEF OF TRINITY
THE BELIEF OF TRINITY

The first and foremost point of comparison between Christianity and Islam is that Islam preaches a very clear faith in divine unity, whereas present-day Christianity preaches Trinitys. All of the original Holy Scriptures have been clearly expressing the belief in the oneness of Allah, which can be easily traced even in present Bible at various places, such as. The concocted Mystery of Trinity has been mentioned only in the end of Mathew (p.44), when Christ talks to his disciples after his resurrection about the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, but the same is neither mentioned at this occasion in John (see p. 146), nor in Luke(see p.117) and nor in Mark (see p. 72). The late William Adams Brown of Union Theological Seminary in New York figured that the threeness is simply the way we think about God, not the way in which He exists. Professor Cyril C. Richardsons peaks of the three as "symbols", not persons. He calls them mere terms. To him it is an artificial three foldness and says that a thoughtful Christian is not supposed to believe in it. In Hebraic Christian faith there is but one God not three. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius, Augustine, the Fathers in general and the Schoolmen and the Reformers, all saw it plainly taught in the Scriptures that there is but one God. The same divine concept has been clearly upheld by Islam and the Qur’ān.

Sajid Mir has elaborated this concept in the words of some western scholars in the following way:

"النيليث هو العقيدة المسيحية تجاه الإله، وهو يوجد في الأفقران الثلاثة بجوهر واحد."

The Christian doctrine of God as existing in three persons and one substance. 

"تقول هذه العقيدة: إن الله واحد. وفي حالة كونه واحداً هو ثلاثة أيضاً ... ومن وجهة نظر المسيحية التقليدية الملحقة (الأرثوذكسية) لا يجوز أن يفسر النيليث بأنه مثل شخص واحد أو أقوم واحد وله..."

---

1 John, 17:3, Mark, 12:28 Mathew, 19: 16-17, John, 14:24.
2 William Adams Brown. Dogmatics in Outline, 156.
3 Professor Cyric C. Richardson. The Doctrine of the Trinity, 14, 15, 98,111.
Christian Muslim Divergences on Persona of Jesus Christ

“It holds that while God is fully one, He is also Three ........... From the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy, it is important not to water down the Trinity by interpreting it as referring to three roles of a single person, as a man may simultaneously be a son, a husband, and a father. As the Athanasian creed put the matter, we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.”

The Christian explanation of the conception of God is extremely ambiguous and difficult to understand. Even the layman knows that God according to Christianity is composed of three persons: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This doctrine of God is known as the doctrine of Trinity. In elucidating and interpreting this doctrine however the views of the Christian scholars themselves are so divided and contradictory that it is extremely difficult to arrive with certainty at one conclusion. Who are the three persons whose unity, according to Christians, is God? There is itself a difference of opinion in their identification. Some say that God is totality of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Others are of the view that the Father, Son and Virgin Mary (Maryam) are the three persons whose unity represents God. Then, what is the individual status of each of these three persons and what is their relationship to the whole God which is referred to as Trinity? In answer to this question also, there are great differences of opinion. One group is of the opinion that each of the three persons is God just as the whole is God. Another group is of the view that each of the three separately is God, but when compared to the whole each has a lesser status and the word “God” has been used for each in a slightly wider

6 Huston Smith: op. cit., 33.
7 This view represent the believe of the majority of Christians-see encyclopedia Britannic, article and tile trinity, volume, vol. 22, 487.
The third group is of the opinion that each of the three is not God, but that God is only the whole (trinity).

UNITY IN THREE

In any event there are innumerable differences of opinion with the result that the doctrine of Trinity has become a “nightmare”. We shall present that interpretation and explanation of this doctrine which appears to be generally accepted by Christians. In the word of the Encyclopedia Britannica, the interpretation is as follows:

“The Christian doctrine of the Trinity can be best expressed in the words: “The father is God; the son is God, and Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not three Gods but one God... for like as we are compiled by the Christian unity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the catholic religion to say that there are three Gods or three Lords.”

In explaining this, the well-known theologian and philosopher of the 3rd Century (A.D.), Saint Augustine writes in his famous book on the Trinity as follows:

“All those catholic expounders of the Divine scriptures, both old and new, whom I have been able to read..., according to the scriptures, this Doctrine, that the father, and the son and Holy Spirit intimate a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality: and therefore that they are not three Gods, but one God: although the father hath begotten the son and so he who is the father is not the son; and the son is begotten by the father is not so he who is the son is not the father and the Holy Spirit is neither the father nor the son, but only the spirit with the father and the son, pertaining to the unity of the Trinity. Yet not that this Trinity was born of the virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, but only the son nor, again, that this trinity descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus when he was baptised; nor that, on the 5 day of Pentecost, after the ascension of the lord, when There came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing wind the same trinity sat upon each of them with cloven tongues like as of fire but only the holy spirit. Nor yet that this

8 Aquinas, vol.1, 327.
9 Matthew, III, 16.
Trinity said from heaven, thou art my son,\textsuperscript{10} whether when he was baptized by john, or when the three disciples where with him in the mount, are when the voice sounded, saying, ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again;’ but that it was a word of the father only, spoken to the son; although the father, and the son and the Holy spirit, as they are indivisible, so work indivisibly. This is also my faith, since it is the catholic faith.\textsuperscript{11}

What is the basis of permissibility in the eye of Christians for regarding three as one, and one as three? Before dealing with the answer to this question, we must understanding the meaning of father, son and the Holy Spirit in Christianity.

FATHER

The meaning of father according to Christians is the substance of God alone without any reference to attributes of speech and life. This essence in relation to the existence of the son enjoys the status of the principle. According to the interpretation of the well-known Christian philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas, the meaning of father is not that he has begotten anybody, or such a time has passed in which there was the father and not the son, but that this is divine terminology - whose purpose is simply that the father is the principle of the son just as the substance is the principle of the attribute. Otherwise, since the time the father was in existence, the son was also in existence, and neither of them enjoys any priority in time over the other.\textsuperscript{12}

Why is the essence of God reference to as the father? In answering this question, Alfred A. Garvie\textsuperscript{13} writes that:

“In relation to man, God is father by which is meant not merely man’s creaturely dependence on God, or personal affinity to God, but God’s love to man, and his purpose to bring man into fellowship of love with himself.”

SON

\textsuperscript{10} Mark I, 2.
\textsuperscript{11} Augustine, vol-2, 672.
\textsuperscript{12} Aquinas, vol.1, 324.
\textsuperscript{13} Encyclopedia of Region and Ethics, 596.
The meaning of “son” according to Christianity is the word of God. This is however not similar to the word of human beings. In distinguishing between the word of God and word of man Aquinas writes:

“In human nature the word is not something subsistent, and hence it is not properly called begotten or son. But the divine word is something subsistent in the divine nature; and hence he is properly and not metaphorically called son, and his principle is called Father”.\(^{14}\)

According to Christian belief, the knowledge of God to whatever extent is obtained through this attribute, and all things are created by means of this attribute. This attribute like the father is eternal and ancient.\(^{15}\) It was this attribute of God which became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ because of which he was referred to as the son of God. The doctrine of incarnation enjoys a specific status and we shall therefore deal with it in detail later.

**HOLY SPIRIT**

That is to say, the essence of God (father) loves by means of these attributes its attribute of knowledge (son), and the son likewise loves the father. These attributes, like the attribute of word, exist in substance, and are eternal and everlasting as the father and son. For this reason, the Holy Spirit enjoys the status of a separate person.

According to Christian belief, these attributes (Holy Spirit) descended on Jesus in the form of dove when he was baptized.\(^{16}\) Thereafter, when Jesus was raised to heaven, this very Holy Spirit descended in the form of tongues as of fire on the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost.

In short, therefore “Tri-Unity” means that God Comprises of three person: the essence of God referred to as the father; the attribute of the word of God referred to as the son; and the attributes of life and love of God referred to as the Holy Spirit.

\(^{14}\) Aquinas, vol.1, 326.  
\(^{15}\) Augustine, vol.2, 168.  
\(^{16}\) Matthew:3:16.
Of these three, each one is God. However, the three together are not three Gods but only one God.

**THE UNITY OF THREE AND ONE**

The question arises here: how can God remain one when the father, the son and the Holy Spirit are each believed to be God? They must necessarily be three.

It is noteworthy to mention a statement of Sajid Mir in which it is stated:

> إن الإله واحد في ثلاثة ألقاب لم تكن مستقرة في الحياة المسيحية وفي اعتقاداتها حتى نهاية القرن الرابع.

> “The formulation “one God in three persons” was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated, into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4\(^{th}\) century.”

This question has since the beginning of Christianity until the present day been a riddle. Great Christian thinkers have attempted to solve the riddle in different forms and ways. There arose on this basis numerous sects. In truth, however, no rationally acceptable answer to the question was offered. Professor Maurice Relton in his excellent work “studies in Christian Doctrine” has in a stimulating discussion dealt with the solutions offered by various sects, more especially at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century of the Christen era.

When the Ebonite sect emerged to solve this problem, they took up the cudgels at the first step - they stated that, in believing Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) to be God, they could not preserve the belief of the unity of God. Accordingly, it must be said that he was not completely and fully God. He could be regarded as the resemblance of God, or the image of God’s character. However, it could not be said that in essence and substance he was God as the father was.

This sect in attempting to resolve the issue struck at the basis and foundation of Christianity, for that reason, the Church openly opposed it and declared its adherents innovators and heretics. As a result, this solution to the problem was not worthy of acceptance.

17 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p.31.
A group of Ebionites themselves emerged and asserted that the divinity of Christ (peace be upon him) must not be so openly denied - he must be believed to be God. But in order to avoid the slander of polytheism, it must be said that in essence the father only was God. However, the doctrine of trinity was also correct because the father had conferred divine status on the son and the Holy Spirit.

The theory also was opposed to the doctrinal principles of the Church because the Church believed the son to be of one substance or essence as that of the father. Hence, this sect was also declared heretic and the matter remained unresolved as before.

A third sect known as patripassianism sprung up. Its foremost proponents were Praxeas, Noetus, zephyrinus and Callistus. They presented a new philosophy in order to resolve the problem. They asserted that the father and son were not separate and distinct persons, but were modes or manifestations of one person to whom separate names were given. In reality, God was the father. He in relation to his essence is eternal and immortal. He is imperceptible to Man, and not subject to human needs and wants. In view of the fact, however, that he is God, and nobody can stop God’s will, it follows that he may at any time by his will assume the human character and be subject to human wants and needs. And, if he wills, he may be visible to people by manifesting himself as man. To the extent that, if he wills at any time, he may die before people. Consequently, on one occasion God willed that he appear in the form of man. Accordingly, he appeared bodily in the world as Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) and became visible to men. The Jews brought untold hardships on him to the extent that they crucified him one day. Hence, Jesus Christ or the Son is not in reality a separate person, but he is the father who is assuming human form called himself the son.

It is clear that although on the other hand this philosophy to a degree solved the problem of “the Unity of three and one”, it raised on the other hand a number of unsolvable problems. Moreover, this sect did not assist the teachings of the Church
which decreed the father and son to be distinct and separate persons. Accordingly, the sect was rejected and declared heretic. And the problem still remained unsolved.

There were other attempts on the part of the heretical sects to solve this problem. But, all of these were not worthy of acceptance because they in some way or the other violated the accepted principles and teachings of the Church.

The question is: how did the Roman Catholic Church itself solve this problem? Our research reveals that the majority of Roman Catholic theologians have openly refused to solve this riddle, and have asserted that “three in One and One in Three” is a mystery which we are unable to understand. Some theologians have attempted to present a rational interpretation to the doctrine of trinity.18

In regard to Indian priests who propagated Christianity for the duration of the previous century in the Indo-Pak continent - it appears after considering their arguments that by virtue of their distance from the seat of Christianity, they could not fully understand the detailed teachings of Christianity. We shall give only one example to show the extent of their understanding of Christianity. Reverend “Quaimuddin” wrote a small booklet known as “Takshifah al-Tathlīth” in order to explain the doctrine of trinity. The booklet was published in Lahore Pakistan in 1972. In giving an example of the doctrine of trinity, he writes therein:

If the composition of the human body is reflected on, then also it is made up of its own species, that is, material parts – whose united form could be viewed from a material level, for example the bone, flesh and blood – by reason of their integration, the human body remains in existence. If one of the three is missing, the completion of the structure of the human body cannot be conceived.

---

18 Some Indian theologians assert that the doctrine of trinity is part of mutashabihat and Muqattā’āt of the Qur’ān. This is a misconception. Firstly, mutashabihat are verses whose comprehension or not necessary for an understanding the cardinal principals, or for acting on any precept, or command are prohibition. All of this is crystal clear. As opposed to this, the doctrine of trinity is cardinal and fundamental to salvation. To treat it as part of Mutashabihat means that we are obliged to believe in something which is beyond the dictates of reason. Secondly, because Christians say that the apparent meaning of the doctrine is intended. Although they do not have the supporting proof whereas, the Mutashabihat, whilst not comprehensible, are still not contrary to reason.
The reverend has in the above statement attempted to establish that just as the existence of God is similarly (May God forbid!) composed of three persons. It is clear that the reverend understands that the “three persons” in Christianity means three parts. And just as each thing which comprises of parts is in totality one, the essence God despite being composed of three persons is in like manner one. Whereas, Christianity does not believe the three persons to be three parts. On the contrary, it decrees them to be three distinct and separate persons each having separate substance and existence for this reason. It has left out the word “parts” for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and has chosen the word “person”. The existence of man is undoubtedly composed of flesh, bone and blood. However, nobody refers to only flesh, or only bone, as man, but refers to them as part of man. As opposed to this, Christianity declares each of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit God - and does not believe in each as a part of God.  

The purpose of presenting this example was only to show that Indian priests in seeking to prove trinity by means of rational arguments are themselves obvious to the detailed teaching of their religion. Accordingly, we shall disregard their arguments in this work, and shall discuss and analyse the views of early Christian theologians and thinkers in this regard. As far as our research reveals, the most comprehensive and detailed treaties written on this subject is that of the well-known theologian and philosopher of the 3rd Century, Saint Augustine. Later scholars have drawn heavily on his work. The English translation of his work was rendered by A.W. Haddan and was published under the title “on the Trinity”. It forms part of those writings of St. Augustine which have been collected and published in New York in 1948 under the title “Basic Writings of St. Augustine”.  

A large part of this work is devoted to spiritual discussion. Towards the end, however, Augustine has, in endeavours to prove.

---

19 If Christianity believed in the three as parts of God, then explanation offered by Reverend “Qaimuddin” would be correct. The fact that the believe in God as comprising of parts is contrary to reason and the principle of eternity, according to other proofs, is a separate issue.
2.2

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS
THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

The second Christian dogma is that of the Godhood of Jesus. The euthanasia creed states that “furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believes rightly in the incarnation of our lord Jesus Christ.” Christians (both Roman Catholics and Protestants) believe the Jesus Christ is God from all eternity, the Second Person of the Divine Trinity; that nearly two thousand years ago he chose to appear in a human body and was born of the Virgin Mary. The author of catholic teaching asserts the Godhood of Jesus in these words:

“This teaching about Christ’s divinity which is to be found in so many places of scripture has always been proclaimed by the Church as one of the most important truths of Catholic Faith. The Council of Nicaea, which was the first general Council after the persecutions, solemnly condemned Arius who contended that Christ was not God but a creature.”

The Protestant author of the Truth of Christianity expresses himself on this subject as follows:

“Evidently then this expression, the Son of God, meant to him (i.e., John), and therefore presumably to other new Testament writers, who use it frequently, that Christ was truly God-God the Son-in-the fullest and most complete sense.”

The dogma also has no support of the words of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels. The truth is that Jesus strongly disclaimed Godhood or divinity, here are his own words:

“Why callest thou me Good? There is none good but One that is, God.”

He spoke of God as “My Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” These words of Jesus reported in the Bible show that Jesus stood in the same

---

20 Rev. J. F. De Groot, Catholic Teaching, 149.
22 Mark 10: 18.
relation to God as any other man. He was a creature of God. In his agony on Cross, Jesus cried out:

“Eloi, Eloi, Lama sabachthani? Which is, being interpreted, my God, my God why has thou forsaken me?”  

Can anyone imagine these words coming out of the mouth of God? Here we have the cry of a helpless man in agony addressed to his creator and Lord. God is the object of our worship, the Supreme Being to whom we, creatures, address our prayers. We cannot imagine God praying to anyone. Yet about Jesus it is written in the Gospels:

“And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.”.....“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”...

The fact is that Jesus never claimed to be God, but only a Prophet or Messenger of God. He was a man to whom God had revealed his message for the guidance of other men. To give his own words:

“Jesus saith unto them, if ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard from God.”...

These words of Jesus prove, firstly, that there is only one Divine God and that Jesus knew nothing of the trinity (“Three, the only true God”); secondly, that Jesus laid no claim to Godhood, for he referred to a being other than himself “Thee”) as the only God; thirdly, that Jesus only claimed to be a Messenger of God (“Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent”). Like the Trinity, the doctrine of the Incarnation was also developed long after Jesus. In fact, one can trace the stages through which Jesus was...

---

24 Mark 15:34.
25 Mark 1:35.
27 John 8:39, 40.
28 John 17:3.
gradually deified. In the Qur’an he was regarded as a Prophet of God, as a human being and nothing more, in “Urmarcus; there was an attempt to glamorize his person and attribute many miracles to him; in works of the first and second centuries he was presented as a mighty angel, the first born of all creatures, but still a creature; and finally in the preface to John’s Gospel and other works of the third and fourth centuries he was made into a God. In the Nicene Creeds (325 A.C.) It is affirmed against those Christians who still denied the divinity of Jesus:

“I believe in ... one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Born of the Father before all ages. God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God. Begotten not made; being of one substance with the Father.”

Reason refuses to accept a man who was born of woman, suffered from human wants, ignorance and limitations, and gradually grew in stature, power and wisdom, like all other human beings, as God. To put human limitations upon God and to believe in His Incarnation in a human body is to deny the Perfection of God.

The dogma of the incarnation was taken into Christianity, like many other Christian nations, from paganism. In pre-Christian mythologies we often read of the hero being regarded as god. The Hindus of India even today worship their ancient heroes. Rama and Krishna, as incarnations of Vishnu, the second person of the Hindu Trinity.

Islam has liberated its followers from the bondage of such superstitions by rejecting the dogma of the Incarnation.

**QUR’ÂNİC REJECTION OF TRINITY**

The glorious Qur’an rejects the divinity of Jesus in these words:

---

29 Nicenee Creeds 325 A.C.
According to the sacred book of Islam, Jesus was a Prophet of God-sinless, pure and godly, like and other prophets-but every bit a human being:

“He (Jesus) said: Lo! I am a servant of God. He hath given me the Scripture and has appointed me a prophet.”

The Islamic view is that the prophets, one and all, were human beings, who by virtue of their devotion to truth and sinless life became worthy of being chosen by God as His Messengers. They had made themselves so completely one with God that in everything they said or did they carried out His Will. The Message which they gave to men, was not their’s but God’s. God conveyed His Word to them, so that they might shape their own lives according to it and become models for their fellow-men. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) declared:

Qur’an 5:72.
Qur’an 3:59.
Qur’an 19:30.
Qur’an, 41:6.
“I am only a mortal like you. It is inspired in me that your God is One God, therefore take the straight path unto Him, and seek Forgiveness of him.”

THE DIVINE SONSHIP

The third Christian dogma is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a special and exclusive sense. This dogma also is not in conformity with the sayings and teachings of Jesus. As Sajid Mir expressed his opinion in these words:

فكرة الإبن أي: الإيمان بالمسيح أنه ابن الله إلى جانب الإيمان باللهه وكونه مظهرًا له

In the Bible this expression has been used for many earlier prophets. For instance, Israel was called the “Son of God” in one of the books of Moses:

“And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, thus saith the Lord, Israel is My Son, even my first born.”

In the Psalms the same title was given to David:

“I will declare the decree: the Lord hat said unto me, thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee.”

A little later in the Bible Solomon also was called the son of God:

“He shall build a house for My Name: and he shall be My Son, and I will be his Father and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.”

This phrase meant nothing more than nearness to God in love. The founder of Christianity himself said that every man who did the Will of the Father in Heaven was a Son of God. It was devout life and kind and merciful behavior that made a man worthy of being called the Son of God. Is this not what Jesus says in the following sayings:

“Love your enemies...that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Haven.”

---

34 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p. 20.
35 Exodus, 4:22.
36 Psalms, 2:7.
37 I Chronicles, 22:10.
38 Matthew, 5:44, 45.
“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the Sons of God.”  

These sayings leave no doubt in our minds as to what this phrase meant for Jesus. In view of this, there is no justification for regarding Jesus as the Son of God, in an exclusive or unique sense. Jesus mostly called himself a “son of man”, but when he referred to himself as a “Son of God”, was no doubt in the same sense in which Adman, Israel, David and Solomon before him had been called the Sons of God and in which he himself had spoken of those who had love in their hearts and lived in peace with their fellow-men as “Sons of God.” The following remarks of Jesus will further show that it was only in a metaphorical sense that he called himself a Son of God:

“Jesus answered them, is it now written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because I said I am the son of God.”

Jesus was obviously referring to Psalms 82: verses 6 and 7:

“I have said, ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men and fall like the princes.”

As the Judges and prophets of old were called “god” only in a metaphorical sense, so Jesus called himself a “Son of God” in the same sense. It is clear that for Jesus the term “Son of God” carried no particular import other than the idiom of the Bible permitted. This is not the case for singling Jesus out as the Son of God in a special or literal sense, as the Christians have done.

The Glorious Qur’ān in a very forceful language rejects the dogma that Jesus was the Son of God in a literal or unique sense

It says:

39 Ibid., 5:9.
40 John 10:34-36.
And they say: God hath taken unto Himself a son, Be He? Glorified! Nay, but whatsoever is in the heaven and the earth is His. All are subservient unto Him.

“It befitteth not (the Majesty) of God that he should take unto Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When he decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only, Be! And it is.

Reason and common sense are again on the side of Islam. Philosophy tells us that no being from whom another being can come out and exist as a separate individual and become his equal and partner can be regarded as perfect. To attribute a son to God would be to deny the Perfection of God.  

---

41 Qurʾān 2:116.
42 Qurʾān 19:35.
THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING RELATING TO JESUS CHRIST

The gist of the Christian teaching relating to Jesus Christ is that word of God (that is the person of the son) became incarnate in the human being of Jesus Christ for the sake of the well-being of men. As long as Jesus Christ stayed in the world, this divine person or substance remained incarnate within him. To the extent that the Jews crucified him whereupon the divine person or substance separated from his body. Then three days after he became alive for the second time and was shown to his disciples he gave them advice and guidance where after he ascended to heaven. The Jews crucified him and thereby that sin of all Christians was forgiven which was committed by Adam and had passed into their nature at birth. This doctrine has four basic parts namely:

1. Incarnation
2. Crucifixion
3. Resurrection
4. Redemption

We shall deal with each part in sufficient detail.
2.3

INCARNATION
INCARNATION

The doctrine of incarnation appears at first in the book of John. The author of this book refers to the beginning of Jesus Christ in the following words:

“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”

And further on, he writes:

“and the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only son from the father.”

We have already stated that the ‘word’ in Christianity refers to the person of the son of God - who himself is God. Accordingly the meaning of the statement of John is that the world of God - that is the person of the son - became incarnate and appeared in the form of Jesus. In explaining this doctrine, Maurice Relton writes:

“The Catholic Doctrine maintains that he who was God, without ceasing to be what he was became man i.e. entered into the conditions of our finite existence in time and space and dwelt amongst us”.

Incarnation has been defined by some scholars as:

“The word is a non-Biblical theological term to state the Christian conviction that in Jesus Christ, God has visited and redeemed His people.”

According to Christians the power that unified the person of the son with the human existence of Jesus is the Holy Spirit. We have stated earlier that the meaning of the Holy Spirit in Christianity is the attribute of the love of God. Hence the meaning of this doctrine is that because God loved His servants, therefore, through his

---

44 John 1-3.
45 John 14-15.
46 Relton, 28.
attribute of love sent the person of the son to this world - so that he may become the redeemer of the original sin of men.

It must be borne in mind that the incarnation of the son into Jesus Christ does not mean according to Christians that the son gave up divinity and became man. But the meaning is that he was previously only God and now also became man. Hence in accordance with this doctrine Jesus was simultaneously both man and God. Alfred Garvey expresses this in the following words: 48

“Jesus was both Man and God at the same time. The denial of one of both of these natures in the one person had given rise to a number of heretical sects. Athanasius strongly defended this theory against Arius. Hence the accepted formula was the unity of the two natures in the one person of Christ”.

From the human viewpoint, Jesus was of lower rank than God. For this reason he stated the following:

“...For the father is greater than I” 49

And it is in this respect that he was subject to human conditions and needs. But from the viewpoint of divinity he was equal to God the father. Hence the Gospel of John writes:

“I and Father are one” 50

Augustine writes: 51 “In the form of God he made man: in the form of servant, he was made man”....Moreover, Augustine writes to this extent

“for he did not so take the form of a servant as that he should lose the form of God in which he was equal to the father. Is there anyone who cannot perceive that he himself in the form of God is also greater than himself but yet likewise in the form of a servant less than himself?”

48 Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 586.
49 John 14:28.
50 John 10-30.
The question arises here. How is it possible that one person be both man and God; Creator and the created, high and low? This question also like the doctrine of trinity became the centre of debate and controversy over the centuries. In answer thereto books were written to the extent that the foundation was laid for a separate science known as Christology.

In regard to the Roman Catholic Church, it bases its argument in answer to this question on mainly different verses from the gospel of John. As if in its view, this doctrine is established by means of what has been transmitted. As for reason, and in order to bring the doctrine of incarnation closer to human understanding, this church presents certain examples. Some assert that the unity of “God” and “man” is like an engagement in a ring. Others say that the analogy is like the reflection of a person in a mirror. So, just as the engagement and the ring are two things in one existence or substance, and just as the mirror and reflection are two things in one existence or substance, the person of Jesus was incarnated into human existence in like manner. For this reason, there are two realities in his personality at the same time - one of God and one of man. Most Christian thinkers have however not accepted these arguments.

We present a summary below of the solutions offered by different Christian thinkers to this question after the attempt of the Roman Catholic Church.

---

52 The details of these arguments, and refutation thereof, can be seen in the third chapter of the book “Izhâr al-Ḥaq” written by the al-Kirān̄wî.

53 Because the engravement in a ring, despite its apparent attachment, is nevertheless a separate thing. Hence, the ring cannot be called the engravement; and vice versa. Whereas, on the contrary, Christians assert that, after the incarnation. Christ was God, and God became man. Similarly, the reflection of John is separate from the mirror itself. The mirror cannot be called John, or vice-versa. As opposed to this, Christians allege that Jesus is God, and God is man. The examples therefore are inappropriate and inaccurate.
THOSE WHO DENY THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

Amongst them, is the group, which, despairing in answering the question, stated that the belief in the divinity of Jesus is false? He was simple human and accordingly the question itself does not arise.

James Makinon has in the excellent work “From Christ to Constantine” dealt with the views of these thinkers in fair detail. According to him, the founder-leaders of this school were Paul of Samosata and Lucian. He writes:

“both held that Christ was a creature, but while Paul of Samosata conceived of him as a mere man in whom the impersonal divine wisdom or logos manifested itself, Lucian and his school regarded him as a heavenly being who was created by God out of nothing, in whom the divine logos becomes personal, who at the incarnation, assumed a human body, but not a human soul, and whose mission it was to reveal the father. But he was not God in the absolute sense and was not eternal”.

So Paul of Samosata denied the doctrine of incarnation at inception. He stated that the meaning of incarnation of God in the being of Christ is only that God conferred on him a specific intellect. Lucian on the other hand did not deny the doctrine of incarnation. He accepted that the attribute of knowledge of God was incarnated into Jesus Christ but that the incarnation did not make Jesus God, Creator, eternal and everlasting- and that despite such incarnation, God remained creator and Jesus created as before.

Arius, the well-known Christian thinker of the fourth Century, influenced by the theories of Paul and Lucian, fought a great battle against the Church of his time and caused an outcry in the then Christian world. The substance of his theory in the words of Makinon is as follows:

---

54 He was Bishop of Antioch from 260 to 272 A.D.
55 Lucian is a well known Christian theologian, who devoted his life to asceticism. His theories are between that of Arlus and Paul of Samosata. Born in Samosata, he spent most of his life in Antioch. (Britanica).
56 Mackinon,
“Arius on the contrary insisted that God alone is eternal and has no equal; that He created the son out of nothing; that the son is, therefore, not eternal, nor is God eternally the father, since there was (a time) when the son was not; that he is of a different substance from the father and is subject to change, that he is not truly God, though he was capable of perfection and became a perfect creature- the logos in a real human body. Christ is thus for him a secondary deity or demi God, who partakes, in a certain measure, of the quality of both, the divine and the human, but is not God in the highest sense.”\(^57\)

When Arius propounded his theories, it was widely accepted especially in the Eastern Church.

**MIRACLES ARE NOT PROOF OF DIVINITY**

They may say again that, Christ is God or the “Son of God” because he healed the sick and raised the dead and lived a more miraculous life than anybody else; the answer is that this is a normal and ordinary way of many righteous people in the history of the world. According to the Bible and the Holy Qur’ān, there were many people who lived miraculous lives and showed many wonders and signs by the power of the Almighty God, the creator of all things.

Recently, a preacher from “The Church of Christ” was preaching on television about the divinity of Jesus Christ, and then he allegedly said that “the miraculous life of Jesus proves the fact that he was God” and thus preachers and their examples in Christendom believe that the miracles of Christ are proofs of his divinity..!

But this cannot be accepted at all as both the Bible and the Qur’ān attributed many miracles to the prophets and righteous men; yet they have never been regarded as Gods even though some of them had shown greater miracles in their lives, e.g. John the Baptist of whom Jesus said, “among those born of Woman, hath not risen one greater than John the Baptist...”\(^58\)

But yet we see, he did not perform any miracle..! Yes, he was great but he did

---

\(^{57}\) James Mackinon. From Christ to Christian to Constantine, 99.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 11:11.
not perform any miracle, and thus the miracle is not a measurement or a proof of Greatness or divinity as assumed by Christians. Now, let us learn about those miracles performed by the Prophets and righteous servants of God:

**EZEKIEL RAISED THE DEAD**

The Christians proudly speak about Jesus and raising of Lazarus from the dead but according to same Bible the Prophet Ezekiel raised a huge army which consisted of thousands of people from the dead while before they were rotten bones in the valley; thus he started his mission of raising the dead by saying: "So I prophesized as He has commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army, then He said unto me, son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel".  

And so all who were healed by Jesus, and other miracles and signs shown by him-in particular the miracles of Lazarus who was raised back to life by Christ-were done by the power of the father, The Almighty God, the creator of all things and thus, Allah supported Jesus with that amazing miracle. The bible states this fact by saying:"... And Jesus has lifted up his eyes, and said, father, I thank thee thou has sent me, and I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which standby I said it, that they may believe that thou has sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with loud voice, Lazarus, come forth, and he that was dead came forth... Jesus said unto them, lose him and let him, go..."  

Thus, Lazarus was raised back to life not by the power of Jesus independently but by

---

59 Ezekiel. 37:1-12; all of these miracle performed by the prophets as explained by both the holy Al-Qur'an and the bible have been done by both righteous men through the power and the divine support of Allah, thus creator of the heaven and the earth..., and thereafter, neither Jesus nor any other Prophet has done nothing from his own power. All that they did was through the support of the Almighty Allah. Jesus Christ is not exceptional on this matter, and thus, all miracles done by him with the support and the power of Allah Almighty, the creator of all things. The Bible confuses the fact saying: "... Ye man of Isreal, here these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know ..."  

Note: The lifting up of his eyes symbolizes the humbleness of Jesus Christ in his prayers to the Creator; then his saying; “Father, I thank thee, that though hast sent me” is a clear statement from him to acknowledge that he was sent by Allah as a messenger to people, his saying, I knew thou hearest me always” is an evidence that Jesus used to seek divine support which he got wherever he wished as the Father, the Almighty creator was always in his assistance.

60 John. 11:41-44.
the power and the Divine support of Almighty Allah. This reality about the miracles of Jesus Christ is exactly what the Holy Qur’ān has explained nearly 1,400 years ago by saying:

وَرَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِلَى نَبِيٍّ إِسْرَائِيلَ أَلَّا تَغْفِرْ بَعْضَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوْا مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ مَنْ رَحَمَهُمْ أَنْ أَخْلَقَ لَهُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسَانِ مَثَلًا

"... And (Allah) will make him (Jesus) a messenger to the Children of Israel, and (he will say) I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. See! I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it and suddenly it is a bird by Allah’s leave. I heal him who was born blind and the leper, and I raise the dead by Allah’s leave..."\(^{61}\)

In Chapter 5 of the Holy Qur’ān, Allah, the mighty is reminding Jesus Christ of the bounties which He had bestowed on him saying:

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَسُوعَ بَنُ مَارْيَةَ أَبْنِ مَزِيَّةَ أَذْكُرْنِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىْ مَلِكِكَ وَرَجُلَ الْقُدُّسِ وَسَمَّاَنَ الْأَلَّافِيسَ فِي النَّعْمَ وَكَمْلَهُ وَزَدَ عَلَّمَنِي الْكِتَابَ وَالْكَلِمَةَ وَيَلَّوْنَ السُّجُودَ وَيَقْضُونَ مِنْ الْأَلْقَابِ كَثِيرًا مَّنْ أَلْقَبُونَهُ الْمِلَّاتُ وَهُمْ مَخْلُوقُونَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِ وَمَا اِخْتَالُوا مِنْهُمْ وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَاهُ الْقُرْآنَ فِيهِ فَلْتَطْمِئِنَّ عَلَيْهِ وَلَدَّرَهُمْ وَلَدَّرَ الْأَسْمَعُ وَالْأَبْرَزُ بِيَادِيّ وَلَدَّرَ الْحَجْرِ الْمُرْقَنَ بِيَادِيّ

"When Allah says O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favor to you and to your mother, how I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit so that you speak to mankind while you are in the cradle as in maturity,... and how you shaped of clay the likeness of a bird by My permission, blew upon it and it was a bird by My permission, and you healed him who was born blind and the leper with My permission;..."\(^{62}\)

---

\(^{61}\) Qur’ān 3:48-49.

\(^{62}\) Qur’ān 5:110; The holy Qur’ān has always referred the miraculous life of Jesus Christ to be the result of divine support from God and not an independent supernatural power of Christ himself as many Christians would like to believe.
THE HEALING POWER OF JESUS CHRIST

The Christians will say that Jesus Christ has the power to heal all kinds of sickness. We personally, do not have any problem with this concept of healing especially when attributed to Jesus Christ, approved by God with miracles and wanders...

But what we are trying to explain is that, the healing power of Jesus does not make him God or the Son of God as believed by the Christians who normally say: "Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, begotten not made". This concept can be easily disproved as we have seen that there are many Prophets and righteous men who have done great signs and wonders in lives, including healing of people, etc.

Apart from the fact that Jesus Christ had never claimed to do anything on his own but always attributed whatever he had done to his Father who had sent him, and so in this, he is neither unique nor different from other Prophets and righteous men who performed miracles and wonders. Jesus Christ said about the nature of himself that: "... I can of Mine Own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my It is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me...

THE BLESSING OF HEALING JEWS

Many were bitten by serpents during the time of Moses; Moses then made a snake from brass and as soon as at those who were bitten and harmed by the poisonous serpents looked at the copper serpent of Moses, they were healed immediately. The scripture says:...“And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looked upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived...

63 John, 5:30.
64 Numbers. 21:8-9; Note: See how the Jews in Egypt and in Israel were so familiar with the phenomenon of healing as they have been blessed of having lived with many saints, Prophets and righteous servants of Allah whom the divine Creator had wrought many miracles in their lives.
Thus as, the Jews experienced the healing power and its blessing from many righteous servants of God such as Moses, Elisha, Elijah, Aaron, Daniel, Ezekiel, Ibrahim, Hezekiah and many others long before the advent of Jesus Christ, thus, the healing power of Jesus Christ was not new for them; they knew about healing of the whole family by Abraham as the scripture says; "...

“So Abraham prayed unto God: God healed Abimelech, and his wife and his maid servants; and they bare children. For the Lord has closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham’s wife” 65

The Jews as we have said knew all of these healing events of the past; as it will be monotonous mention all healing events which took place long before Jesus Christ in his booklet, here finally, is Prophet Hezekiah exercising his healing power as the scripture says:

"And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. And the Children of Israil that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites, and the priests praised day by day, singing with loud Instruments unto the Lord." 66

---

65 Gen. 20:17-18; NOTE: These healing powers were bestowed almighty God, the creator to many of the righteous people of the past, present and those who are to come. To have the power of performing miracles and wonders does not make you the physical son of god but would simply mean that, you are "the righteous servant of god". This is why I have said that, if the meaning of the phrase "Son of God" means "the righteous servant of God" then the Muslims worldwide will have no objection in accepting it, but if the phrase "Son of God will mean that JESUS is "the Only begotten Son of God " or what they normally believe that this “begotten not made” then Muslims worldwide will not only reject it but would also consider it to be a blasphemy. In fact here is only one God and his real name is Allah. He is the Creator of every thin and he alone deserves to be worshipped. Muslims do not worship Jesus Christ. For Muslims, Jesus was a man created by Allah and sent as a Prophet to the Jews and the Israelites.

66 2 Chronicles. 30:20-21.
2.4

THE BELIEF OF CRUCIFIXION
THE BELIEF OF CRUCIFIXION

Islam preaches that Jesus Christ was not crucified but he was directly lifted towards the heavens. He is alive and dwelling there till today and will come down again to preach the religion of Islam, before the occurrence of the Day of Judgment. He neither died nor was hanged nor was he murdered but he was granted complete safety from his enemies, whereas present-day Christianity believes that Christ was crucified, he was hanged and after three days was raised towards heavens. It is an amalgamation of death, resurrection and ascension.

In view of the fact that the sign of the cross is of great importance by virtue of the doctrine of crucifixion refer briefly to its position which is not without interest.

Until the fourth century AD this sign had no collective significance. It is popularly reported that Emperor Constantine saw (probably in his dream) in 312 AD during battle the sign of a cross was the one on which Jesus (according to the Christian claim) had been crucified. In commemoration of this known as the finding of the cross thereafter the sign of the cross became the symbol of the Christian faith why is the cross holy in Christianity? When according to Christian belief it was the cause of harm to Jesus. We have not found the answer to this question in the writing of any Christian scholar. It appears that the basis of because the cross is the doctrine of atonement. That is because the cross is the cause of the forgiveness of sins, it is respect and sanctified. Sajid Mir is of the view that the concept of salvation was made by paul as he says:

اصطبع بولس عقيدة الكفارة على عكس الحقائق المذكورة آماً، وتعاليم عيسى، وعقيدة الحواريين،

وحتى فكرته الأولى في النجاة، أسسها علی خطيئة آدم – الخطيئة التي لم يقصر أثراً علی آدم، بل شملت جميع ذرية آدم إلى أن کفرت بصلب عيسى. 67

67 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p.133.
THE CRUCIFIXION

وَلاَ تَطُوفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ ۖ عِلْمُ ۖ إِنَّ الْمِنْهَرَ ۛ وَالْيَتْمُّرَ ۚ وَالْفَوَائِدُ قَلْ أَوْلَٰئِكَ كَانُواْ عَلَى مُهَادَٰرَةٍ

And never concern thyself with anything that thou have no knowledge thereof. Verily - thy - hearing and sight and heart - all of them - will be called to account for it - on Judgment Day.

وَقَلِ أَلْحَمَتَ نِسَ ۚ وَمَسَّكَمُ فَنَّ عَاءِ فَلْيُؤْمِنَ وَمَنْ عَاءَ فَلْيُصَدَّفْ

And say: 'The truth - has now come, from your Sustainer, let him then who wills, believe in it, and let him who wills, reject it'.

THE EVIDENCE

Professor Robert Funk, founder of the Jesus Seminar, was not the first one to cast doubt on the crucifixion of Jesus. He wrote: 'The crucifixion of Jesus is not entirely beyond question'. 'The story of Jesus' arrest, trial, and execution is largely fictional'. 'Mark's account of the Passion, which reaches its climax, with Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion are products of Mark's narrative imagination'; and 'Jesus' crucifixion is a very unmessianic thing to happen'.

A.N. Wilson wrote: 'No real evidence can be found for Jesus’ arrest and execution'; and 'The first three gospels claim that the Eucharist was instituted during or after the traditional Jewish Passover meal. If this is the case, then every single event that follows: the arrest of Jesus, his trial, his execution, must be a work of fiction. It is unthinkable that the Jews would have broken their most sacred religious observance in order to put a man on trial'. Professor Burton L. Mack was more emphatic in his statement. He wrote:

---

68 Qur’an 17: 36.
69 Qur’an 18: 29.
71 Wilson, A.N., 1992, Jesus, alive, Fawcett Columbine.
72 Qur’an 17: 36.
73 Qur’an 18: 29.
74 Funk, Robert. Honest to Jesus: Jesus for Millennium, 218,127,131& 138.
As for the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, Mark took the basic idea from the Christ myth but dared imagine how the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ might look if played out as a historical event in Jerusalem, something the Christ myth resisted. Thus Mark's story is understood as a studied combination of Jesus traditions with the Christ myth ... All other narrative gospels start with Mark. None would change basic plot... Ever later, Christians would imagine Mark's fiction as history.²²

Professor Geza Vermes wrote:

Neither the 'suffering' of the Messiah, nor his 'crucifixion' appear to have been part of the faith of the Nazarenes ... Whether there was a trial of Jesus⁹ by the supreme Jewish court in Jerusalem on a religious charge, and a subsequent capital sentence pronounced and forwarded for confirmation and execution by the secular arm, remains historically more than dubious.⁷³

On top of all evidence, or lack of it, it is conspicuous that both the gospel, the Q gospel and the gospel of Thomas, include no reference to Jesus’ passion and execution'. They include no passion story, and lack any reference to the death' of Jesus. Both are much closer to Jesus, time, having been written at least these years earlier than the earliest of the four canonical gospels.

The Qur'ān for its part, fourteen centuries ago, categorically rejected story of Jesus' crucifixion:

وَقَالُونَ إِنَّا فَيْلَعْبَنَ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُمْ أَنَا مَرْتُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَنَا قَتَلَوْنَهُ وَسَتُعْقِبُنَّ شَيْئَهُمْ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ أَخْلَفَهُ فِيهِ لَهُ شَيْئَ مَآ أَلَمْ بَهُءُ مِن عَلَمِ إِلَّا أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ وَنَا قَتَلْنَهُ بِعِينَاتٍ

“And they said - in boast-, we have slain the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, who claimed to be - an apostle of God. However they did not slay him, neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them - as if it had - so. And verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no - real - knowledge

²³ Vermes, Geza. Jesus the New, 38, 36.
thereof, and following mere conjecture. For, a certainty, they did not slay him.”

In sharp contrast, one Gnostic document from the Nag Hammadi Library the 'Second Treatise of the Great Seth', discovered in Egypt in 1945, relates Jesus saying the following:

“It was another ... who drank the gall and vinegar, it was not I ... it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another up-whom they placed the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing in the height over ... their error ... And I was laughing at their ignorance.”

Another Gnostic Nag Hammadi document, 'The Apocalypse of Peter', relates the following information on the lips of Peter:

“I saw him apparently seized by them. And I said, ‘What am I seeing, O Lord! Is it really you whom they take? And are you holding on to me? And are they hammering the feet and hands of another? Who is this one above the cross, who is glad and laughing?’ He said to me, ‘He whom you see being glad and laughing above the cross is the living Jesus. But he into whose hands and feet they are driving the nails is the fleshy part of the substitute. They put to shame that which remained in his likeness. And look at him, and look at me.”

Such tales among the Gnostics seem to have, at some level, penetrated Muslim thought, creating stories that at the last moment God substituted for Jesus a person closely resembling him. Some specify Judas Iscariot having been crucified in his place. Clearly, such legends do not find the slightest support either in the Qur’ān or in the authentic traditions of the Prophet. The Qur’ān phrase 'but it only seemed to them-as if it had been - so' simply implies that after the time of Jesus a legend somehow grew up to the effect that Jesus died on the cross to atone for the 'original sin' of humankind. This may have been under the influence of Mithraic worship and in particular the slaying of the 'sacred' bull in Mithraic ceremonies. Professor Mack's

---

76 Ibid., 377; and see also Freke and Gandy 1999, 120.
comment above serves to strengthen this point. With the passage of time, even the Jews, Jesus' enemies, began to believe the story, although in a derogatory sense, since crucifixion was in those times a heinous form of death-penalty reserved for the lowest of criminals.\footnote{Asad, Muhammad, 1984, The Message of the Al-Qur‘ān, Dar Al-Andalus, Beirut, 134.}
PASSION NARRATIVES

Even if the four gospel narratives on the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, are taken at face value, many points in the story remain in question.

Jesus was supposed to be celebrating the Jewish Passover feast with his disciples on the night of his 'betrayal'. The passion narratives of the four gospels describe the agony and suffering of Jesus during the mocking, scourging and crucifixion. They included the events that began the evening prior to his death, or even prior to his arrest, beginning with his 'triumphal' entry into Jerusalem. The defection of the followers of Jesus, including Peter, is stated in Mark. In the garden of Gethsemane, during and after the arrest, the disciples were supposed to have deserted Jesus and gone into hiding. Contradicting the gospels, the Qur’ān redresses the injustice done to the disciples, exonerating them from disgraceful behavior:

"And when Jesus became aware of their - his people's - refusal to acknowledge the truth, he asked: 'Who will be my helpers in God's cause. The white-garbed ones - the disciples - replied: 'We acknowledge the truth, he asked: 'Who will be my helpers in God’s cause. We believe in God, and bear thou witness that have surrendered ourselves to Him.'

At another place Qur’ān says:

Even if the four gospel narratives on the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, are taken at face value, many points in the story remain in question.

78 Mark 14:15.
79 Mark 11:1-10.
81 Qur’ān 3:52.
82 Qur’ān 61:14.
“O you who have attained to faith! Be helpers - in the cause of - God, as, Jesus the son of Mary, said to the white-garbed ones - the disciples -: 'Who will be my helpers in God's cause?' - My Nazarenes-, whereupon the white-garbed ones - disciples - replied: ‘we are - your - helpers-in the cause of God!’ And so it happened that a portion of the Children of Israel believed in the prophetic mission of Jesus -, whereas others denied the truth, but...Now - We have given power to those who believed, against their foes, and they became the ones that shall prevail.”

This is one aspect of the nobility of the Qur’an, portraying the disciples as truly responding to Jesus and supporting him in the time of need. The synoptic gospels claim that the 'Eucharist' that preceded Jesus' arrest and 'crucifixion' was instituted during the traditional Jewish Passover meal. However, John's gospel puts Jesus' meal with the disciples well before Passover, meaning it had nothing to do with Passover. In consequence, John’s gospel is oblivious to the institution of the Eucharist and includes no account of it.

In the words of A. N. Wilson:

“The first three gospels claim that the Eucharist was instituted during or after the traditional Jewish Passover meal. If this is the case, then every single event which follows: the arrest of Jesus, his trial, his execution must be a work of fiction since it is unthinkable that the Jews would have broken their most sacred religious observances in order to put a man on trial. The fourth gospel tells us that the meal took place well before Passover. It was not a Passover meal, and in this account there is very conspicuously no institution of the Eucharist. This is perhaps the most glaring inconsistency in the Christian claim to be a historically based religion. The truth is that even if we were to believe the fantastic claim that Jesus wished to found anew religion, with a sacramental order of bishops and deacons, we could not believe that he had instituted the Eucharist at Passover time as Paul and the Gospels aver.”

83 Wilson, A.N., 1992, Jesus, a Life, Fawcett Columbine, x.
EYEWITNESSES

On the authority of Mark, all the followers of Jesus fled during his arrest. 'And they all forsook him and fled' \(^84\) None of Jesus' followers were present during his trial; and none of them spoke to him or saw him after he was arrested and convicted. We only have the story of the denial of Jesus by Peter, during Jesus' trial, \(^85\) and that one too seems to have been designed by later generation Pauline scribes to discredit Peter.

The second gospel states that three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome the mother of James and John sons of Zebedee, had witnessed the crucifixion. \(^86\) But even if those women had, we must face the problem that their recollections had to wait some half a century, obviously passing through intermediaries, before the authorship of a detailed passion narrative, if indeed that narrative reflects any reality or any eye witnessing at all.

In the absence of eyewitnesses, and the half-century time gap before forming a passion story, and the need to explain the disappearance of Jesus and his subsequent reappearance, early Christian authors researched the ancient scriptures for 'evidence'. Such scriptural 'evidence' was used as a framework for the main themes and details of the story. Christian scribes put great effort into extracting clauses from the Greek Jewish Bible 'proving' that Jesus had 'died in accordance with the scriptures' \(^87\)

Old scriptures were conditioned to look like fulfilled prophecies. It seems to have been quite common and legitimate to extract scriptural texts, rewrite them, and reinterpret them to establish a future 'fact' or 'event'. It was a way of reforming scriptures to make them 'predict' or dictate future conceptions. The net result was that historical reality had been totally obscured or masked. Thus, it became impossible to know, with any degree of certainty, which of the details in gospel narratives bear any relation to historical reality. Origen, the Christian theologian wrote:

\(^84\) Mark 14: 50.
\(^85\) Mark 14: 66-71.
\(^86\) Mark 15: 40.
“He must be dull indeed who does not of his own accord observe that much which the scriptures represent as having happened never actually happened. The Scriptures wove together with history that which did not occur, in one place that which is not able to occur, in another that which is able to occur but certainly did not. And what more is it necessary to say? Those who are not altogether dull are able to infer a great number of things of this sort, Written down as if they occurred, but which have not occurred in to manner related.\textsuperscript{88}

In recent times, Bible scholars have established that so many details connected with the passion story were derived from ancient scriptures. That prompted one biblical authority to conclude: 'We know virtually not about the arrest, trial, and execution of Jesus'.\textsuperscript{89}

**JESUS REAPPEARS WITH THE DISCIPLES**

On that very day, on the way to a village called Emmaus not far from Jerusalem, Jesus joined two of his disciples and discoursed with them for five miles. ‘Jesus himself drew near and went with them ... And they said unto him concerning Jesus who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word.’\textsuperscript{90} ‘Then he said unto them, Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken’,\textsuperscript{91} meaning, can't you see, you fools, that it is me the live Jesus. ‘And their eyes were open, and they knew him’.\textsuperscript{92}

In Jerusalem, on that same day, Jesus met the eleven disciples - twelve minus Thomas:

And said unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them why you are troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself handle me and see [that I am not a resurrected spirit], for a

\textsuperscript{88} Dawes, Gregory W., 1999, The Historical Jesus Quest, Deo Publishing, 93.
\textsuperscript{91} Luke 24: 25.
spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have. And as he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.\textsuperscript{93}

Jesus was saying clearly that he had not been killed, and he was proving it to the disciples beyond any doubt.

But the disciples were afraid because they had heard from hearsay that the Master was killed on the cross. All their knowledge was from hearsay. None of them was eyewitness to the 'crucifixion'. Because 'they all forsook him and fled'.\textsuperscript{94} In contrast Mary Magdalene was not afraid when she saw him, because she was an eyewitness to the events, and therefore she was expecting to see a live Jesus. She had known very well from the start that Jesus was not killed. In order to dispel any doubt, and assure the disciples further, that he was no resurrected spirit, that he was no ghost, Jesus asked them: 'Have you here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them'.\textsuperscript{95} To prove what? That spirits and ghosts eat? If Jesus had only eaten to show that he could eat, while he was a spirit with no need for nourishment, it would have been absurd.\textsuperscript{96}

Thomas, the twelfth disciple, could not believe what the eleven had told him.\textsuperscript{97} He was told it was the physical Jesus that they had seen; not a resurrected spirit. A Jesus that ate fish and honeycomb. Had they claimed that they had seen a resurrected Jesus, a spirit, there would have been nothing special about this; Thomas would have readily believed. In the disciple’s teaching the resurrection of Jesus was not something particularly impossible. The rising of the dead was a sign of the beginning of the messianic age. Jesus would have been the first to rise.\textsuperscript{98} For example, Matthew claimed that at the moment of crucifixion ‘the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose’.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{93} Luke 24: 36-40.
\textsuperscript{94} Mark 14: 50.
\textsuperscript{95} Luke 24: 41-43.
\textsuperscript{97} John 20: 24-25.
\textsuperscript{99} Matthew 27:52.
After eight days Jesus met the twelve disciples together, including Thomas, and said to them, 'Peace be unto you. Then he said to Thomas: Reach your finger and behold my hand',\textsuperscript{100} meaning, see for yourself that I am the physical Jesus, alive, not a spirit or ghost; what more proof do you need?

An additional point is worth noting. If the gospels’ claim that Jesus indeed had so clearly predicted his crucifixion and resurrection in three days saying, ‘after three days I will rise again’\textsuperscript{101}, and ‘on the third day he shall rise again’,\textsuperscript{102} why is it that all the disciples were dazzled in disbelief to see their Master alive after the crucifixion? Or was this promise another fabrication similar to Jesus’ anticipation of his ‘suffering’ passion? Not a single disciple seems to have heard or remembered the ‘promise’ of Jesus’ resurrection on the third day. And if the promise of Jesus’ resurrection in three days was true, why did not a single disciple go to the sepulcher on the third day to witness the fulfillment of the Master’s ‘promise’? On the contrary, they were all astonished and frightened at an event which they were all ‘supposed’ to have anticipated!\textsuperscript{103}

OTHER APPEARANCES

Luke stated in the book of Acts that Jesus was alive for forty days after passion, ‘To whom he also showed himself alive[not resurrected] after passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God’.\textsuperscript{104} A gospel of Secret James, discovered in 1945 among Nag Hammadi codices, describes Jesus continuing his instructions to the disciples for 550 days after his ‘crucifixion’.\textsuperscript{105} Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, documented that Jesus was seen by Peter, then by the twelve, then by some five hundred people.\textsuperscript{106} It is significant that in his reappearances Jesus never showed

\textsuperscript{100} John 20: 26-27.
\textsuperscript{101} Matthew 27: 63.
\textsuperscript{102} Matthew 20:19.
\textsuperscript{103} Dawes, Gregory W., 1999, The Historical Jesus Quest, Deo Publishing, pp. 74-76.
\textsuperscript{104} Acts 1:3.
\textsuperscript{106} 1 Corinthians 15: 5-8.
himself to his enemies, only to the faithful. As a live person he would have been afraid that his enemies might conspire again against him. Had he been a spirit, he would no reason to fear anyone.

**JESUS’S LIFETIME**

One of the most intriguing features of the ministry of Jesus is that it should have lasted no more than one year, according to the synoptic gospels. This seems too short a duration considering the immense importance of the Messiah’s mission. One explanation of this difficulty is that gospels cannot and should not be viewed as accurate historical records. One Bible authority suggested that the authors of the gospels did not order their material according to chronological events in the life of Jesus, but rather according to the Jewish liturgical year which covered Jesus’ lifetime on an annual cycle. Consequently, a gospel reader might obtain the impression that Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem only once, at the end of his ministry, with the false impression that Jesus’ mission was covered by its Galilean phase culminating and concluding in his journey to Jerusalem.

The exact years of Jesus’ birth, his ministry, and his death are uncertain. Gospels depict Jesus’ ministry as having followed shortly after that of John Baptist, and in particular, shortly before the latter was executed in prison by the tetrarch Herod Antipas (4 BCE - 39CE). According to Matthew’s gospel, Jesus was born during Herod the Great’s reign (37 BCE-4 BCE). Knowing that Herod the Great died in 4 BCE, that would put Jesus’ birth at 4 BCE at the latest. Luke, however, offers two contradictory dates for the birth of Jesus, one in the days of Herod the Great, and another at the time of the census of Cyrenius, ‘a decree from Caesar Augustus (31 BCE-14 CE) that all the [Roman] world should be taxed, and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria’.  

---

because Cyrenius made the census in the year 6 CE, a full ten years after the death of Herod the Great.\textsuperscript{112}

Cyrenius was not legate of Syria while Herod the Great was alive. But even if we accept that Jesus was born late in Herod the Great’s reign we do not know the exact year. Dismissing the story of Cyrenius’ census, scholars therefore speculate that the birth of Jesus was somewhere between 7 and 4 BCE, the year when Herod the Great died\textsuperscript{113} offers an interesting analysis as to why the birth of Jesus is a few years ahead of beginning of the era that is supposed to start with his birth.

There is also conflict on Jesus’ age at the start of his prophetic mission, its duration, and on the year of his death. Luke’s story requires that Jesus was in his early thirties when he started his prophetic mission.\textsuperscript{114} Luke explicitly states that John the Baptist started his prophetic mission in the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius’ reign. Since Tiberius’ reign covered years 14-37 CE, the fifteenth year should be 29 CE, and assuming that Jesus started his mission one year later than the Baptist, namely in 30 CE, Jesus would have been between 34 and 37 years of age. But John’s gospel states that Jesus was in his forties during his ministry: ‘not yet fifty years old.’\textsuperscript{115}

Contradicting John, Luke explicitly stated that Jesus was about thirty years of age when he began his mission.\textsuperscript{116} This Lukan piece of information requires that Jesus be born in the year 1, which is probably the reasoning behind our present calendar.

As to Jesus’ death, the gospels assign the date to the period when Pontius Pilate was Roman prefect of Palestine (26-37 CE). If Jesus died when Pilate was prefect, and certainly after the martyrdom of John the Baptist, that would put his death after the year 35 CE, or at the year 37 CE at the latest. This notion is predicated by the date of John the Baptist’s martyrdom, which is implied by Flavins Josephus to have

\textsuperscript{112} Freke, Timothy and Gandy, Peter, 1999, The Jesus Mysteries, Harmony Books, New York, 199-200.
\textsuperscript{113} Sanders, E.P., 1993, The Historical Figure of Jesus, Penguin, 11-12.
\textsuperscript{114} Luke 3:1, 23.
\textsuperscript{115} John 8: 57.
\textsuperscript{116} Luke 3:23.
been between 35 and 36 CE.\textsuperscript{117} This makes Jesus’ age between 41 and 44 years at the time of his death, which would be closer to John’s gospel: ‘not yet fifty years old’. In this case Jesus’ ministry would have lasted 6-8 years, not including the duration of his reappearance after the ‘crucifixion’.

In summary, all such records and dates make it extremely improbable that the duration of Jesus’ prophetic mission could have been limited to merely one year as depicted by the synoptic gospels, nor three years as depicted by the fourth gospel. In the words of Eisenman:\textsuperscript{118} ‘If Jesus died after John the Baptist, as Scripture seems to think, then by Josephus’ chronology it be around 37 CE or just a little time before. If Jesus died before John the Baptist, then what are we to make of these scriptural accounts at all?’

**THE ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT**

Illuminating snatches remaining in the New Testament point to the fact that Jesus was not crucified. It had proved awkward and impossible for authors and editors of the New Testament to superimpose, on factual history, fabricated stories invented ‘in accordance with scriptures’ matching their own preconceptions.

At this juncture, we would like to quote Imam Qarrafi about the wrong notions of Christians:

إن تطهير الخطايا بصلب يسوع ابن الرب – يزعمهم – وإهانته على خشية الغضبة، ذنب أكبر وجزم أشياع مما زعموه خطيئة آدم عليه السلام، والتطهير الذي تنادي به النصارى بصلب المسيح عليه السلام غير موجود في العالم ولم ينزل الناصريين إلا على حاله لم يتغير، والمعصية ما زالت موجود في العالم قبل وبعد صلب المسيح عليه السلام.\textsuperscript{119}

Once more, the Qur’ān is found in agreement only with the most coherent parts of the Scriptures. In turn, modern scholarly research seems to be arriving at

\textsuperscript{117} Eisenman, Robert, 1997, James the Brother of Jesus, Penguin, 62, 106.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 107

\textsuperscript{119} Qarrafi, Al-Ajawibah al-Fakhirah an al-Asilah al-Fajirah, p. 350-351.
conclusions clearly stated in the Qurān fourteen centuries earlier. This is systematic with how the Qurān describes itself:

‘setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein’. More specifically:

'And upon thee have We bestowed from on high this divine writ for the express purpose that thou might make clear unto them all - questions of faith - on which they have come to hold divergent views, and - thus offer - guidance and grace unto people who believe.'

Contrary to the Christian creed, Muslims believe all humans to be born sinless and therefore not in need of advance redemption. In consequence, religion and the feeling of guilt are not interconnected. The concept of vicarious atonement of the so-called 'original sin' is unnecessary and is rejected in Islam.

On the subject of Jesus having been raised to God, there seems agreement between the Qurānic verses\(^{122}\) and the dialogue reported in John's gospel, between Jesus and Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre: ‘Jesus said unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my father, but go to my brethren, and say unto them, ascend unto my father, and your father; my God and your God.’\(^{123}\) Having first assured Mary that he was not coming back from the dead - not yet ascended unto the father- he asked her to tell his brethren, the disciples, that he was going to be ascended - raised - to God. He also dissociated himself from any notion of divinity, while denying being a Son of God in any unique sense.

\(^{120}\) Qurān 5: 48.
\(^{121}\) Qurān 16: 64.
\(^{122}\) Qurān verses 4: 157-158.
\(^{123}\) John 20:17.
There is another instance of Jesus referring to his future ‘lift up’ into heaven: ‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth’, to which John by way of explanation erroneously stated: ‘This he said, signifying what death he should.’ Obviously John added this explanation because of his preconception of the ‘crucifixion’. In comparison, it is noteworthy that the Qur’a’n explicitly states that Jesus was raised by God, not crucified. Events of the last days of Jesus’ mission on earth are neatly summarized by the Qur’a’n as follows:

فَلَنَا أُخْشَى عِبَادَنِي مِنْهُمْ لَصِفَتُهُمْ قَالَ مِنْ أَنْصَارِنِّي إِلَّا أَنْذَرْنَاهُمْ فَلَنَّا أُخْشَى عِبَادَنِّي مُسْلِمَنَّ رَبِّنَا عَلَى أَمَانَةٍ أُذُنُّكَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَّارَةَ اللَّهِ غَيْرُ المُنْتَزِقِينَ إِذَا قَالَ اللَّهُ يَعْبُدُنَا إِلَى مَتَّى

“And when Jesus became aware of their refusal to acknowledge the truth, he asked: ‘Who will be my helpers in God’s cause?’ The white-garbed ones - the Disciples - replied: ‘We shall be - thy - helpers - in the cause - of God! We believe in God, and bear thou witness that we have surrendered ourselves to Him: O our Sustainer! We believe in what Thou has bestowed from on high, and we follow this Apostle - Jesus; make us one, then, with all who bear witness - to the truth - ; And the unbelievers schemed - against Jesus – but God brought their scheme to naught; for God is above all schemers; Lo! God said: ‘O Jesus! I shall bring your term on earth to completion, and shall exalt thee to me, and cleanse thee of - the presence of - those who are bent on denying the truth; and I shall place those who follow thee-far- above those who are bent on denying the truth, unto the Day of Resurrection. In the end unto me you must all return, and I shall judge between you with regard to all on which you were wont to differ.”

For one thing, the above verses honor the disciples for their performance in helping Jesus, and praise their surrender to God’s will - in this sense becoming

---

125 Qur’a’n 3:52-55.
Muslims. This is in vivid contrast to the gospels, which slander the disciples accusing them of cowardliness, treason, and desertion. A second point of the verse is its emphasis on the utter failure of the scheme to kill Jesus. A third point is that Jesus was raised without being killed. The fourth point is the emphasis that those who followed Jesus, i.e. the Nazarenes, will eventually have the upper hand through the advent of Islam. And finally, the verse asserts that all will return to God whereby everyone will know the truth behind mission, i.e. final judgment rests with God alone.

During the lifetime of the Prophet (570-632 CE), he could not have had access to the Christian Bible, nor to pertinent historical records, let alone objectively analyzed them and reached such conclusions. At the time of the Prophet’s mission there existed no Arabic translation of the New Testament, much less the Old Testament. We have already noted that the first Arabic translation of the Christian Bible, a scripture now present at St Petersburg library, dates back to the year 1060 CE, more than four centuries after the Prophet’s death. And in any case, Muhammad was illiterate. As for the Qur’ānic verse:

\[
فَلْأَيْتُوا بِالْقُرْآنِِّ أَقْلُوْبَا إِنَّكُمْ صَدَيقُونَ
\]

‘Say - to the Children of Israel -: Come forward, then, with the Torah and recite it if what you say is true’, this could possibly an allusion to the fact that there was none among the Arabs who could read the Septuagint in Greek, nor the Hebrew version of the Old Testament. It could also constitute a challenge to the Jews in that they were unable to come forward with the Torah - Torah - of Moses that they lost long ago. All that they possessed were scriptures that they themselves authored, possibly including snatches of the original divine revelation.

Conspicuously there was no religious cultural center in Arabia that could have propagated the kind of Old Testament precepts that the Qur’ān dealt with.\(^{127}\) On this point the Qur’ān remarkably states:

\( ^{126}\) Qur’ān 3: 93.
‘For- O Muhammad - thou has never been able to recite any divine writ before this one- was revealed, nor did thou ever transcribe one with your own hands, or else, they who try to disprove the truth - of thy revelation - might indeed have had cause to doubt - it.’

Another verse alludes to the ‘foreign’ language of the Bible in Muhammad’s Arabia:

‘And indeed We know that they say, “It is but a human being that (imparts - all - this to him” - notwithstanding that - the tongue to which they so maliciously point is wholly outlandish, whereas this is Arabic, clear - in itself- and clearly showing the truth - of its source-.’ Clearly, the outlandish language of the Bible at the time of the Prophet was either the Syriac of the Peshitta, the Latin of the Vulgate, or - in the case of the Old Testament - the Greek of the Septuagint.

**RESURRECTION**

The third belief of Christians relating to Jesus is that after his crucifixion and burial, he became alive again on the third day. He then gave his disciples advice and instruction where after he ascended to the heaven.

---

129 Qur’ān 16:103.
2.5

THE ATONEMENT
Islam believes in the Day of Judgment when all the people will be judged by God on the basis of their acts and deeds on earth. They will be rewarded or punished in proportion to the good or evil deeds they committed during their lives. Islam preaches the belief of moral accountability in earthly as well as in ethereal world. But the present-day Christianity believes in the atonement and salvation through the crucifixion of Christ. In this way, they will escape the reckoning on the Day of Judgment. This idea, according to Islam, is completely against the Divine justice as well as the moral and ethical sense of a man.

The fourth and final belief relating to Jesus is the doctrine of atonement. For a number of reasons it is necessary to understand this doctrine in detail.

One point can be said with certainty that even Christian scholars are different with each other on this concept:

“Turning to the doctrine of Atonement, we find that its root meaning, of course, is reconciliation, the recovery of atonement. Christians were convinced that Christ’s life and death had affected an unparalleled rapprochement’ between God and man. By voluntarily disobeying God’s order not to eat of the forbidden fruit in Eden,
Adam sinned. As his sin was directed squarely against God, it was of infinite proportions. Sins must be compensated for, otherwise God’s Justice is outraged. An infinite sin demands infinite recompense, and this could only be effected by God’s vicarious assumption of our guilt, and payment of the ultimate penalty it required, namely death.”

Firstly, this doctrine is at the heart of Christianity according to Daniel Wilson;\(^\text{131}\) and in itself is most important because what has been discussed previously is really a preface to this doctrine.

Secondly, this doctrine by virtue of its intricacy has especially been the least understood in the non-Christian world.

Thirdly, by not understanding it fully, two evils have resulted. One is that Christian missionaries in our country have explained this doctrine as they wished, with the result that the unwary, ignorant of the truth, fell under a misconception; the other is that those who wrote in reflection of Christianity raised objections to this doctrine which were inapplicable. The result was that such objections could not properly uphold the truth.

We shall accordingly deal with this doctrine in sufficient detail in what follows so as to avoid any doubt.

The encyclopedia Britannica has summarized this doctrine in the following words:

“Atonement in Christian theology means the redemptive work of Christ, which sinful man was made at one with, and reconciled to, God. It presupposes to truths, the fall of man from God’s grace through Adam’s sin, and the incarnation of the word of God to restore man to grace.”

This in itself is too brief. The doctrine has behind it a long sequence of historical and theoretical assumptions. This can be seen by a statement made by Sajid Mir in his book in these words:

\(^{131}\) Wilson, A.N. _Jesus, a Life_. vol. 2, 53.
“It is remarkable that in the earliest centuries of Christian thought there is only the most slender support for theories of the atonement which became widely current at a later time. The early fathers did not regard the sufferings of Christ as a vicarious satisfaction of God’s wrath, where he underwent punishment done to us and his obedience in imputed to us.”

If these assumptions are not understood, the doctrine cannot be probably comprehended. These assumptions are as follows:

1. The first assumptions is that Adam, the first human being, was given at the time of his creation all kinds of material comforts and pleasures without restriction, save that he was prohibited from eating wheat. At that time his will was made entirely free whereby he could if he wished obey order or oppose them.

2. Adam exercised this will wrongly by eating the forbidden fruit, he became the perpetrator of a great sin. The sin itself appeared trivial. On the contrary, It was very serious having regard to its nature and magnitude. In regard to nature, because it was extremely easy at the time for Adam to observe the order of prohibition. After giving him absolute freedom of eating and abundant supply of foods, he was subject to only one prohibition which was very easy to observe. Apart from this, man at that time did not have the powers of passion and desire which could compel him to sin. Hence, it was not difficult to stay away from wheat. And, the seriousness of violating the prohibition is in proportion to the ease with which it could have been observed and fulfilled. Furthermore, this was the first sin of man who instead of obedience committed disobedience. Prior to this, man did not sin, and just as, obedience is the tree of all good deeds, disobedience is the foundation of all sins. The sin of Adam laid this foundation.

132 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p.33
This sin was from the viewpoint of magnitude very serious as it embraced many other sins with the result that it became the source to mother of sin. St. Augustine writes in this regard:

“This one sin of man encompassed so many sins... in truth, if one reflects on the reality of any sin, he will see its reflection in this original sin.”

3. In view of the fact that the sin of Adam was extremely serious, it resulted in two consequences. The one is that as punishment for the sin, he became entitled to everlasting death or punishment for God showed him the forbidden tree and told him:

“...For in the day that you eat of it, you shall die”

The other consequence is that the free will that was given to Adam was taken away from him. He was previously given the power to do good or evil according to his will. But because he wrongly used this power, he was deprived thereof. Augustine Writes:

“When man sinned by his free will was subdued by sin; hence his free will ended because ‘whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved’... Hence, he cannot acquire the will to do good until he is freed from sin and becomes the slave of good.”

As if, and until he is not freed from shackles of his sin, his free will remains terminated. Now, he is free to commit sins but not good deeds.

The questions arise here: why God in punishment for one sin caused men to be involved in other sins? In answer to this question, St. Thomas Aquinas writes:

133 Augustine, vol.1, 684.
134 Gen 2:15.
135 Augustine, vol.1, 675.
“Because when men are deprived of the help of divine grace, they are overcome by their passions. In this way sin is always said to be the punishment of a preceding sin.”

4. In view of the fact that the free will of Adam and Eve ended after the commission of the sin - which meant that they were not free to do good; but were free to sin - it followed that the element of sin became embedded in their nature. In other words, their sin became their nature and constitution. This sin is referred to in technical terminology as the original sin.

5. The original sin was thereafter transmitted to posterity born and to be born because they were created from the loins of both (Adam and Eve). St. Augustine writes:

“As happy, then, as were these our fist parents... so happy should the whole human race have been, had they not introduced that evil which they have transmitted to their posterity... In truth, all men who are sullied by the original sin were born of Adam and Eve.”

That is to say every person who is born into the world is born with sin from time of birth because the original sin of his parents is embedded in his nature. The question is: the sin was committed by the parents-how did the children become sinners as a result thereof? John Calvin the well-known leader of the protestant church writes:

“In reality, we have been infected by the disease of sin through Adam, and by reason of this sin we are justly worthy of punishment.”

Thomas Aquinas, the well-known Roman Catholic theologian and philosopher explains this by means of another example:

\[137\] Quoted by Aquinas, 669.
“That original sin, in virtue of the sin of our first parent, is transmitted to his posterity; just as from the soul’s will actual sin is transmitted to the members of the body, through their being moved by the will”. 138

6. Because all the children of Adam were trained by the original sin - and the original sin itself is the tree of all sins - they like their parents were excluded from the exercise of free will, and became tainted by one sin after the other. To the extent that apart from the original sin, they were affected by other sins which they committed by reason of the original sin.

7. By virtue of the above mentioned sins, the whole of mankind like their parents became entitled on the one hand to perpetual punishment. On the other hand, they became excluded from their own free will. Accordingly, there was no means of salvation and forgiveness because protection from such sins could only be attained by good deeds. But, by reason of the absence of free will, man could not do good deeds which could save him from punishment.

8. One was of achieving deliverance from this problem was for God to shower mercy and forgive men. This however was not possible because God is just and fair and He will not break his immutable laws. In the book of genesis, to which we have previously referred, death was prescribed as the punishment for the original sin. Now, it would amount to a breach of the law of justice if man was forgiven without the imposition of the punishment of death.

9. God on the other hand is also merciful. He cannot leave his servants in this miserable state. Accordingly, He chose such a scheme whereby both mercy was extended to his servants and the law of justice remained untainted. The only legal course available was for man to die once as punishment, and thereafter, become alive for a second time. In this way man’s free will which ended prior to his death by reason of the original sin would be restored to him. And he would acquire freedom from the burden of the original sin and perform good deeds together with his freedom.

138 Ibid.
10. But, it is country to laws of nature to make all human beings in the world die and thereafter cause them to come alive again. Hence, there was a need for one person who was free from the original sin to bear the burden of all the sins of men. God would give him once the punishment of death and then give him life again. And his punishment would suffice for all mankind. Thereafter, all men would become free.

For this noble purpose, God chose his own “son”; and sent him in human form and body to the world. He made this sacrifice by being crucified on the cross and thereby dying. This death became redemption for man. In virtue of such death, not only the original sin of all men, but also all sins committed by reason of the original sin, was forgiven. Then his son became alive for the second time after three days where by all men acquired a new life. In this new life, men became owners of the free will. If the free will was exercised in good deeds, he will be rewarded. If exercised in evil deeds, he would in accordance with the state of such deeds be punished.

11. But this sacrifice of Jesus is only for that person who has faith in Jesus, and who acts on his teachings. The sign of such faith is the fulfillment of the ritual of baptism. The undergoing of baptism signifies faith in the redemption of Jesus on the part of the baptized. Hence, being baptized through Jesus is deemed to take the place of his death and second life. Consequently, whoever undergoes baptism will have his original sin forgiven, and he will be given a new free will. On the other hand, that person who does not undergo baptism, his original sin remains with the result that he becomes entitled to perpetual sin. Aquinas therefore writes. “But original sin incurs everlasting punishment; since children, who have died in original sin, because they have not been baptized, will never see the kingdom of God”.

12. As for those who died prior to the coming of Jesus, it will be seen whether they believed in Jesus or not. If they believed in him, then the death of Jesus
will also be redemption for them and they will be saved. If they did not believe in him, they will not be saved.

13. As mentioned before, those who believed in Jesus and underwent baptism - for them redemption does not mean that they will not be punished for sins committed, but redemption means that their original sin will be forgiven, which sin demanded perpetual punishment. Moreover, all sins will be forgiven, whose cause is the original sin. Now, they will obtain a new life in which they will own free will. If that will is wrongly exercised, then they will be punished according to the types of sin committed. If after baptism they committed a sin which take them out of the pale of faith they again become entitled to perpetual punishment. And, the redemption of Jesus in such case will not suffice. Accordingly, those declared by the church as heretic and excommunicated become entitled to perpetual punishment.

If one the other hand, they commit a minor sin, then they would be sent to that part of hell, which has been made to purify believers of their sins, for temporary limited period. The name of such part is purgatory wherein they will stay for a while and then sent to paradise.

Some Christian theologians on the contrary assert that not only disbelief, but also major sins separate one from the redemption of Jesus. And, they become entitled to perpetual punishment. St. Augustine have written a specific book on this issue, and it appears from certain of his statements in the Enchiridion that he is inclined to this opinion.

**DENIERS OF REDEMPTION**

This is a brief account of the doctrine of atonement. The overwhelming majority of Christians have from inception believed in Atonement as a cardinal doctrine of Christianity. Notwithstanding, there are people in the history of the
church who reject the doctrine. The first amongst these was probably Coelestius whose theories in the word of Augustine are as follows: ¹³⁹

“The sin of Adam harmed Adam only; and did not affect mankind at all.”

However, these theories were declared heretic by a council of Archbishops at Carthage. Thereafter, there were some who denied the doctrine of atonement whose position is referred to in the article “atonement” in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

¹³⁹ Augustine, vol. 1, 621.
2.6

INHERITED SINFULNESS
INHERITED SINFULNESS

Another point of difference between the two religions is that Christianity believes in inherited sin while Islam believes in inherited purity and only earned sin. According to Islam, both virtue and evil are earned through actual deeds performed during the life-time of an individual. A child at the time of his birth is innocent; he is not born with the original sin perpetrated by Adam. Moreover, a man can get redemption and remittance directly from God through his act of Repentance which appeals to Allah’s mercy and forgiveness. But, according to Christianity, no child is born innocent. He carries the stigma of Adam’s sin; he is a product of sin. And this sin will be atoned by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Islam does not believe in this bizarre concept of pre-determinism which leads to inborn criminality; it believes in the freedom of the individual to achieve honour and dignity within the frame work of human limitations.

Paul introduced this belief as mentioned by Sajid Mir with reference to Herbert Muller in the following words:

“Specifically, he introduced the idea of original sin. The prophets of Israel had made little or nothing of the Genesis myth of Garden of Eden and Jesus made nothing at all of it; he never mentions the Fall of Adam or the curse of Original sin.”

THE QUR’ĀN AND THE CONCEPT OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is the fruit which always comes as a result of repentance from our sins and apologizing to Allah for what we have done. The process is always simple. Of even greater significance, Jesus taught us saying; “... For if ye forgive men their
trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you...” then he taught us to ask forgiveness by saying; “... Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...”

But in fact, the forgiveness of sinners after punishing and killing someone else on their behalf is not forgiveness but it is a drama which has no place in the divine order as there is no free salvation without labor, Jesus is reported to have said: “... but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

He also said, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven...”

This reinforces the Islamic concept that there is no salvation without righteousness, and this righteousness can only be achieved through keeping the commandments as Jesus taught. My beloved, beware of the innovation of Paul and his concept of confining all laws and divine principles and all the commandments which are the source of human perfection and Salvation to his mythology of the Cross of Calvary by saying: “... Blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross... Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days...”

If one considers the words of Paul in his above statement, one will see clearly his negligence and ridicule of God’s commandments; through his words, Paul dared to declare the laws of God as “ordinances which are against us and contrary to us”. This, in simple language, means that the laws are unfit to guide mankind towards Salvation as laws bring calamity to people and so we must only depend upon the Cross of Calvary for our forgiveness and Salvation..!

These words of Paul itself are blasphemous but unfortunately, the Christians agree with them without question as they dogmatically think that Paul while uttering

141 Matt. 6:12; 14.
143 Matt. 5:20.
144 Col. 2:14; 16.
these words was inspired by the Holy Spirit...! Let us now learn about the concept of “forgiveness” from the Holy Qur’ān, which say's;

"... Say: O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Turn ye to your Lord (in repentance) and bow His (will), before the Penalty comes on you..."

"If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah’s forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And if any one earns sin he earns it against his own soul: for Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom..."

We learn from the above two verses of the Holy Qur’ān that, Allah, the Creator of all things is the only source of forgiveness. He forgives all mankind of all types of sins committed, no matter how great those sins are; thus no man is supposed to despair from the Mercy of Allah. What is required is only his repentance to Almighty God and to turn away from wickedness, and after this step, the divine forgiveness will be awarded to that particular person. In another verse of the Holy Qur’ān, it is made clear that whosoever does any evil act or wronged his own soul and then pursued in seeking the pardon of God and reforms himself will find God Forgiving, Merciful, and so you see that the Holy Qur’ān does not in any way agree with the doctrine of Atonement and the ritual of a human sacrifice for the removal of sins.

146 Qur’ān 4:110-111.
2.7

THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN
THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

We have previously discussed in this research work that there is no original sin and that no one is born a sinner, but the Orthodox Christians and their allies claim that everyone in this world is born sinful. Adam and Eve were expelled from heaven for their sin and all their children ever since that time have inherited their sin and are born in sin and are thus sinful. They continue to assert that it was for this reason that the Son of God, Jesus, did not enter the womb of Mary through the seed of man (Sperm), but it was an immaculate conception, without male intervention, according to the Christians, that was done in order to prevent Jesus Christ from inheriting the sins of Adam and Eve like the rest of Adam's children.

This doctrine has no place in the world of reality. Christians have confused themselves by condemning the entire humanity of sinfulness, except Mary and Jesus Christ. We know that this doctrine is wrong and false. If we are counted as sinners being born of man and woman, then, why was the same concept not applicable to Mary, mother of Christ? And if Mary had also inherited the original sin from her two parents, then why were these sins not inherited by Jesus Christ? In Christianity, we are being accused of having inherited the sins of our ancestors, Adam and Eve thousands of years ago, but the Church has failed to acknowledge the fact that even Mary, according to their dogma of inheritance of sin, can in no way be excluded as by the same measurements, they measures the whole human race, Mary, the mother of Jesus shall be also among the chain of those who inherited sins from their ancestors, without any exception. But let us take another look at the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis; in eating the forbidden fruit, the sin of Eve was graver than that of Adam as it was she who ate first. Adam was only seduced afterwards through her dictate; and so it is written;”... And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be
desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit therefore; and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat...”

“Paul put all the blame on the woman and admitted to his belief saying; “… Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became transgressor …”

Surprisingly enough, according to the Bible, woman is considered to be an evil being and wickedness; as it is written; “… the leaden cover was lifted, there was a woman sitting, and he (the angel) said; this is wickedness…”

In the Book of Job a woman is considered to be unclean and everything which comes out of her womb is also unclean. The Bible says; “… A man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble... Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one...”. Then how is it that Mary is considered to be free from the original sins while the Bible is imposing all blame and uncleanness to all women without exception? And how could Jesus be considered clean and innocent while no one can bring clean thing out of an unclean..? In another Biblical passage we read, “… What is man, that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, He (God) putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight How much more abominable and filthy is MAN, which drinketh iniquity like water...?”

Those Christians who have read this passage for years are considered blind hearted if they did not understand this Biblical expression of the nature of a woman; if any one who was born of a woman is unclean and is not righteous, then there is no excuse for Jesus being excluded from this phenomenon as he was among those born of

147 Gen. 3:6.
148 1 Tim. 2:14.
149 Zee. 5:7.
151 Job.15:14-16.
woman. The most interesting part of this above passage is the phrase “... How much more ABOMINABLE and Filthy is Man which drinketh Iniquity like water...”\textsuperscript{152} Is Jesus excluded? No. Did he drink water? Yes. The Bible says: “Now in the morning as he (Jesus) returned into the city, he hungered”\textsuperscript{153}. What is this? A hungry man? If a hungry man does not wish to eat and drink then where has this hunger came from? But Jesus thirsted for water and eventually drank from Jacob’s well as it is written: “... Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There Cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said unto her, give me to drink... Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, how is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?”\textsuperscript{154}

Finally, we can recapitulate from all of these evidences by saying that, Jesus used to both eat and drink water and therefore we cannot repeat other than what the Bible has written that: “How much abominable and filthy is man which drinketh iniquity like water.”\textsuperscript{155}

Can we consider water as iniquity? Water is not iniquity in its literal sense, but it is iniquity in so far as its metaphysical sense is concerned. Water is a liquid which consists of some life giving substances which, when consumed, generate temporary energy and life but this energy and life are temporary and not eternal, and so it may be seen as iniquity as it connects us with only the materialistic side of life. It is in this metaphysical expression, that water may be termed as iniquity and evil as it prolongs material desires and not the spiritual wellbeing of the soul.

The man who eats and drinks water must encounter other things such as sleep, relaxation, answering the call of nature, loss of memory, sickness, and death; contrary to a

\textsuperscript{152} Job. 15:16. 
\textsuperscript{153} Matt. 21:18. 
\textsuperscript{154} John. 4:6-10. 
\textsuperscript{155} Job. 15:16.
Spiritual Being (Allah) who does not encounter any of these defects. As water and food symbolize the evil which can cause all of these physical and body defects to man, then man in metaphysical expression is considered to be “Filthy and abominable” as he is a compound of materials and their components.

John the Baptist was a spiritual man who defeated his physical desires. As he was master of his body metaphysically, he became a spiritual being within his own physical environment and so conquered the divine power in such a way that he managed to live without water and food, and this attribute of John makes him unique and greater than many of Prophets.

Jesus himself confessed this fact saying; “... For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold, a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber...”\(^{156}\)

The habit of drinking and eating in Jesus’ life symbolize his physical existence as a man born of a woman, due to his nature of being a human he must be governed by the needs of his flesh and blood. Jesus owned nothing of the divinity, as he inherited the human defects which are the result of his natural behavior of consuming what has been termed as iniquity in the Bible (water and food) and which he consumed in his daily life. This is why Jesus having been affected by this symbolic iniquity (water and food), had all these defects which may be found in human life.

According to the Bible, Jesus also slept;\(^{157}\) he groaned in spirit and was troubled;\(^{158}\) he became weak;\(^{159}\) he was tempted by the devil\(^{160}\) and he was ignorant of the seasons;\(^{161}\) he (Jesus) was powerless without God,\(^{162}\) and his wisdom and stature increased as he (Jesus)

---

\(^{156}\) Matt. 11:18-19.  
\(^{157}\) Luke. 8:23.  
\(^{158}\) John. 11:33,38.  
\(^{159}\) Mark. 14:33.  
\(^{161}\) Mark. 11:12-13.  
\(^{162}\) John.5:30.
All these human qualities and defects can be linked with all previous evidences which prove that Jesus was not God and so it is not correct to regard him as God who came to redeem mankind from their Original sins. A man who had all of these defects cannot be God nor sinless.

And thus to rely on a man (Jesus) who was neither innocent nor God for your Salvation is like placing all your eggs in one bag and then dropping the bag. Can you then have your eggs back?

Finally we learn that Adam and Eve were blessed by God (according to the Bible) but at the same time we hear the Christians preaching about their being cursed as they ate from the forbidden tree. We fail to understand the reason for their being first blessed by God and then cursed afterwards but here the Bible says; “And God blessed them”\(^\text{164}\). The fact that, Adam and Eve were created in the image and the likeness of God signifies their holiness as this image of God is nothing but His righteousness. God is not a physical Being but He “is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.”\(^\text{165}\)

Adam was the beginning of human history i.e. the first man and his encounter with many obstacles signifies the love of God upon him in preparing him to gain the power to conquer all future obstacles, opposition, and trials. So the first man, or Adam, after he was created in the image of God and His likeness started his life by entering into trials, difficulties and temptations, which in fact was a divine blessing for him to acquire the divine prudence in the battle against Satan, the common enemy and he became victorious as he was blessed by his Creator and God.\(^\text{166}\)

As this man was perfect, perfected by God Himself, there was no room for his failure, and thus, the dogma that Adam did fall by eating the forbidden fruit has nothing

\(^\text{163}\) Luke. 2:52.
\(^\text{164}\) Gen. 1:22; 28.
\(^\text{165}\) John. 4:24.
\(^\text{166}\) Gen 1:22; 28.
of truth in the world of reality. In fact, both failing and passing the test and temptation was a blessing for Adam as he was in the divine seminary to be trained as the first son of God and the first man, founder of civilization; and the first creation of God. Therefore, the fall of Adam and his success in the Garden symbolize the reality of present life on this planet so that, there should be no one who is without defect and perfect except Allah, the Creator of all things.

God created Adam, He gave him the authority over everything in the Garden of Eden; then God, having given all of these blessings to Adam, left him alone to be tempted by Satan so that the everlasting blessings of God might remain in Adam's life. As the human soul is weak without God, Adam failed spiritually; he disobeyed his Lord but the Lord did not curse either Adam or Eve. Instead the Serpent was the only One to have been cursed by God. Adam and Eve were innocent being the victims of the beguiling evil appearing in the form of a Serpent. “And God said unto the Serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, upon they belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life ...”

The life of Adam and the serpent in the Garden was a trial and temptation. God, the Almighty created Satan as a test and trial for him. Tests and trials in life are not a curse, they are the remedy and a permanent blessing from God to His beloved ones, tests, temptations and trials of life cause the soul to grow in confidence and happiness. While to err is human, men learn through their mistakes; therefore Adam having been blessed by God, was tempted of Satan in the Garden but even though he fell down spiritually, we still see him victorious as God stood by him by cursing his enemy, the Serpent, and this was an assurance of that eternal divine bliss upon mankind which came as a result of the temptation of the first man. This temptation not only symbolized the eternal blessing for him and his children but it was the origin of this eternal and God's continuous inter-

---

vention in our affairs in supporting every struggle and war waged by our souls against the temptations of Satan.

After we have been blessed with this first blessing of temptation through Adam’s life, God, the Almighty, being a loving God, blessed us again with His blessing of temptation, but this time through Jesus Christ, known in Biblical expression as the second Adam. Jesus also came out of this temptation victorious against the Satan. The process of renewing this blessing of temptation, through Jesus Christ in the wilderness, after it had been gifted to the first man in the Garden of Eden, is the greatest manifestation of God’s love to this Universe as His love not only perfected mankind spiritually, morally and intellectually but also facilitated the continuation of the divine institution of learning and acquiring wisdom through temptations and trials.

We are not saved by the blood of Christ “literally”, “the blood” symbolizes all that Christ gave in service to humanity; in fact, Jesus gave us love, righteousness, commandments, power to overcome the Satan and confidence in life; these and other valuable gifts of Christ are playing a major role in bringing Absolute Salvation into our lives. Therefore, Salvation cannot be achieved or earned through “death and the blood of Christ”, as assumed by Christians but through the perfect examples of spiritual and moral deeds and obedience to divine commandments. In that there will be the power to overcome Satan, as a result, this permanent confidence will flourish in someone’s life. Remember that, had it not been for the institution of “temptation and trial” in the life of the first man, Adam, and in the life of the second Adam, Jesus, these above mentioned gifts would never have been achieved by our souls. Indeed, it is through hardships and trials that the soul earns the expected perfection and reaches to the cradle of holiness.

The Holy Qur’ān has indeed spoken the truth when it says,
“He who created death and Life that He may try which of you is best in deed; and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.”

Therefore, it is only through trial and temptation that the soul can reach towards perfection and its divine goals. By being schooled in the very institution of temptation which is governed by divine blessings, all mankind can keep order in their physical and spiritual lives, so that the trials and temptations in Adam’s life were a blessing and his fall was not a sin as he was in a divine seminary under the care of the Creator Himself, as explained earlier.

\textsuperscript{68} Qur’ān 67:2.
CHAPTER 3
CLASSICAL AND MODERN CHRISTIAN APPROACHES TO THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST
CLASSICAL AND MODERN CHRISTIAN APPROACHES TO THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

The person of Jesus Christ not only plays a key role in Christian dialogue with non-Christians, but is also the central issue in the current debate within the Christian theology of religions. As has been observed in previous chapters, both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC in their official pronouncements, and individual scholars in their views on the status of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur’an have implied that this question should be reconsidered within the context of Christianity’s relationship with other faiths. This is necessary in order to answer the following questions: How is the status of Jesus to be understood by Christians in their relationship with people of other faiths? Can Christians continue to affirm that Jesus is normative not only for themselves but also for those who belong to other faiths? Can Christians acknowledge that there are other saviours besides Jesus Christ?¹

Both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC authorities have moved their Churches from Church-centred or Christianity-centred views to Christ-centred approaches to people of other faiths, they have stressed that the value of other faiths must be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Contrary to this official position, some individual theologians and thinkers have attempted to study the status of Jesus by questioning seriously the traditional Christian beliefs and doctrines. A number of works have been published which discuss the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the possibility of reinterpreting traditional

doctrines in the light of new developments and the practical implications of dialogue with people of other faiths.

At this place, it seems quite pertinent to present some “facts” about the Jesus about which there is consensus among the leading Christian scholars:

From 30 AD to around 130 AD that is about within a hundred years of Christ’s death (roughly from 30 AD up to 130 AD), this is what we know for sure;

- No surviving pagan sources are of any help in trying to construct the life and teaching of Jesus because he is not mentioned in them. Given the impact that Christ has had on history ever since his death, one might expect that his life made an enormous impact on the society of his day—like a comet striking the earth. But if the historical record is any indication, Jesus scarcely made any impact at all less like a comet striking the earth than a stone being tossed into the ocean.

- From the first century AD, there are hundreds of documents written by all kind of pagan authors for all kind of reasons. Among all these surviving sources, Jesus is mentioned only twice which means that he is not mentioned by the vast majority of any of the philosophers, poets, historians, or scientists; he’s not named in any private letters or public inscriptions known to date.
  - The Roman governor of the province of Bythinia-Pontus (in modern-day Turkey), Pliny the younger, in a letter written to his emperor, Trajan (112 AD), mentions a group of Christians who are followers of “Christ, whom they worship as a God” (letter 10 to the Emperor Trajan).
  - The Roman historian Tacitus gives a lengthier reference in his history of Rome, the Annals (115 AD), in his discussion of the torching of the city of Rome by the emperor Nero in the year 64 AD. Here he mentions the Christians as the hatred of the human race and says that they were followers of “Christ” who, he notes, was crucified under the procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate, when Tiberius was the emperor.

In religious sources, Jesus is mentioned twice by Josephus Flavius, the Church historian.

To come to the New Testament, the life of Jesus is scarcely mentioned outside of the Gospel (e.g., by the apostle Paul, who is far more concerned about faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection than in the details of his life). That means, then, that if
We want to know about what Jesus said and did, our only sources are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (and possible the Gospel of Thomas).

There is once again consensus among all biblical scholars that these sources are also problematic if we want to use them to reconstruct what Jesus said and did.

- They were written between 35 to 65 years after the events they narrate. The authors were not eyewitness and they appear to have acquired their stories from oral traditions that had been in circulation for decades.
- All four books were written anonymously. They were not ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John until some time in the century AD, decades after they were written and there is good reason for doubting that these traditional ascriptions are accurate:
  - Even though Christ and his own disciples spoke Aramaic, these books are written in Greek.
  - Jesus’ own disciples, at least according to the New Testament accounts, were mostly lower-class, uneducated peasants (according to Acts 4:13, both Peter and John were known to be illiterate); the Gospel writers were highly educated, literate and seemed to handle sophisticated ways of thinking quite well.

If these are our only historical sources for the life of Christ how can one possibly use them to reconstruct what Jesus was really like or what he said and did.

Add to that the matter of alteration, deletion and addition to the text of the Bible. There is compelling evidence to suggest that whole passages even books were added and scratched away simply because they fitted well or did not fit with somebody’s personal theology. A befitting example all too well known in the area of Biblical Criticism is St. Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews (extremely essential to understand the paradigmatic shift in the understanding of revelation from the Old Testament model to the New Testament model). Nobody knows how it got into the Bible and who its author was. It is almost confirmedly not St. Paul’s but since the ideas mentioned therein were essential for the Church, it was adopted.

To come back to Christ, Rudolf Bultmann (1884 – 1976), a Catholic theologian yet vehemently criticized by the Catholic Church for his view on the demythologization of Christianity, clearly stated that to write the history of Christ was impossible given the lack of historical information available on him.
3.1

JESUS CHRIST IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL
JESUS CHRIST IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL

The apostle Paul came to terms with an "emerging myth" about Jesus Christ, which he himself helped to preserve by incorporating Christological hymns in his letters. Yet Paul did not see it as a myth in the sense of something that happened in primordial time, that is, in the “time” prior to world-time. What happened, though it may have functioned as a primordial myth to many early Christians, also happened, for Paul, in time. It is true that he had no particular interest in a biographical "life" of Jesus- "even though we once regarded Christ from a Human point of view, we regard him thus no longer" but It is also true that he resisted every attempt to deny Jesus' actual suffering and death on the cross; thus he quickly added "the death of the cross" to the Philippians hymn Paul accepted Jesus as the preexistent Son sent by God, but he was also "born of woman, born under the law". In short, what Paul proposed was not a Gnostic Redeemer myth but a "paramyth" which, paradoxically (from the point of view of myth in archaic societies), was rooted in history.

This view emerged especially in Paul's controversies with his opponent. In 1 Corinthians 1-4 he found it necessary to speak against those (“proto-Gnostic”) Corinthians who believed that they had a superior Knowledge (Greek: gnosis) and wisdom (Greek: Sophia) about their heavenly origins and entrapment in fleshly bodies. Some of the Corinthians were apparently so proud that they were willing to say anathema lesous, "Jesus be damned"; referring to the earthly Jesus. Paul responded with the exclamation Kyrios lesous, "Jesus is Lord!"Paul did use "wisdom" as a way of talking about the special knowledge of the mature Christian, but that wisdom was the message of the "Christ crucified," a "cause for stumbling" (Greek:

---

2 In this section I am indebted to Reginald H. Fuller, "Aspects of Pauline Christology," Review and Expositor 71 (1974), pp. 5-17.
3 2 Cor 5:16b.
4 Phil 2:8.
5 Gal 4:4.
6 1 Cor 12:3.
7 1 Cor 2:6-16.
skandalon) to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks\(^8\). He argued that it was God’s wisdom to choose what is foolish, weak, low, and despised in the eyes of the world, not the worldly wise, powerful, and those of noble birth—thus he chose many of the Corinthians\(^9\). Likewise, he chose the way of the cross, a criminal’s suffering and death, and though the cross symbolized for Paul the whole meaning of salvation, it included the Jesus who lived, suffered, and died.

At this place, it is quite relevant to mention the impression of Arnold Mayer as pointed out by Sajid Mir:

“The first Christians, indeed, regarded St. Paul’s mission to the gentiles, together with his liberal attitude towards the law, as an innovation; as such they either tolerated or attached it; and St. Paul himself does not judge of it otherwise; he is, indeed, proud of the fact that here he goes his own way in the power of divine revelation. In Antioch he demonstrates even to St. Peter that he, the “pillar apostle” did not yet comprehend the liberty of the Gospel and the significance of Christ.”

Paul had to face another kind of opposition at Corinth: wandering preachers from the outside who came in teaching that they were the powerful, spirit-filled heirs of a hero-Jesus who was a “divine man” (Greek: \textit{theios aner}):

“This concept must be seen within the framework of Hellenistic anthropology, for which man was not simply a given species of

---

\(^8\) 1 Cor 1:18-25.
\(^9\) 1 Cor 1:26-31.
\(^10\) Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyah, p.50. See also: Arnold Meyer, Jesus or Paul? (English Translation), p.98.
being. Man in this concept is not simply what he is, but he is a being hovering between his two possibilities, the divine (theion) and the animal (theriodes'). Only the Divine Man is man in the full sense; then his humanity becomes the epiphany (manifestation) of the divine. He is exceptionally gifted and extraordinary in every respect. He is in command both of a higher, revelational wisdom and of the divine power (dynamis) to do miracles. Yet he is not identical with a deity, but can be called "a mixture of the human and the divine," “a higher being," or "superhuman."

Thus, whereas the first group considered themselves special because they believed Christ was a mythical god, this group considered themselves special because they exhibited special divine powers such as speaking in tongues, visions, and miracle working like the miracle working like the miracle working of Jesus. Against them, Paul claimed that the apostle of the crucified Jesus was characterized by suffering. Jesus was Christ, Lord, and Son of God, who is known "according to the Spirit," but he was also a man who suffered and died, and this is the correct model for the Christian.

Paul also faced opposition from the "Judaizers" at Galatia, who wanted Christians to hold to Jewish dietary and circumcision laws as a prerequisite for becoming Christian. Paul developed his views against adherence to the Jewish law in his letter to the Galatians and again in his letter to the Romans, for at Rome tensions had arisen between Jewish and gentile Christians. Whereas Paul's interpretation of the cross usually stressed a particular view of who Jesus Christ was, now he further interpreted who Jesus Christ was "for us." The key term for this interpretation of Jesus Christ was "justification" (Greek: dikaiosune). In a formula Paul passed on, he wrote that Jesus "was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification"; that is, the one who believes in Christ is acquitted even though

---

11 Esp 2 Cor 10-13.
12 2 Cor 4:17-18; 6:3-10; 11:22-17a.
13 Rom 4:25
guilty. That is God’s justice. Paul summarized:14

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the (Greek. 17) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live.”15

It is probable that Paul added the italicized words in the following formula, thereby linking the atoning death of Christ with justification and faith:16

. . . whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; 26) it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

Other, similar passages indicate that God made his Son to be a sacrifice for sinners17 and that by this redemption Christians receive the status of "sons of God".18

Paul’s view of Jesus Christ was elaborated by his conviction that the cross made salvation present for the believer.

Another significant observation of Arnold Meyer has been discussed by Sajid Mir about Paul in these words:

إن كان فهمًا للمسحية يعني الإيمان بالسياح باعتباره ابناً سامياً، لم يكن ينتمي إلى الناس على الأرض، بل كان يعيش في الصورة الإلهية والسعادة السماوية… (ثم) نزل من السماء إلى الأرض، واتخذ شكلًا إنسانيًا لكي يقدم كفارة عن خطيئة الناس بدمه، ويعيش بعد ذلك من الموت، ورفع إلى السماء، وأجلس على الجانب الأيمن من الله سيداً للمؤمنين به، ويشفع لهم نفسه، ويسمع دعواتهم ويخمدهم ويهديهم، ويلقي شخصيًا في كل من يؤمن به يعمل فيه، وسوزن مع سحاب السماء مرة أخرى، لكي يقيم العدل في الدنيا ويبدد أعداء الله جميعًا، وسوف يأخذ أتباعه معه إلى بيت السماء المنورة حتى يصبحوا مثل جسده المنظم. إن كان هذا هو مفهوم المسيحية فإنها أسست على يد بولس المقدس، وليست على يد سيدنا المسيح.”19

---

14 Rom 1:16-17a
17 Rom 5:9; 2 Cor 5:21.
18 Gal 4:4-7.
19 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p. 59; See also: Arnold Meyer: Jesus or Paul? Pp. 122-123.
“If by Christianity we understand faith in Christ as the heavenly son of God who did not belong to earthly humanity, but who lived in the divine likeness and glory, who came down from heaven to earth, who entered into humanity and took upon Himself a human form that He might make propitiation from men’s sin by His own blood upon the cross, who was then awakened from death and raised to the right hand of God as the lord of His own people, who now intercedes for those who believe in Him, hears their prayers, guards and leads them, who, moreover, dwells and works personally in each of those who believe in Him, who will come again with the clouds of Heaven to judge the world, who will cast down all the foes of God, but will bring His own people with Him into the home of heavenly light so that they may become like unto His glorified body – if this is Christianity, then such Christianity was founded principally by St. Paul and not by our Lord.”

Paul had a number of other notions about the identity and meaning of Jesus Christ. To be “in Christ” or "in Christ Jesus" was to be in the community of believers, to share the gift of salvation through faith, and to labor for the gospel. It will be recalled that Philo had the conception that the First Adam was the Perfect Man and that the Second Adam was the fallen, physical man; however, Paul saw the Genesis Adam as the First Adam, who sinned and died, and Christ as The “Last Adam,” the eschatological Redeemer who created a new humanity. He may have been correcting the early Gnostic belief that the spark of light in the one who has knowledge is from the Heavenly Man, while fallen man is the second man. In any case, Paul stressed that Christ was the "Last Adam," and in connection with that, Christ was the true image (eikon) of God, an image that transforms the redeemed.

In loving relationship, service, and responsibility these redeemed are “the body of Christ” or one body "in Christ". Paul believed that Christians were “baptized into

---

20 Gal 3:27; Rom 12:5.
21 2 Cor 5:19; Rom 3:24.
22 1 Cor 4:15; 2 Cor 12:19.
23 Gen 1.
24 Gen 2, 3.
25 1cor 15:21-22; 45-50; Rom 5:12-21.
26 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 4:4.
27 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29.
28 1 Cor 12:12-31; Rom 12:4-8.
29 Rom 12:5.
one body”\(^\text{30}\) and sustained by breaking the Bread that is the body of Christ,\(^\text{31}\) the act of which is participating in the body of Christ.\(^\text{32}\)

In short, Paul took over from the Christological hymns a myth that was in the Process of formation but “corrected” it in the direction of the history and significance of the cross. Likewise, Jesus was in his humility more than a “divine man” transmitting visionary, spiritual, and miraculous powers. Through God’s gift of grace—Jesus Christ—the believer was justified, even though guilty. Christ was the “Last Adam,” the true "image" of God, and he reversed the sin of the First Adam. This new humanity brought about a new community of those “in Christ,” or “in the body of Christ,” which shared a mutual love and responsibility. The Christian was initiated into this community by baptism, and by it the Christian was sustained, sharing in the body, especially through participation in the Lord’s Supper. To conclude, following words of John Zeisler can be quoted as described by Sajid Mir:

"وَاجْهِيَتْ الْمَسْحُوَّةُ الْبَوْلَسِيَّةٌ مَعَارِضُةً مِّنْ قَبْلَ الْكُنْسَةِ الْقُدْرَةِ، وَأَسْتَمِرَّتْ هَذِهِ المَعَارِضَةُ بِيْنَ الْحَيْثِ وَالْأَخِرِ عَلَىْ مرَّ العَصَورِ.\(^\text{33}\)

“Paul’s version of Christianity faced opposition in the early Church, and has done so sporadically ever since.”

And further it is said:

"أَغْبِرَتْ الْبَدْعَةُ الْبَوْلَسِيَّةُ أَسْاَسًا صَحِيحًا لِّلْعِقَيْدَةِ الْمَسْحُوَّةِ الْحَقَّةِ، وَأَغْبِرَتْ الْكُنْسَةُ الْأَصِلِّيَّةُ مَلَحِدَةً، وَأَنْكَرَ النَّاسُ الاعْتِرَافَ بِهَا.\(^\text{34}\)

“The Pauline heresy became the foundation of Christian orthodoxy and the legitimate Church was disowned as heretical.”

\(^{30}\) 1 Cor 12:13.
\(^{31}\) 1 Cor 11:24.
\(^{32}\) 1 Cor 10:17.
\(^{33}\) Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p. 59; See also: John Zeisler: Pauline Christianity, p. 140.
\(^{34}\) Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p. 59; See also J. Lehman: op.cit., p.128.
3.2

MARTIN LUTHER’S APPROACH TO JESUS CHRIST
MARTIN LUTHER’S APPROACH TO JESUS CHRIST

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was born of an upward-bound, lower-Middle class German mining family. He received his early education at the University of Erfurt, where the curriculum was oriented to the new thought of William of Occam (died ca. 1349). Occam was critical of Aquinas’s high estimate of reason as preparation for revelation and of His attempts to distinguish between “essences” of things and their outward manifestations, for Occam was a Nominalist, that is, he thought Under “essences” were simple an abstraction of human mind. Occam also defended the independence of the state from Church authority, taught that Scripture, not councils and popes, was binding for christen, and doubted the biblical basis for transubstantiation.

Luther graduated from Erfurt in 1505 and began to study law. Shortly thereafter, as he was returning to Erfurt after a visit with parents, he was caught in a violent thunderstorm and struck to the ground by a bold of lighting. Terrified for the salvation of his soul, he vowed to become a monk. Over his father’s objections, he entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt. His further studies of Occam, Augustine, the German mystic, and the Bible deepened his Piety, but they did not quit his personal anguish. As part of his penance, Luther continually pestered his superiors with hours-long confessions about trivia. So great was his consciousness of sin that he felt unworthy to celebrate his first Mass and fled the altar.

By 1513 Luther was in Wittenberg, a professor of Scripture in the newly established university. It was probably soon thereafter that he underwent a conversion. In his later life he wrote that he had hated the righteousness of God which punishes sinners and that he was studying the Epistle to the Romans to find Paul’s true meaning:

“At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of words, namely, in the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’\(^{36}\) There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which a merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates....\(^{37}\)

The solution for Luther’s anguish lay in Scripture: It was “faith alone”—not works—that was the basis for forgiveness. Thus were the bywords of the Protestant Reformation: sola scriptura (“Scripture alone”) and sola fide (“faith alone”).

Little by little, Luther’s insight brought him into conflict with the abuses in the system, especially as they centered in the sacrament of penance. When the Dominican friar John Tetzel came to Wittenberg selling for a fee the extra merits accumulated in a heavenly “bank” by the goodness of the Virgin Mary, Christ, and the saints, Luther penned his Ninety-five Theses, the heart of which was an attack on papal authority. In three important treatises of 1520 (An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, and On Christian Liberty) Luther attacked the, “Roman tyranny” accepting only three sacraments (baptism, penance, and the Eucharist), and treating the pope as his equal. He also rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation as a philosophical perversion of biblical faith’s simple trust that the body and blood of Christ were “really present” in the bread and wine. The authority of the priest to perform the rites of the Church was not totally condemned; yet Luther came to think that all Christians could hear one another’s confessions and that all were priests (“the priesthood of all believers”), and eventually he would reject sacrament of penance. In short, Luther attacked the authority of the Church by his judgment about the

\(^{36}\) Rom 1:17.

The supreme leader, the pope, and its means of grace, the sacramental system. Like others of his period, Luther was reexamining the Bible and beginning to give it his own interpretation as a means of evaluating Church tradition.

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther refused to recant and was charged with heresy by the emperor. Shortly thereafter he was excommunicated, and his supporters kidnapped him for his own safety and carried him off to Wartburg Castle. In 1522 he returned to take up the reform of Wittenberg. Three years later he married a former nun. After a long life of writing and activity as a Reformation leader, Luther died in 1546.

Luther's early view of Jesus Christ was focused on a highly judgmental image, a figure who required acts of penance. Without them, he thought, Christ sought revenge. Luther wrote in later years,

“I was often terrified at the name of Jesus. The sight of a crucifix was like lightning to me and when his name was spoken, I would rather have heard that of the devil, because I thought I must do good works until Christ, because of them, became friendly and gracious to me.”

38

After his discovery of “by faith alone” in the writings of Paul, Luther no longer feared Jesus Christ; he believed that the message in Scripture about Jesus Christ was that God’s real righteousness was forgiveness of the sinner. To him, that was the transforming message of salvation. Faith that one was justified became, for Luther, the impetus to works.

Luther sought to maintain the orthodox doctrine of Jesus Christ as “truly God and truly man”; however, he did not find in Scripture what the Church’s traditional interpretation said was there. He usually avoided using the Church’s language and the philosophical language of Aquinas, preferring to employ down-to-earth expressions and language taken directly from Scripture. Whereas the great Scholastic looked at his

holy text with a historical, doctrinal spectacles, Luther’s own glance was backward into the past, for it was the Jesus who lived that became the focus of his notion of Jesus’ humanity and divinity. To the extent Luther looked back, he shared the Renaissance attitude toward history.

What did Luther see in the Bible? His was not a “religion book” in the sense that the words themselves were holy; rather, he spoke of the Logos, or Word, contained in the words. But that Word was not limited simply to the Logos concept of the Fathers, nor was it identifiable with the words as they were written. For Luther the New Testament apostles were those who unlocked the Old Testament orally, and it was because of a “great failure and weakness of spirit” that books had to be written. The Word of God for Luther was an uncovering, a revelation that went beyond the written words of the Bible.

Luther was not directly in line with the classical Logos doctrine; neither did he accept the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture, which had dominated the Church through the influence of the School of Alexandria. Luther’s view was that the Bible was a unity: Both Old and New Testaments should “drive home Christ.” But that did not mean that the Old Testament was full of allegorical references to Christ.

Luther stressed another traditional method of interpretation that derived from the School of Antioch and Augustine: concentration on the plain, literal sense of the text and the use of clearer passages to illuminate more obscure ones. Luther believed that Scripture interprets itself: The Gospel (New Testament) is the plainest witness to Christ, and the law (Old Testament) is to be read in the light of it, but without reading the light of it, but without reading into the text secret, symbolic references to Christ. One might compare the Roman Church’s canon law, institution, and sacraments to Israel’s law, institution, and cultic life; to the gospel of the New Testament one might compare justification by grace through faith. However, the “law gospel” scheme was reproduced in every believing Christian: Salvation by works (law) is overcome by salvation by grace through faith (gospel). The movement from law to gospel included the perspective of the advance of the New Testament on the Old for Luther, but it include much more.
When Luther came to the New Testament itself, he concentrated on the humanness of Jesus. It was the weak, lowly, and beggarly Christ that attracted him most. Jesus Christ was born in lowliness, lived his life as a humble beggar, and suffered and died on the cross a weak man, the object of scorn and contempt:

“He had eyes, ears, mouth, nose, chest, stomach, hands, and feet, just as you and I have. He took the breast: his mother nursed him as any other child as nursed....” 39...“He ate, drank, slept, awoke, and was tired. He was sad and happy. He wept and laughed; He hungered and thirsted, froze and perspired. He chatted and worked and prayed. In short, He required all the necessities and sustenance of this life, and died and suffered like any other man, sharing fortune and misfortune.” 40

For Aquinas, God can be known in his essence-in a preparatory way by natural reason, and completely by the revelation of God, which is then to be explained by natural reason; for Occam, God is unknowable in his essence; for the German mystics, God is known through the “imitation of Christ,” a way of devotion leading to union with him. For Luther, God is known through the humble Jesus, a notion that is closer to Occam and the mystics than to Thomas Aquinas. Luther’s conception is well expressed in the German term Ausbund, a mercantile expression for “the faultless sample bound to the outside of a bolt of cloth to indicate the quality of the merchandise within.” 41 Jesus Christ is a visible, tangible manifestation of the God who is hidden from sight. He expresses the Father’s will and heart; he is God’s seal, standard, ensign, pledge, and especially beloved Son. He is “The Man,” a term of authority for Luther somewhat analogous to the way government employees refer to the President as “The Man.” For Luther, the Christian relies solely on “The Man” for salvation. Thus the most characteristic God-given task, or office, of “The Man” is that of preacher (or teacher, which is virtually synonymous). Jesus’ literal words as preacher are the means through which God’s Word comes, and they are spoken with childlike simplicity. He preached not law, but gospel; not rules, but life. In short, his

---

39 Translated from Luther’s Works (Weimar edition), vol. 33, 115, as quoted in Siggins, Doctrine of Christ, 199.
40 Translated from Luther’s Works (Weimar edition), vol. 46, 598, as quoted in Siggins, Doctrine of Christ, 200.
41 Siggins, Doctrine of Christ, 86.
spoken message was “by faith alone” (sola fide).

How is this salvation accomplished? Luther believed that the “popish rabble” had falsely stressed pilgrimates, monkery, private masses, holy orders, and ascetic lives. Instead of these Luther wished to stress Jesus Christ alone, especially the Jesus who suffers, dies, is raised, and ascends; he saw these events not simply as something that happened, but as something that mysteriously and unexplainably happened “for me.” “The words OUR, us, FOR us, ought to be written in golden letters—the man who does not believe them is not a Christian.” Thus Christ is a continual mediator who speaks for us at God’s right hand in heaven, requests the Holy Spirit for us, and mediates our prayers.

Christ’s role as mediator involved several conceptions for Luther. As Messiah, he came not to liberate Israel, but to be the universal Savior, king, and priest. Christ is true king, although his kingdom is not of this world, and as such he reigns over heavenly and spiritual things. He is true priest, interceding in heaven on behalf of believers and offering himself as a sacrifice. It is especially this priesthood conception that interests Luther. As mediator between God and the people, Christ is the great high priest “after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 7) who offers himself as a sacrifice on the cross. He is also the true pass over lamb, the Lamb of God who is sacrificed for our sins. Like Anselm, Luther held to a satisfaction theory of atonement, but unlike Anselm, he was suspicious of reason. Whereas reason attempts to atone by the performance of good works, ceremonies, the invocation of the saints and the Virgin Mary (of Mary, Luther sarcastically remarked, “Intercede for me before your Son, show Him your breasts”), faith understands that “One has sinned, another has made satisfaction. The one who sins does not make satisfaction; the one who makes satisfaction does not sin. It is an amazing doctrine!” Finally, Christ not only

42 Translated from Luther’s Works (Weimar edition), vol. 31/11, p. 432, as quoted in Siggins, Doctrine of Christ, 110.
43 John 18:36.
44 John 1:29.
45 Translated from Luther’s Works (Weimar edition), vol. 20, p. 623, as quoted in Siggins, Doctrine of Christ, 131.
overcomes sin; he also defeats death.\textsuperscript{46}

If Jesus Christ and justification are inseparable, so are Jesus and sanctification. How does one become holy before God? The piety the monks and mystics of the period, based on the “imitation of Christ,” stressed that one becomes better and better, progressing to stages of perfection. Although Luther apparently was influenced by the mystics and apparently thought that the Christian emulates Christ his faith, love, and suffering, he also believed that the Christian does not do so in order to progress to higher stages of perfection. It is not the believer’s holiness that makes him acceptable (see the discussion of Ignatius Loyola, on pages 121-24). Just as works proceed from faith—not the reverse so-sanctification results from justification. Moral acts not a means to salvation; rather, they result from salvation as a gift to the believer. The Left Wing of the Reformation and John Wesley, the Father of Methodism, would alter this belief.

Luther’s different perspective on Jesus Christ was accompanied a different accent on the rites of the Church. As noted, he reduced the seven sacraments to two. He regarded the sacraments as visible signs of God’s invisible grace, and each had to have grounding in Scripture. On the basis of Romans 6, baptism (in which the visible sign was water) signified beginning to die to this world in order to live in the world to come. “Thus, you have been once baptized in the sacrament, but you need continually to be baptized by faith, continually to die and continually to live.”\textsuperscript{47} Because the most important aspect of baptism not the holiness of the rite or the ordination of the priest, Luther accepted the baptism of infants. What matters in this case is the faith die sponsors and of all members of the Church.

In his ideas about the Eucharist, or the Lord’s Supper (in which the visible sign was bread and wine), Luther departed from tradition three significant points:


He claimed that Scripture asserts the universality of the cup;\textsuperscript{48} that is, all participants—not just the priests—are to drink it.

He rejected the Thomistic conception that while the “accidents” remain the same, the essence (or substance) is transformed into the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation); this was because what he found in Scripture was not this “scholastic perversion” but the simple conviction that the body of Christ is “in, with, and under” the elements of bread and wine as a special manifestation to the Christ who is everywhere.

He rejected the celebration of the Mass as a sacrifice, as a rite whose proper performance would ensure grace, in favor of its character as a promise established and fulfilled through faith. Thus the administration of the sacraments is to be accomplished not by a “holy priest” with special powers but by a "minister" whose special calling and gifts include preaching and teaching, gifts Luther believed were characteristic of Jesus Christ but sadly missing in the Roman clergy. Though the minister is commissioned by the community or his superior, he is in principle not uniquely holy: All believers are priests to each other.

In summary, Luther attempted to be orthodox, but he did not present Jesus Christ in the orthodox manner, that is, with a systematic and well formulated doctrinal position. Rather, he looked back and took up the simple language and simple ideas of the Bible, only occasional interspersing them with the language of orthodox doctrine. Just as the New Testament had no unified, consistent view of Jesus Christ, so Luther emphasized no Christ doctrine in the traditional way? Thus it is possible to say that Luther had no Christology. He did not begin with “who Jesus is” in his essence and then proceed to “what he does; rather, Jesus is who he is because of what he does and who he says he is—better, who he said he was. At times, Luther appeared simply to take over a more cosmic and ahistorical Jesus Christ from the creeds, but that is because he looked back behind the Church’s tradition and dogma at

\textsuperscript{48} Mark 14:23.
the Christ found in the New Testament—especially in the Gospel of John. But even more, he turned to the poor, weak, beggarly Christ he found in the synoptic gospels. There he saw Jesus primarily as preacher and teacher, just as he himself was preacher and teacher. His Christ was really present in the sacrament of the Eucharist, but not in the philosophical sense of Scholastic philosophy. Baptism was the rite of participating in the death and resurrection of Christ, the beginning of understanding what is to become a continual life-and-death struggle. Believing that God mercifully justifies sinners, Luther saw in the Scepters not the Jesus who was the terrifying judge, but the humble preacher and teacher who offered salvation to those he met. Luther saw a Jesus who was destroying the myths of his own time—a figure who challenged the way in which concentration upon the sacred traditions and rites themselves could obscure the true intention of those traditions and rites. Thus Luther's own look at the past was a small but definite step in the direction of affirming that the profane world is also sacred—for the one who believes.
3.3

JESUS CHRIST IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHN WESLEY
Pietism and Moravianism grew vigorously in seventeenth-century continental Europe. In England, where the lower classes were depressed economically, spiritually, and morally during the beginnings of the industrial Revolution, the time was ripe for religious renewal.

John Wesley (1703-91) was the fifteenth of nineteen children (eight died in infancy). His father, Samuel Wesley, a priest of the Anglican Church (in America this is the Protestant Episcopal Church) priest, bequeathed to him both Anglican and Pietistic impulses. His mother Susannah, though at times domineering, was very religious and influenced him greatly. After his early schooling, John became a student at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1720. About 1725 he began studying two books that helped shape his ideas about Christian piety: Bishop Jeremy Taylor’s Rules for Holy Living and Dying, essentially a biblically oriented handbook of spiritual discipline that stressed progress in inner holiness and external rules of behavior, and the Imitation of Christ. Wesley then developed his own program of strict spiritual discipline and morality. Following Taylor’s lead, he chose to enter the Anglican priesthood as a voluntary celibate.

The following year Wesley began his study of William Law’s Christian Perfection, which presented an “imitation of Christ” ideal centering on daily self-denial, for example, by moderate fasting, leaving home and family for the sake of Jesus, and abstinence from improper books, dramas, plays, and conversation. By 1729 Wesley was also beginning to emerge as a leader of an Oxford student group formed by his brother Charles and eventually nicknamed the Methodists because of the group’s dedication to a way of disciplining one’s life and study called the “rule and
method.” In this period Wesley studied the Bible and the medieval mystical document *Theologica Germanica*.

In 1735, accompanied by his brother Charles, John Wesley set out to become a missionary among the Indians of Georgia in order to “save his own soul.” On board ship, he became friends with some Moravians. Once in Georgia, Wesley took temporary charge of a parish in Savannah and met the young niece of the chief magistrate of the city, Sophy Hopkie. Though Wesley was determined to keep his commitment to remain single, and Sophy claimed that she wished to return to England to avoid marrying a disreputable suitor, Wesley’s frequent and occasionally intimate associations with her led to love and he vaguely hinted at marriage. For the moment, Sophy avoided Wesley’s restrained overtures and told him she had resolved never to marry. Wesley consulted his Moravian friends. As was his custom in difficult decision, drew lots. The lot said: “Think of it no more.” Though Sophy gave ample opportunities, Wesley made no further advances. But to his consternation, Sophy announced her engagement to still another suitor quickly married him. Later, when Wesley refused her communion the technicality that she had not given legal notification to communicate after her absence for a period, he encountered great opposition from supporters of the newlyweds and, after being indicted by a grand jury (the trial never occurred) he decided to leave Georgia.

Unsuccessful and demoralized in all his efforts, in 1737-38 John Wesley returned to England where religious revival was well under way. Both Wesley’s now came under Moravian influence, and both had conversion experiences. For John, the famous event occurred in 1738 while he listened to a reading from Luther’s Preface to the Commentary on Romans at a Methodist society meeting at Aldersgate Street, London. Wesley later wrote about his Aldersgate experience in his Journal: “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation . . . .”

After a visit to Germany to learn more about the Moravians, Wesley returned to preach at the many societies in and about London and, finally, at George Whitefield’s urging, even in an open field near Bristol. By the 1740s Wesley found relations with the Calvinist wing of the revival (led by Whitefield) strained, and
because the Moravians shower increasing tendency toward mystical quietism and separation from the church, he decided to split with them. His own group centered in the rapidly growing “societies.” With a tremendous talent for organization, Wesley developed smaller support groups within the “societies” (classes and bands) and, to the chagrin of the Anglicans, developed the office of “lay preacher.” Organized for mutual support, discipline, and pastoral care, these groups became the context for the practical implementation of Wesley’s view of Jesus Christ among the Methodists. Despite Wesley’s wishes, the Methodists separated from the Anglicans by 1795, four years after his death.

Because Wesley wrote no treatise about Jesus Christ, his views this subject must be gleaned from various places in his writings.\textsuperscript{50} The difficulty of systematizing his views is compounded by the fact that such a systematic statement was not as important to Wesley as Christian life itself. In theory, Wesley followed the Reformers stress on salvation by Scripture alone (sola scriptura); in practice, he was also highly influenced by books about spiritual discipline and mysticism. This meant that he read the Scriptures from the perspective of human, personal, quasi-mystical, quasi-ascetic, Pietistic, and evangelical movements. To Wesley, Scripture was to be interpreted in the light of experience and experience in the light of Scripture. Thus he frequently used biblical characters as models for interpreting particular events in his own life, especially in times of great crisis, and he was not beyond opening a Bible to find a random passage to solve a problem. The sola in sola scriptura meant, then, not “solely,” but “primarily.” We will see that was true of sola fide, that is, not “by faith alone,” but “primarily by faith.” Wesley’s specific method of biblical interpretation stressed the Reformation principles that one should look for the plain, literal sense of a passage and that “Scripture interprets Scripture.” But he had a higher estimation of human reason than Luther’s, and he criticized Luther and the mystics on this very

\textsuperscript{50} In addition to note 34, see Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles,\textit{ A Compend of Wesley’s Theology} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954); Colin W. Williams,\textit{ John Wesley’s Theology Today} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960); John Deschner,\textit{ Wesley’s Christology: An Interpretation} (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960); Harald Lindstrom,\textit{ Wesley and Sanctification} (London: Epworth Press, 1946).
point. His Pietistic inclination is reflected in his belief that the result of interpretation should be “plain truth for plain people,” free from “all nice and philosophical speculations; from all perplexed and intricate reasoning’s.” Wesley also differed from the Reformation thinkers in being somewhat more concerned with maintaining Christian orthodoxy. Drawing on his Anglican background, he believed that Scripture should be interpreted in relation to tradition.

This overall perspective is crucial to Wesley’s view of Jesus Christ. Like Calvin, he came to believe that all persons share in Adam’s sin, are totally without merit (Original Sin), and therefore are dependent on God’s totally free gift of grace through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ (justification by faith). At least, these were his views by the time of his conversion in 1738. However, Wesley went on to state that God’s gift of grace is continually available and that a person is continually free to accept or reject it. This perspective on human freedom took the sharp edge off Calvinist predestination. For the Calvinists, including White-field, Wesley’s focus on continual free choice was in danger of stressing human effort so strongly that a doctrine of works would result shades of Catholicism! Wesley did not go that far, but his interest in works of love as part of the Christian life was not characteristic of either Luther or Calvin. At one point, he suggested that faith was only the “handmaid of love.” Again, sola fide meant “primarily by faith.”

We can obtain a clearer impression of Wesley’s overall view by considering the stages of salvation that sometimes appeared in his writings. Though these stages were distinct, Wesley did not think of them as static or irreversible. The first stage is prevenient grace. This is the working of God in such a way that one experiences the feeling of having done something wrong and an increasing desire for God. Next comes convincing grace, the strong knowledge of sin and guilt, a poverty of spirit accompanied by the desire and readiness to amend one’s ways. This stage involves “works of repentance” before one attains mature, justifying faith, a view Luther and Calvin would not have accepted because of their fear of works of righteousness. For Wesley such works did not “buy” salvation. Third comes justifying faith, accompanied sudden new birth. Justifying faith is a feeling of being liberated from
(Wesley saw this as “a relative change”); new birth is an assurance one is freed from the power of sin by the gift of the Spirit of God (“a real change”). Again, we should note that for Wesley, justification is not just "bare assent," but acting out the gift with works of love, that is, works of piety (prayer and meditation) and of mercy (love of neighbor). This then is the fourth stage, the gradual progress of the Christian life in the light of one’s knowledge of sin. Fifth, though some imperfection may remain, it is possible to gain inward and outward purity and holiness. This is the stage of Christian perfection, a goal to which one may come closest at “a moment before death.” The final stage of complete sanctification is the glorification that comes beyond the grave.

The view that the experience of salvation was just this sort of gradual process stands out in Wesley’s life and thought. Yet, true to his 1738 Aldersgate experience, he held to the importance of sudden conversion. It seems probable that this tension between sudden conversion gradual progresses toward perfection (Wesley spoke of “going on to perfection”) provides a basis for understanding Wesley’s view of Christ. The conversion experience and justification apart from human effort corresponded to the Christ who accomplished what is impossible for sinful persons to accomplish, while the stages of perfection (sanctification) corresponded to Wesley’s modified concept of piety based on the imitation of Christ.

Though Wesley was attracted to the simple view of Christ and avoided metaphysical speculation, he continued to draw on orthodox conceptions. Christ was a representative person, the mediator of a relationship between God and his people. When speaking of Jesus Christ directly, Wesley tended to stress his divinity: Christ is the son of God from the beginning of time; he was eternally generated; he is the same substance (homoousios) as the Father; he is the second person of the Trinity; he is truly God and truly man; he is Messiah and the savior of the world; he is prophet, priest, and king; and he will return at End. Likewise, Wesley accepted traditional views on the atonement that is on the question of how Christ effected salvation for Christ Augustine had suggested a ransom theory; Anselm was famous for the satisfaction theory; and Reformers had moved toward a penal theory. Wesley held all three: Jesus Christ paid the debt for sin (ransom theory), satisfied God’s justice
(satisfaction theory), and became a substitute for sinful human beings on the cross (penal substitution theory). Wesley made the atonement central to his view of justification by faith alone:

   The sole cause of our acceptance with God (or, that for the sake of which, on the account of which, we are accepted) is the righteousness and the death of Christ, who fulfilled God's law, and died in our stead.\(^{51}\)

Yet Wesley’s views on sanctification as the process of Christian perfection led him to develop a moral influence theory of the atonement. To be sure he was cautious. His former spiritual mentor, William Law, appeared to him to have taken the doctrine of sanctification in the direction of a legalism centered on works that did not take into account the depth of sin. At this point, Wesley agreed with the Reformers that one was not justified by imitating Christ. Nonetheless, Wesley believed that after justification and new birth, progress toward perfection could take the form of the imitation of Christ. Given justification, there was a form of sanctification in which Christ had a moral influence on the believer. Jesus Christ was not only a sinless substitute and in that regard impossible to imitate; he was also an example to be followed. Christ is therefore the pattern of the Christian life, the revealer of true holiness, holiness not of resignation or of quietism, but holiness in the world. Thus Wesley’s moral influence theory of the atonement led to a view of ethical behavior as the proper expression of love.

Wesley’s attempt to explain his view of sanctification and his theory of Christ’s moral influence can be observed in his interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), the source of many of his sermons. The Sermon on the Mount described, for Wesley, the way of salvation:

“The Son of God, who came from heaven, is here showing us the way to heaven; to the place which He hath prepared for us; the glory He had before the world began. He is teaching us the true way of life everlasting; the royal way which leads to the kingdom;

\(^{51}\) Lindstrom, *Wesley*, 89.
and the only true way for there is none besides: all other paths lead to destruction. From the character of the Speaker, we are well assured that He hath declared the full and perfect will of God.52

Wesley came close to a conception of the “mystical way” of salvation when he discussed the beatitudes of the Sermon. These were like the mystical ladder of ascent, that is, they were progressive steps to be followed. Following them, “real Christianity always begins in poverty of spirit, and goes on in the order here set down, till the ‘man of God is made perfect’”53 But unlike many mystics, he never lost sight of sin and justification. “Poor in spirit” referred to the Christian who “sees himself... utterly helpless with regard to atoning for his past sins; utterly unable to make any amends to God, to pay any ransom for his own soul.” Yet there remained the cross of Christ as the path to follow:

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you” shall persecute by reviling you “and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” This cannot fail; it is the very badge of our discipleship; it is one of the seals of our calling; it is a sure portion entailed on all the children of God... Rejoice, because by this mark also ye know unto whom ye belong; and “because great is your reward in heaven”-the reward Purchased by the blood of the covenant, and freely bestowed in proportion to your sufferings, as well as to your holiness of heart and life.54

If, then, “going on to perfection” does not mean going on without sin, it is nevertheless a sincere goal, the basis of which is the pattern of Christ's life:

“But whom then do you mean by ”one that is perfect?” We mean one in whom is “the mind which was in Christ,” and who so “walketh as Christ also walked,” a man “that hath clean hands and a pure heart,” or that is “cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;” one in whom is “no occasion of stumbling,” and who accordingly, “does not commit sin.”[!]... We understand hereby, one whom God hath “sanctified throughout in body, soul and spirit.”...This man can now testify to all mankind, “I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in

53 Ibid., 321.
54 Ibid., 326-27.
In summary, John Wesley’s view of Jesus Christ stressed the Lutheran tradition that God’s act in Jesus Christ was accomplished apart from all merit on the part of sinful humanity. Yet it also emphasized the importance of human merit in the process of “going on to perfection (sanctification). The stress on justification by faith, which emerged especially in connection with Wesley’s Aldersgate experience in 1738, made it difficult for him to maintain consistent relations with English Pietists and Moravians. The emphasis on a process of sanctification, which emerged through his reading of the mystics and Pietists and through the influence of the Moravians, tended to conflict with the Calvinist denial of free will. His synthesis of justification by faith and sanctification was made by drawing on the age-old notion of stages of salvation. Justifying faith and new birth were placed between preparatory stages of grace (“prevenient” and “convincing” grace) and resultant acts of piety, which progressively lead one toward perfection. In this way, the view that Jesus Christ has done all for the sinner was combined with the view that Jesus Christ is the model for imitation. What the view lacked in consistency it gained in completeness.

---

3.4

REPRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST BY DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS
Albert Schweitzer opened his chapter on the life of David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74) in the following way:

In order to understand Strauss one must love him. He was not the greatest, and not the deepest, of theologians, but he was the most absolutely sincere. His insight and his errors were alike the insight and errors of a prophet. And he had a prophet’s fate. Disappointment and suffering gave his life its consecration. It unrolls itself before us like a tragedy, in which, in the end, the gloom is lightened by the mild radiance which shines forth from the nobility of the sufferer.  

The suffering prophet, David Friedrich Strauss, was born the third of four children in 1808 in the little village of Ludwigsburg, near Stuttgart in southern Germany. His mother, Christiane, was only moderately educated, but she knew the Bible well and had developed her own form of rationalism. His father, Johann Friederich Strauss, was a struggling businessman, an excellent Latinist, and a good poet. He also spoke fluent French. From this modest family, the bright young Fritz went to the theological seminary at Blaubeuren in 1821, partly because it was the least expensive route for entrance to the university. One of his teachers was the (eventually) famous Hegelian church historian F. C. Baur. In 1825 Strauss and a number of his Blaubeuren friends, notably Marklin and Vischer, matriculated at the University of Tubingen. Faced with several uninteresting professors in philosophy, the group enthusiastically embraced the romantics on their own. Strauss also became...
absorbed in the mystics and developed a fascination for local occult practices.

Nadia has introduced Strauss very finely in these words:

With Strauss entered the theological phase of his education at Tubingen in 1827. Baur, who had become a professor at Tubingen the previous year, directed Strauss and his friends to the writings of Schleiermacher. Though the latter’s views helped to shift the group away from the romantics and the occult, they were not yet intellectually satisfied. With Hegel it was different. Though the Berlin philosopher was viewed with suspicion at Tubingen, Strauss’s group eagerly devoured The Phenomenology of Spirit. By now Strauss was as much a philosopher as a theologian; when he graduated with a first in 1830, he no longer held to traditional orthodox beliefs.

In 1831 after nine months in the parish, Strauss was excitedly off to Berlin, which was the capital of Prussia, a great cultural center, and a mecca for young theologians. Among other things, Strauss was eager to hear the lectures of the great Hegel. After Strauss had heard two of Hegel’s lectures, Schleiermacher had the unpleasant task of informing him that Hegel had suddenly died of cholera. Strauss was crushed. He disappointed. Blurted out, “But it was for his sake that cam. Here!” This so offended the now famous Schleiermacher that relations between him and Strauss became strained, though Strauss grew to like Schleiermacher’s spontaneous classroom style in his course on the life of Jesus.

In May 1832 Strauss was back in Tubingen among friends, lecturing on logic,

---

metaphysics, Kant, and ethics, but he was now beginning to encounter opposition because of his Hegelian philosophical views. After a year and a half of teaching, he retired to work on his Life of Jesus Showing the inadequacy of both the supernatural list and the Rationalist views, he proposed as an alternative a “mythical” interpretation of the texts. This placed them in question as accurate historical sources. When the first volume appeared, on June 1, 1835, extremely strong reaction flared up, first on the part of the seminary, and then from all quarters, including the Hegelians. The momentum earned to the remotest corners of German church life, and things were never again the same for German theology or for Strauss.

The rest of Strauss’s life corresponds to Schweitzer’s description. He was dismissed from Tubingen as a bad influence on the seminary students, and though a second edition of the Life was quickly printed he was limited by the authorities to teaching Latin at Ludwigsburg. Back in Stuttgart, he began to write defenses of his views (Polemical Writings). Slowly three friends from Tubingen—but only three—came to his support. Even F. C. Baur, his teacher and manuscript reader, remained silent and cautiously sought to diminish the importance of the book (it appeared before Baur’s major works) and to stress that Strauss method was negative (destructively critical) whereas his own was positive (constructively critical). In 1838 Strauss was appointed to a position at Zurich. The third edition of his Life of Jesus appeared greatly modified but opposition also mounted against him at Zurich, and he was pensioned off before assuming his responsibilities. Never again would he be appointed to a church or a university position. It is scarcely surprising that in the fourth edition of his book (1840) he returned to his original views. Strauss now made an all-out attack against the orthodox theologians (1840/1841). He married an opera star in 1842, but shortly after the birth of two children, they were separated. Strauss was elected, to the provincial parliament in 1848 but soon encountered opposition from his own constituency. From 1842 to 1862 he moved from town to town partly to avoid his estranged wife, who sought reconciliation. During this period he wrote about politics, biography, literature, and history, but not theology.
In 1864 Strauss reentered the battle and wrote his Life of Jesus for the German People, an attempt to communicate with the masses in the way that Renan’s recent Life of Jesus had communicated in France. In contrast to the Life of 1835, this new book explicitly sketched a “life of Jesus” and dealt with the origins and dates of the gospels. At times, Jesus appeared as an exceptional religious personality and great ethical teacher, but sometimes he seemed to be a deluded fanatic. After more polemics (1865) and preoccupation with the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), Strauss wrote his last work, The Old and New Faith (1872). He confessed that though religious feeling still exists, “we are no longer Christians.” He regarded the church as a worthless institution to be replaced by the arts, as he turned to Darwin’s and Ernst Haeckel’s theories of evolution, espoused a conservative morality, and claimed Jesus was a deluded fanatic. In the book his final words were, “The time of vindication will come, as it came for the Life of Jesus: only this time I shall not live to see it.” He returned to Ludwigsburg in November. Now his lifelong friend Vischer could not agree with his position. The book was also attacked by Friedrich Nietzsche. Strauss was ill. In February 1874 he died, requesting that there be no church funeral, no music from the church tower, no cross on the pall, and no clergyman.

Strauss became known for his mythical view of the New Testament. There is a certain irony in this characterization, because Strauss did not himself believe in a Christ myth, nor did he propose an intellectual understanding of myth with anything like the modern sensitivity to primitive myth. In fact, in his classic Life of Jesus of 1835 he scarcely wrote anything about Jesus as an identifiable entity!

Did his mythical view come from the romantic interest in the past and in primitive myth? He had read Herder. He had devoured the romantics, especially Schelling, at Tubingen. Moreover, F. C. Baur, who had been influenced by the early Schelling’s view of myth (1792), had lectured to Strauss and his friends on this subject in 1828-29. Strauss had also studied the once romantically inclined Schleiermacher and was, himself, a sensitive poet of feeling. He may have known of the later Schelling’s lectures on myth, which began in 1828 at Berlin. Yet the romantic approach to myth
did not shine through—at least not directly. You will remember from our discussion on page 158 that Herder’s romantic spirit was not inclined to more rationalistic historical-critical precision. However, C. G. Heyne’s was. It was Heyne (1729-1812) who in many respects was still deeply rooted in the Enlightenment. And it is especially Heyne whom Strauss cites in his Life of Jesus; it would not be accurate to think of the Life as an epitome of romanticism or of Strauss’s Jesus as a romantic’s Jesus.

Neither was Strauss’s view of myth rooted in Hegelian idealism. It is true that Strauss was deeply absorbed in Hegel’s thought; in fact, he presented his material in “dialectical” fashion, that is, he discussed the orthodox supernatural list interpretations of Jesus (thesis), then the rationalist interpretations (antithesis), thus clearing the ground for his own “mythical” interpretation (synthesis). His thinking was the product of conflicting ideas. Yet the form of his presentation, or argumentation, did not mean that Strauss thought of myth simply as an idea of the “God-man” that made contact with history in Jesus of Nazareth Strauss accepted Hegel’s distinction between abstract “concept and concrete “image,” but to Strauss thinking in concepts was an advance over thinking in images, and the two types of thinking remained separate. Though the idea or “concept” of the God-man was important to him it was not necessary that it be linked to the biblical images, such as Jesus’ power over the demons, resurrection, and ascension. Strauss viewed the biblical images critically because he could move on to abstract ideas—in this case, the concept of the God-man—without them. Furthermore—and this is the major point—myth for Strauss was not the Hegelian “idea” or “concept” which became concrete, as Schleiermacher’s notion of consciousness of God became concrete in Jesus; on the contrary, myth was the concrete image, that beyond which the philosopher should move.

What Strauss called “myth” came from a somewhat different direction. The notion of myth in Heyne’s thought was applied to Judaism by J. S. Semler (1725-88) and to the Old Testament by J. G. Eichhorn (1752-1827). To Eichhorn, myths in both
Hebrew and pagan history were not the product of deceit and falsehood, but the way primitives spontaneously expressed events and unseen realities in sensuous, pictorial visual and dramatic imagery characteristic of their times. The older the sources, the more they were pervaded with “myths.” Such views began to be applied to the New Testament by Eichhorn and J. P. Gabler (1753-1826), but only in a limited sense, especially to infancy stones which seemed to have a long oral tradition. Similar views were held by G L Bauer (1755-1806), who claimed that if a narrative deals with matters which cannot have been witnessed, or if it explains events through the direct intervention of personal gods rather than natural causes and laws of nature, or describes everything in a sensuous way, one is in the realm of myth. For Bauer there were “philosophical myths” (Stories about the origins of the world, the human race, or future life), “historical myths” (stories about the oldest histories of peoples, their founders, benefactors, and inventions, with quasi-historical events behind them), and “poetical myths” (stories invented or embellished by poets and embellished over time with multiple layers). Among the New Testament “myths” Bauer included narratives of angels and demons, the virgin birth, and the transfiguration.

There was reason for caution in all this: The historicity of the gospels was now at stake. Strauss pointed, for example, to some important anonymous articles. In Henke’s Magazine in 1796, a certain “E. F.” had anticipated Bauer by explaining the virgin birth as simply a popular Jewish belief from Old Testament prophecy applied to Jesus’ birth. In 1799 an anonymous book entitled Concerning Revelation and Mythology (possibly written by J. C. A. Grohmann, professor of philosophy at Wittenberg) argued that Jesus’ life was interpreted in the pattern of the Old Testament Messiah current in popular Jewish belief at the time, though Jesus’ actual life had been quite different. Another anonymous article in Bertholdt’s Critical Journal of the Most Recent Theological Literature (1816) attacked both the rationalists and the mediators explanations and proposed that the “mythical” view be carried out in interpreting the whole New Testament; to illustrate his point he drew

---

59 Isa 7:14.

Strauss himself built on this tradition and attempted to do two things: to define his terms and to carry out his mythical interpretation on the whole life of Jesus. He distinguished the terms as follows:

(1) Evangelical myth: “... narrative relating directly or indirectly to Jesus which may be considered not as the expression of a fact, but as the product of an idea (in this context, “idea” means “religious image”) of his earliest followers.” It has two sources:
   (a) Jewish messianic ideas and expectations, before or independent of Jesus (for example, the transfiguration).
   (b) The general impact of Jesus’ personal character, actions, and fate, which modified the messianic idea (for example, Jesus’ hostility to temple worship gave rise to the story of the rending of the veil in the temple). The latter, however, verges on the next type.

(2) Historical myth: a specific historical fact which religious enthusiasm has enveloped with ideas (religious images) of the Christ, such as the baptism, or a saying (such as the cursing of the fig tree) that has become a miraculous story.

(3) Legend: “... those parts of the history which are characterized by indefiniteness and want of connection, by misconstruction and transformation, by strange combinations and confusion the natural results of a long course of oral transmission; or which, on the contrary, are distinguished by highly colored and pictorial representatives, which also seem to point to a traditionary origin.”

(4) Additions of the author: “... purely individual, and designed merely to give clearness, connexion, and climax, to the presentation.”

As we have said, Strauss’s application of myth to the whole story of Jesus involved rejecting both the supernatural and the rationalist interpretations. In the process he pointed out again and again the discrepancies among the various versions of a story, frequently interpreting as a pure “evangelical myth” with its origin in an Old Testament

---

60 Summarized from Strauss, Life of Jesus (trans. George Elliot), 86-87.
Classical and Modern Christian Approaches to the Life of Jesus Christ

Testament story. In direct contrast to Schleiermacher, he concluded that the Gospel of John was, by definition, the most "mythical" and hence the least historical. In short, Strauss did openly and completely what had heretofore been done only anonymously or partially: He cast doubt on the historical credibility of much of the life of Jesus.

Strauss’s method is best observed by taking an example, the story of Jesus’ baptism. Strauss noted that the orthodox interpreters said (thesis) that Jesus was conscious of being Messiah already, but that he refrained from assuming his Messianic prerogatives until he was acclaimed publicly. However, the rationalists pointed (antithesis) to the problems in the text such as the opening of the heavens, the descent of the dove, and the voice of God. Was there originally a flash of lightning a clap of thunder and, at the same time, a dove hovering overhead? After noting the divergences of the various interpretations, Strauss pointed (synthesis) to God’s speaking in Isaiah 42:1 (“Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights”), which Matthew 12:17ff. Says was applied to Jesus as the Messiah. On the basis of the Old Testament it was believed that God would speak to the Messiah this way. Strauss also pointed to Psalm 2:7 (“Thou art my son; today I have begotten thee”), which was considered messianic by Jewish interpreters. The two Old Testament texts were combined in the Gospel of Hebrews (apocryphal) and Luke’s version of the baptism. This explains the origin of the voice in the account: The popular mind believed it would happen that way and so portrayed it. Similarly, the dove as the image of the spirit was based on the view that the spirit would come in messianic times, that the spirit was presented in concrete images in the Old Testament (for example, a fire) and spoken of as “hovering” like a bird. In the East, the dove was considered a sacred bird, was given special significance in the Noah-flood story, and was esteemed in Jewish writings, It would therefore have been natural to associate the dove with baptism by water and the Spirit, which comes from the

---

62 Joel 3:1; Isa 11:1ff.
63 Gen 1:2.
heavens. For it to come, the heavens, of course, had to be opened. These items were therefore not factual (that is, historical), but “mythical.” Was the baptism itself historical or mythical? Interestingly, Strauss believed that it was probably historical, for it would have provided a reason for Jesus’ messianic project; that point, however, was lost. What had been an occasion for Jesus’ condescension, or a set of natural events given a misunderstood significance, now became only a probable event colored by myth.64

We have pointed out that Strauss was really interested in analyzing the mythical character of the gospels, not in portraying the Jesus who was the product of his critical study. Yet he did make occasional statements about Jesus, and his view of Jesus can be reconstructed from them.65 For Strauss, little could be known about the birth, infancy, and childhood of Jesus, for they were the product of myth. Certainly, Jesus was a disciple of John the Baptist and continued John’s preaching about the coming Messianic kingdom after John was imprisoned. At first, Jesus spoke of the Son of Man as someone different from himself. Gradually, however, he came to think of himself as that coming Son of Man, and referred to himself also as the Son of God and the Messiah. Thus it was not the resurrection of Jesus that caused the early church to identify him with such titles, but Jesus’ own teaching. For Strauss, Jesus did not consider these titles in the Jewish nationalist or political (Zealot) sense; rather, he viewed them as religious images related to the apocalyptic expectations of the Jews about the coming supernatural kingdom.

Strauss found little history in the narratives about Jesus. Though Jesus’ teachings were historically based, they had passed through interpretive elaboration in the oral tradition, had been placed in a new context by the synopsis’s, and furthermore offered little that was new or unique in comparison with Jesus’ contemporaries. Strauss concluded that Jesus did not intend to sever connections with Judaism. Despite his messianic claims, Jesus simply presented himself as a correct interpreter of the Mosaic Law in contrast to the traditional interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, with.

64 Ibid., 237-49.
65 Ibid., passim; see also the Introduction by Peter C. Hodgson, xxxi-xxxvi.
the addition that the Mosaic Law would come to an end with his glorious return to the regenerated earth at the End. Jesus also spoke many of the parables attributed to him, though the settings were different, and possibly Jesus spoke some of the “woe unto you” sayings against his opponents and the rich, but these were also characteristic Ebonite teaching in this period.

Strauss claimed that as Jesus’ life moved toward its completion, Jesus predicted that after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple he would come on the clouds of heaven as the supernatural Son of Man, thus bringing to end the present age. Though he might have considered this role without his intervening death at first, he later came to see that suffering and death were part of his messianic vocation, and he sought to prepare his followers for that possibility. Not political revolution, but the supernatural power of God would be the means for ushering in the End. Thus Jesus was in fact wrong in his predictions. Though Strauss saw most of the details of the passion story as “myth,” he thought it probable that Jesus became afraid in the garden and prayed for release from his sufferings; that he publicly claimed to be the Messiah before the Sanhedrin and Pilate; and that he met an actual death. Strauss nonetheless doubted the resurrection of Jesus and believed that the empty tomb stories were legendary myths and that the appearance was the product of the disciples' hallucinations. Strauss analyzed the gospels as a whole as being a product of myth thus casting much doubt on their historical character. Jesus might have been a highly distinguished personality who made some impact human history, but Strauss had difficulty in accepting even that conclusion. Ultimately, the “myths” of the gospels should be replaced by philosophical speculation about the God-man.
JESUS CHRIST IN THE PERCEPTION OF ADOLF HARNACK

Adolf Harnack (1851-1930) was born in the university town of Dorpat, Estonia (now part of the Soviet Union). He was one of four sons of Theodosius von Harnack, a pietistic ally inclined professor of practical and systematic theology, who moved to the University of Erlangen in 1853 and back to Dorpat in 1866. Young Adolf also studied at both these universities, but he finished his studies at the University of Leipzig in 1873. There, as a result of his doctoral dissertation on Gnosticism, he was appointed university lecturer in 1874 and professor extraordinarius (assistant professor) in 1876. In this period he and his circle of friends came under the influence of the Liberal, moral-values oriented theology of Albrecht Ritschl. In 1875 he became one of the editors of an edition of the Apostolic Fathers. The following year he cofounded a periodical Theologische Literaturzeitung (News of Theological Literature) still one of the best organs in Germany for reviewing German theological publications. Next came seven years at the University of Giessen (1879-86), during which he initiated the scholarly series Text und Untersuchungen (Texts and Investigations [1882]) and published the first of three volumes of his monumental History of Dogma (1886). Though he was denied official recognition by the Lutheran church he nevertheless gained a position at the University of Berlin in 1888 with the backing of Otto von Bismarck and the emperor, William II.

While at Berlin, Harnack showed himself to be a broadly based, far-ranging scholar. In 1890 the Evangelical-Social Congress, a church oriented group concerned with social and political responsibility, was formed; Harnack’s increasing involvement with the group led to his presidency from 1903-11. In 1890 he was elected to the Prussian Academy of Science and was invited by it to write its history as part of a hundredth anniversary celebration. At his urging, it established a commission on the

---

early Church Fathers, which Harnack headed from 1893 to the end of his life. He also became rector of the University of Berlin, director of the Prussian Royal Library from 1905 to 1921 (a kind of second profession), and in 1911 founded the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for the Advancement of Science (today called the Max Planck Institute), of which he was the first president. In all these endeavors he was recognized as a fine administrator, an expert fund raiser, and a strong builder of prestige. Indeed, Harnack was invited to be friends with the emperor and was made a nobleman in 1914. He guided the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute through Germany’s military defeat in World War I, and he continued to do so through the troubled Weimar Republic. In 1929 he held his last seminar, having been an emeritus since 1921, when he had declined an offer to become ambassador to the United States. He died suddenly in 1930 at Heidelberg.

Nadia has very finely introduced his personality in the following words:

"الإنجيل كما أعلن يسوع المسيح له علاقة مع الأب فقط وليس مع الابن مع أن يسوع المسيح كان معرفته الشخصية وقونه وما زال يعتقد كذلك" فإن هذا لا يعني أن يسوع المسيح لم يكن يدرك وظيفته بل إن حياة المسيح كله كاذت تهدف إلى خدمة ملكوت أبيه. كان هارنيلك يهدف إلى رفض اللاهوت المسيحي التقليدي ورفض معرفة يسوع المسيح التاريخي عن طريق التأويلات فلمع جميع العناصر الغامضة من الأناجيل وجعل العبيدة مصدرًا ثانوياً في معرفة يسوع المسيح لأنه يعتبر الأناجيل يسوع المسيح نفسه فلم يكن الإنجيل عبيدة عن يسوع المسيح بل هي عبارة عن شخصية المسيح نفسها.67

Harnack was above all a historian and a teacher. His extremely active and productive life was an expression of his vocation as a historian. To be sure, history for Harnack involved the technical, hard-nosed analysis of sources; in fact, a number of his works have become classic, most notably his History of Dogma (1886-89; 4th ed. 1909), his Mission and Expansion of Christianity During the First Three Centuries (1902; 4th ed. 1924), his History of Ancient Christian Literature (1893-1904), and his

---

popular What Is Christianity? (1900; 15th ed. 1950). But history to Harnack was not just the technical and interpretive attempt to uncover past events. His ultimate goal was to replace theological dogmatism with “historical understanding,” to substitute for creedal orthodoxy a total historical perspective. Experts have noted many influences on Harnack (the Enlightenment, the romantics, Hegel, F. C. Baur, Kant, Ritsch), but it is perhaps best to hear what Harnack himself said:

“We study history in order to intervene in the course of history, and it is our right and duty that we do this, for if we lack historical insight we either permit ourselves to be mere objects put in the historical process or we shall have the tendency to lead people down the wrong way. To intervene in history this means that we must reject the past when it reaches into the present only in order to block us. It means also that we must do the right thing in the present, that is, anticipate the future and be prepared for it in a circumspect manner. There is no doubt that, with respect to the past, the historian assumes the royal function of a judge, for in order to decide what of the past shall continue to be in effect and what must be done away with or transformed, the historian must judge like a king. Everything must be designed to furnish a preparation for the future, for only that discipline of learning has a right to exist which lays the foundation for what is to be.”

Harnack was perceived by everyone as an unusually talented teacher. His students knew they were in the presence of genius, but he never made them feel inferior. One of the many testimonies to this fact reads:

We had the feeling that a new world was dawning upon us. ... Here we were touched by the aura of genius. Harnack combined in himself in a unique way the qualities required of a scholar with the gifts of a born teacher: concentrated inquisitiveness; tireless industry; the ability of ordering and forming his materials; a comprehensive memory; critical astuteness; a clear and considered judgment, and, together with all this, a wonderful gift of intuition and combination and, at the same time, a marvelously simple, lucid, and appealing manner of presentation. And, to top it all, he also had not infrequently the good fortune of finding and

---

discovering something new. To every subject and field of study he gave light and warmth, life and significance. In both theory and practice he was a master of the teaching method. “... He made the past live through the present and let the present explain the past.”

In short, Adolf Harnack is truly the exemplar of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Liberal Protestant historian.

Harnack’s most popular book was called in English What Is Christianity? Such a translation misses the point of the book. Strictly translated, the title is The Essence of Christianity. In general terms, the “essence” for Harnack is “the gospel”: the teaching of Jesus and the application of that teaching to several concrete ethical and theological issues. Building on this foundation, the second half of the book takes up “the Christian religion” in its major historical expressions. These are Paul and apostolic Christianity, Greek Catholicism, Latin Catholicism, and Protestantism. You will recall that Harnack was primarily a historian of dogma and that his special subject matter was early Christianity. The basic problem with which the book as a whole wrestles can be put in the form of a question: Is the Church, with its hierarchical institution, its ministry and sacraments, its dogma and liturgy, its Virgin and supernatural Christ, its saints and angels and relics, the legitimate evolutionary outgrowth of the primitive gospel of Jesus, or is it in the final analysis a distortion of that primitive gospel? His answer was that it is a distortion that preserved the essence of Christianity almost by accident.

Of the influence of Greek religion and Greek civilization Harnack judged harshly: “It was to destroy this sort of religion that Jesus Christ suffered himself to be nailed to the cross, and now we find it reestablished under his name and authority!” He was also severely critical of Greek and oriental-monastic “deviations,” for, he said, the monks as a rule were “... the instruments of the lowest and worst functions of the Church, of the worship of pictures and relics, of the crassest superstition and the

---

69 W. Bomemann in Christliche Welt 35 (1921), 315, quoted in Pauck, Harnack and Troeltsch, 16-17.

70 The following is derived from the English translation by Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Harper & Row, Torchbooks, 1957).

71 Ibid., 238.
Roman or Western Catholicism moved away from the gospel to an even greater extent: “. . . the whole outward and visible institution of a Church claiming divine dignity has no foundation whatever in the Gospel. It is a case, not of distortion, but of total perversion.” Fortunately, Harnack believed, the Church preserved the potential for correction in the essence of the gospel-partly rediscovered in the Protestant Reformation, more completely captured in nineteenth-century historical reconstruction. The vocation of the historian, as contrasted with theologian, is to recover that essence for the modern world.

When he turned to the sources for the gospel, Harnack followed the; (by then) conventional judgment that the Gospel of John should be set aside and that the two-source theory would best explain gospel origins. Thus he accepted the Markan priority and with it a modified Markan hypothesis. Though the gospels were insufficient for a biography of Jesus, they did offer a clear picture of the main outlines of Jesus’ teaching and its specific applications, the way Jesus’ life was oriented to the service of his vocation, and the impression Jesus made on his disciples, which they passed on. Harnack did not consider miracles a central issue for the historian, as they had been for the rationalists a century earlier, He compared his more optimistic view with that of Strauss:

“Sixty years ago David Friedrich Strauss thought that he had almost entirely, destroyed the historical credibility not only of the fourth but also of the first three Gospels as well. The historical criticism of two generations has succeeded in restoring that credibility in its main outlines.”

Thus, Harnack believed that the historian could isolate from the gospels a reliable basis for understanding Jesus' teaching and life. The “essence” of Christianity so obtained should be the norm for all subsequent developments. In the language of the Protestant Reformation: Scripture, historically interpreted, is the guardian of tradition,
Harnack believed that the essence of Christianity is to be found in the religious experience of the historical Jesus, indeed, in religious experience itself. The important thing is not the religion about Jesus, but the religion of Jesus, just as in the great Liberal tradition religious experience of the individual is the heart of religion.

Jesus’ religion, for Harnack, had certain roots in Old Testament prophecy, but essentially it was an isolated and unique phenomenon in the midst of Old Testament tradition and Jewish religion. Jesus did not stress the nation; he did not teach strict observance of the Mosaic Law; he subordinated thinking about the future; he did not separate himself from the world, as the Essenes did; he was not educated, as the rabbis were; in contrast to John the Baptist, he focused more on joy than on judgment. He was also unique in that he had no relation to the Greek outlook. His teaching could be summarized in three items, which Harnack made famous:

“Firstly, the kingdom of God and its coming.
Secondly, God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul.
Thirdly, the higher righteousness and the commandment of love.”

Concerning the kingdom of God and its coming, Harnack recognized that the future kingdom was an idea Jesus shared with his contemporaries, but it was only the husk of Jewish eschatology; the kernel, the eternally valid teaching, Jesus’ own unique view, was the “rule of God in the hearts of individuals,” the kingdom within, the present kingdom, which enters the soul through Jesus’ healing and forgiving of sin. As Harnack put it, “Eternal light came in and made the world look new.”

The second item of Jesus’ teaching is “God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul.” Belief in the fatherhood of God is accompanied by the conviction of being a child of God. As one who prays the Lord’s Prayer knows. God is Father and his children feel safe. Even the very hairs of one’s head are numbered. Harnack thought that Jesus was the first to give the individual human soul such value (“What

---

75 Ibid., 51.
76 Ibid., 62.
77 Mt 10:30.
shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" for other religions gave more emphasis to the nation, as did Israel. The theme of “higher righteousness and the commandment of love,” the center of Jesus’ ethical teaching, embraced the whole gospel for Harnack. The “higher righteousness” is the righteousness demanded by the Sermon on the Mount, which is superior to conventional externals of religious worship and technical observance. “You have heard it said . . . but I say to you . . .” What counts is the inner disposition and intention to love God and to love one’s neighbor as oneself with all humility, as is illustrated by the Beatitudes and parables such as the Good Samaritan parable. Whereas the Old Testament God, for Harnack, was a capricious God of fear and judgment, Jesus taught about a God of mercy and love. The result is a golden rule ethic of tremendous civilizing power.

Harnack worked out the specific implications of his Liberal, ethical, civilizing Jesus in four practical areas (the Christian’s relation to the world, to poverty, to public order, and to civilization) and two doctrinal areas (the Christian’s relation to Christology and to creed). In contrast to the view exemplified by monasticism (and praised by the philosopher Schopenhauer and the novelist Tolstoi), Jesus opposed the renunciation of the world. It is true that he countenanced self-denial when he spoke out against riches, excessive attachment to material things, and egoism; but he was accused of being a glutton and a winebibber, he refrained from organizing his disciples into a monastic order, and he encouraged them to continue their occupations and not to leave their wives! Self-denial and asceticism two different things to Harnack, and Jesus did not teach asceticism the Church was later to do.

The social question, too, was handled gently by Jesus. Harnack argued that Jesus was not a social reformer, did not lay down as a program for relief of the poor,

78 Mark 8:36.
79 Mt 5:27, 31, etc.
81 Ibid., 78ff.
82 Mt 10:17-31
83 Mt 6:25ff.
84 Mt 11:19
spoke more of being "poor in spirit"\textsuperscript{85} than of actual economic poverty, and established no foundation? Monastic vows of poverty. “The poor you always have with you,” said Jesus.\textsuperscript{86} Yet Jesus did indicate that the rich would have difficulty entering the kingdom of God, and there were social implication to Jesus’ more individualistic love ethic: Love of God and neighbor le to a spiritual brotherhood that cannot help but benefit the poor.

On the question of public order, or law, Harnack was convinced that Jesus was not a political revolutionary and developed no political program. The realm of God was distinct from the realm of Caesar. Jesus was concerned with the individual’s relation to God, not the nation’s the attempt of the oppressed to achieve rights was ultimately futile, and one was called on to disarm one’s enemies by one’s gentleness. In the end. God would be just.

Similarly, civilization (science and the arts) was not of primary concern to Jesus, for that implies the notion of progress. Moreover, it become of such concern that it is seen as a “work,” or “law,” and that was not the thrust of Jesus’ teaching. One of the errors of Catholicism, thought Harnack, was that it tied itself to medieval civilization!

In the realm of Christology, Harnack did not think of Jesus as the political-national Messiah of Jewish hopes. Jesus’ own “messianic consciousness” centered in self-subjection to God as Son and Jesus' authoritative request to keep his own commandments. God is Father; Jesus is Son: “No man knows the Son but the Father; neither does any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son reveal him,” said Jesus.\textsuperscript{87} The evangelists say that Jesus an inner experience which became the foundation for his conscious as Son at his baptism. He was tempted as Son. Jesus had transferred this to a more spiritual conception of the Messiah, current in some quarters of Judaism, by the time of Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi. His public declaration occurred at the entry to Jerusalem and cleansing of the Temple. Yet Jesus

\textsuperscript{85} Mt 5:3
\textsuperscript{86} Mk 14:7.
\textsuperscript{87} Mt 11:27.
did not proclaim himself to be Son: “The Gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, has to do
with the Father only, and not with the Son.” In other words, Jesus was the way to
the Father, appointed by the Father, and the Judge—but by virtue of what’ said, what
he was, what he did, and what he suffered. The usual ecological conception of the
Messiah (expressed by the apocalyptic Son Man) was the husk; the experience of being
a child of God was the kernel.

Finally, what is the relation between the gospel and doctrine? The gospel, said
Harnack is no theoretical system of doctrine, no Philosophy of the universe, no
theory of nature: rather, it is religion and morality, the inward experience of the
living God along with its confession and practice. Already with early Christianity and
Paul, the shift began to take place from inwardness to ward doctrine. Harnack’s
judgment was:

“.....we are reminded of the fact that, so far as history concerned,
as soon as we leave the sphere of pure inwardness, there is no
progress, no achievement, no advantage of any sort, that has not
its dark side, and does not being its disadvantages with it.”

It is important to see the profound influence that Harnack’s views of Jesus had
on protestant Christianity in the early twentieth century. Though the orthodox
suspected him of heresy, most liberal protestant Christians have been in some way
indebted to Harnack, weather in their historical consciousness, their basic distrust of
an overlay institutionalized religion, their focus on ethics rather than on ritual or
discipline, or their notion that the individual’s religious experience is the heart of
religion. When a Liberal protestant claims “Jesus said....,” What usually follows is an
echo of Harnack’s views.

88 Ibid., 144.
89 Ibid., 187.
3.5

ALBERT SCHWEITZER’S STAND POINT ON JESUS
ALBERT SCHWEITZER’S STAND POINT ON JESUS

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965)\(^9\) was a professional organist, an expert on Bach, a great New Testament scholar, and a medical doctor French Equatorial Africa (modern Gabon). He was honored by numerous universities and learned societies and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952.

Born on January 14, 1875, in the village of Kaysersberg in Upper Alsace (then part of Germany), Schweitzer was soon taken by his family to Gunsbach, where he spent his childhood. This was the home town to which he would later return on his visits to Europe. Schweitzer’s father, Louis, was the pastor of the Gunsbach evangelical Lutheran church, and many of his relatives were pastors, teachers, and organists. By age of nine Albert was displaying enough talent to substitute for organist at the Gunsbach church.

In 1893, when he was eighteen, Schweitzer secured the exceptional privilege of becoming a student of the famous Parisian organist and composer Charles Marie Widor. That same year he entered the University of Strasbourg to study theology. There Schweitzer completed his doctorate in philosophy (on Immanuel Kant) and his work to qualify the position of lecturer, published as The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus’ Messiah ship and Passion (1901). Meanwhile, he continued his theological studies, took piano, and organ, and then after a stay in Berlin, returned to Strasbourg to become part of the pastoral staff at St. Nicholas Church, where he preached. He also made jaunts to Paris to study with Wider.

Nadia has introduced him in these words in her dissertation:

\(\text{فكان اهتمامه الخاص حول طبيعة تعاليم المسيح الأخروي، فقال أن التصور البريدي لشخصية المسيح}\

By 1903 Schweitzer had advanced to the position of principal of Theological College at the University of Strasbourg, all the while playing and publishing Bach’s music. It was in this period that he also began waking on his monumental classic on late eighteenth-and nine-tenth-century study of the life of Jesus, From Reimarus to Wrede (English title- The Quest of the Historical Jesus), and published in 1906. Schweitzer was by now a famous musicologist and theologian; his careers seemed to be set. However, on October 13, 1905, having earlier resolved that at age thirty he would devote the rest of his life to the service of humanity 'he resigned his post at the Theological College and wrote to his parents and most intimate acquaintances to tell them of his decision to enter medical school to prepare himself to become a doctor in French Equatorial Africa. Undaunted by all protestations, he stated a simple rationale: He had taught and preached; now “I wanted to be a doctor that I might be able to work without having to talk.”

In 1911, after six hectic years of writing, playing the organ, and studying, he finished his examinations. He took a year of internship, during which he wrote his thesis (a medical defense of the sanity of his apocalyptic Jesus against the attacks of several psychiatrists), and after racing funds egging from friends and colleagues and by performing, he and his new wife Helen Bresslau, embarked for Lambarene in French Equatorial Africa.

Most of Schweitzer’s life from here on was dedicated to the cure of tropical diseases among black Africans. Yet he continued writing about Bach playing a piano with pedal attachments built especially for the tropics and developing his famous “reverence for life philosophy (he attempted to avoid killing any living thing). Because he and his wife were German, they were confined to their quarters by the French at the outbreak of World War I. The Schweitzer’s were later interned at Garaison in the Pyrenees Mountains and then at St. Remy, after the war Schweitzer gave lectures on

---


92 Schweitzer, Life and Thought, 94.
the philosophy of civilization at the University of up sala, in Sweden. He set off again for Lambarene, where he was to spend most of his life, returning to Europe only to raise money for his hospital.

In October 1948 Schweitzer, now seventy-three, once against visited Gunsbach (and Switzerland, where his daughter lived); in 1949, partly to raise money for Lambarene, he accepted an invitation to give a Speech at Aspen, Colorado, on the two-hundredth anniversary of Goethe's birth. This visit with his wife to the United States made him even more famous, and on subsequent visits to Europe he was besieged by reporters and autograph seekers. He was awarded honorary doctorates from major universities in the United States and Europe, culminating in the Nobel Peace Prize. His wife died in 1957. Schweitzer himself passed away at the age of ninety, in 1965, at the place to which he had dedicated fifty-two years of his life, his beloved Lambarene, where he is Buried Of his many sayings, perhaps the prayer from his early childhood at Gunsbach is a fitting conclusion: “Dear God: Protect and bless everything that has breath, keep them from evil, and may they sleep in peace!”

Did Jesus believe that the kingdom of God would disrupt the natural order of the world? Did he think that it was coming very soon? Did he accept the conception that "messianic woes" (tribulation and suffering) would immediately precede the End? Did he expect a Messiah from heaven, the Son of Man, to come (as the book of Daniel foretells) at the end of the world to judge the nations? Did he think that an Elijah figure would precede the Messiah? Did he actually believe that when the End came, he himself would become the Son of Man? Albert Schweitzer answered virtually all these questions with a firm yes. The view of Jesus for which he is justifiably famous is that Jesus was a thoroughgoing apocalypticist who adopted all these views from the popular Judaism of his time—with the exception of the last, his own messiahship.

Schweitzer’s inspiration about the apocalyptic Jesus went back to a fateful day in the village of Guggenheim when, as a young nineteen-year-old soldier on maneuvers, he was preparing himself to impress H.J. Holtzmann (see page 203) in his

---

93 From his Memoirs, quoted in Picht, Schweitzer, 34.
upcoming examination at Strasbourg. Holtzmann, who was known for his Liberal historical view of Jesus, defended Mark as the earliest and most historical gospel and as the foundation for the view that Jesus had a developing messianic consciousness from the time of his baptism\(^\text{94}\) to the period; when he began to encounter increasing opposition and retreated to Caesarea\(^\text{95}\). There, north of Galilee, he indicated that he was a spiritual Messiah who would suffer and die to consecrate his earthly kingdom, which was represented by brotherly love and ethical concern. There was no room in this Liberal portrait for either a Messiah of radical political opposition to Rome (identified with the Son of David in Schweitzer’s day) or bizarre apocalyptic visions about the end of the world (identified with the Son of Man in Schweitzer’s day). Jesus rejected the political and apocalyptic alternatives in Judaism for his own, more prophetic, spiritual view, said the Liberals. Schweitzer, in contrast, was forcefully struck by Matthew 10 and 11, where Jesus is reported to have sent the disciples on a mission in whom he said they would experience persecution, that is, would be part of the “messianic woes” prior to the end of the world. Jesus also foretold that, before their return, the Son of Man would appear and the messianic kingdom would be revealed. All of this was Jewish apocalyptic, but it did not happen. Schweitzer reasoned that it is unlikely that the early church would have created a prediction like this and placed in it in Jesus’ mouth if Jesus had not really said it. It only remained to indicate how Jesus’ apocalyptic view changed when his mission prediction did not come true.

Schweitzer expressed his insight in his book The Secret of the Messiahship and the Passion: A Sketch of the Life of Jesus (1901) and in The Quest of the Historical Jesus (1906).\(^\text{96}\) He recognized that others had verged on his view, namely, the rationalists Reimarus and Paulus; Strauss- and Wilhelm Baldensperger. Johannes

\(^{94}\) Mark 1:9-11

\(^{95}\) Philippi Mark 8:27.

Weiss, in his classic study Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God (1892), claimed that Jesus believed the kingdom was apocalyptic but that Jesus did not do anything to hasten its coming, for he believed that God would bring in the kingdom. What Schweitzer did was to develop the concept that everything, Jesus thought, taught, and did was motivated by an apocalyptic vision. Today, his view is known as “consistent (or thoroughgoing) eschatology,” a phrase borrowed from the title of the next-to-last chapter in The Quest of the Historical Jesus. Since there are different forms of eschatology a somewhat more accurate description of Schweitzer’s view might be “consistent apocalyptic.” By custom, however, “consistent eschatology” is used and will undoubtedly remain in use.

Schweitzer’s theory was that Jesus’ life and teaching were dominated by an eschatological (apocalyptic) secret first disclosed to Peter, James, and John at the Mount of Transfiguration,\(^{97}\) then to the twelve disciples at Caesarea Philippi,\(^{98}\) and finally to the public at Jesus’ trial.\(^{99}\) The heart of this secret was the combination of apocalyptic eschatology, like that found in the Old Testament (Daniel 7), and ethics, like that found in the Old Testament prophets, especially the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah.\(^{100}\) Thus “ethics” was conceived within the context of the apocalyptic kingdom: it is “interim ethics”, a temporary ethics for the period before the End. But it was not that Jesus simply waited for the kingdom (the idea Weiss developed); ethics meant that by suffering and repentance the kingdom would be brought about. For Schweitzer, the heart of Jesus’ ethics in the Sermon on the Mount\(^{101}\) was repentance. In the mission speech of Mathew 10 and 11, Jesus expected the suffering of the disciples to precede the kingdom. It would come before they returned. When that did not materialize, he shifted the suffering to his own experience, hoping himself to bring about the kingdom. Thus his secret of the passion was that he would take on the “messianic woes,” that he would suffer like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. With

\(^{97}\) See: Mark 9 and parallels.

\(^{98}\) Mark 8:27ff.; Schweitzer transposed the order of these two events.

\(^{99}\) Mark 14:6ff.

\(^{100}\) cp.Isa 52:13-12.

\(^{101}\) Mt 5-7.
the Liberals, Schweitzer believed that Jesus’ views changed. But they did not become “spiritual”; they remained apocalyptic. Jesus’ Messianic Secret was that he believed he himself would become the son of man to judge the wicked and defend the righteous at the inauguration of the kingdom. Part of that secret was that whereas the people questioned whether he might not be the Elijah figure to precede the messiah—this is Schweitzer’s interpretation of the “coming one”—Jesus believed that John the Baptist was the “coming one” and Jesus passion, and Jesus did not become the Son of Man. In the historical sense, Jesus secret of the passion and the Messiah were still mistaken. As a result, the postresurrection church then reinterpreted Jesus’ life and teaching to show that the resurrection had vindicated him, that he had been the Messiah, and that he would return as the apocalyptic Son of man at the End, still to come.

In short, for Schweitzer apocalyptic thought did not lead Jesus to “spiritualize” the kingdom as an earthly kingdom that would be carried on by ethical activity. Schweitzer thought this Jesus was a creation of modern Liberal scholars who wanted a relevant Jesus “like ourselves.” Schweitzer distressed them greatly with his comment. “This historical Jesus will be to our time a stranger and an enigma.” And so he was—for Schweitzer’s epoch. One may well ask whether for succeeding generations, less optimistic torn by war and human suffering, such an image.

He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake side. He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: “Follow thou me!” and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.103

---

102 Mark 11:1ff.; Mt 11:1ff
103 Schweitzer, Quest, 403.
3.6

JESUS CHRIST IN THE CONSIDERATION OF

WILLIAM WREDE
JESUS CHRIST IN THE CONSIDERATION OF WILLIAM WREDE

The life of William Wrede (pronounced Vrada; 1859-1906) was short and rather undramatic. He was born on May 10, 1859, in Buchen, Germany, the son of Ernst and Justine Wrede. In 1862 his father became a Lutheran pastor. After attending grade school in the German villages of Fredelsloh and Gross-Freden, Wrede entered the University of Leipzig in 1877 to study theology. Hermann Schultz, Adolf Harnack, and Albrecht Ritschl were there at the same time as professors; they had a lasting influence on Wrede. Two years later he transferred to the University of Gottingen, and he passed his first university theology exams in 1881. After a year as a teacher in a private school in Liebenburg, Wrede enrolled for two and a half years in the Preachers' Seminary at Loccum, after which he was a tutor at the theological college in Gottingen. He passed his ordination exams in 1887 and at first took a pastorate. After the death of his parents in the same year, he decided to return to academic life, which was much more to his liking. He spent two more years at Gottingen, preparing to qualify as a university lecturer. This he accomplished in 1889 with his study on I Clement (1891), an early Christian writer. In 1893 Wrede was appointed to the University of Breslau (now called Wroclaw in Poland), and shortly thereafter he married a daughter of one of his old professors, Elizabeth Schultz. In 1895 he received a doctorate in theology from Gottingen and was promoted at Breslau. Here he worked until 1906, when he suddenly developed a serious lung disease, which led to a heart disorder and eventually to his death. Whereas Schweitzer had ninety years to make his contributions to humanity, most of them with tremendous health and vitality, Wrede had only forty-seven.

Apart from his dissertation on I Clement and some reviews, Wrede’s career of academic publication was really launched with the appearance of his lectures on the task and method of New Testament theology. Then, in 1901, he published the work

104 W. Bomemann in Christliche Welt 35 (1921), 315, quoted in Pauck, Harnack and Troeltsch, 16-17.
for which he became famous. The Messianic Secret in the Gospels, dedicated to the
person who had so strongly influenced his thought, Albert Eichhorn. His major
studies thereafter were on the Gospel of John (1903), on the authenticity of II
Thessalonians (1903), on Paul (1904), and, as he neared the end on his life, on the
literary riddle of the Book of Hebrews (1906). Two volumes of his collected lectures
and studies were published posthumously in 1907.

In most respects Wrede was a typical representative of the religionsgeschichtliche
Schule, having become well known for his view that Paul was the “second founder of
Christianity.” When Wrede turned to the Messianic Secret in the gospels, he saw
that the idea was different in each gospel and that each should be interpreted
independently. However, going beyond F. C. Baur, he speculated that in the pre
literary oral stages, the early Christian community had created tradition anew. In
contrast to most Liberals and Religionsgeschichtler, he came closer to the ideas of
Strauss and Bruno Bauer in his willingness to state that Mark was further removed
from the actual, historical Jesus: For Wrede Mark elaborated much community
material about Jesus and indeed created a perspective on Jesus by his own portrayal of
him.

You will recall that the Markan hypothesis was the basis for the historical
outline of the life of Jesus and that those who held it thought in terms of Jesus’
progressive, or evolutionary, messianic consciousness, born his baptism to his
revelation to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi. Thus the Messianic Secret was Jesus’
secret interpreted psychological by Liberal historians. For the Liberals, Jesus redefined
messiahship in terms of suffering and dying in a way that had spiritual and ethical
value for the individual believer; for Schweitzer, the heart of the secret was Jesus’
apocalyptic view, which also underwent revision when the end did not come
according to Jesus’ predictions in Matthew 10. For both it was Jesus’ secret, and it
rested on the fundamental historicity of Mark.

105 The following is derived from the English translation by Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York:
106 Ibid., 238.
Wrede, who published his study in the same year as Schweitzer’s secret of the Messiah ship Passion: A Sketch of Jesus’ Life (1901), like Schweitzer opposed the prevailing Liberal view. But Wrede’s view was also opposed to Schweitzer’s, for it denied the historicity of Mark and the claim that the Messianic Secret, was Jesus secret, whether spiritual-ethical or eschatological-apocalyptic. For Wrede, there could not have occurred a turning point of Jesus’ life at Caesarea Philippi, because certain of the disciples knew of Jesus' messianic power from the beginning. In fact, Jesus knew (according to Mark) that he was the son of Man early in the ministry. There were also hints of the coming passion near the beginning. This meant, for Wrede, that there was no messianic development in Jesus’ mind. The psychological explanation was therefore untenable.

Wrede undertook an investigation onto those passages in Mark that portrayed Jesus as concealing his messianic glory or being misinterpreted in his conception of the messiah ship by those who knew him best the disciples. Some passages in Mark indicated that Jesus expelled demons because they recognized him or that Jesus commanded the demons to remain silent about him. In others Jesus commanded those whom he healed of sickness to keep silent about the miracle. Still another key passage portrays Jesus as telling his parables in order to keep outsiders from understanding him, that is, as secret teachings for the initiated. Finally, there are a number of passages in which the disciples, to whom his identity was eventually revealed, persistently misunderstood him. Noting that Matthew toned down this emphasis (especially of 'the disciples' ignorance), that Luke reinterpreted their misunderstanding in terms of the traditional Jewish nationalistic concept of the messiah, and that John was partially dependent on a totally different tradition of the secret, Wrede argued that Mark, too, represented an interpretation. The key to

---

108 Mark 2:19ff.  
109 Ibid 1:24, 34.  
110 Mark 3:11-12.  
111 Mark 1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26.  
112 Mark 4:11-12; cp. 7:17.  
113 Mark 6:52; 8:14-21; 9:10, 19, 32; cp.14-37-41.
Wrede’s view was the resurrection. According to the book of Acts and Paul’s writings, Jesus’ messiah ship was linked with his resurrection. But why would this have been the case if he had already been thought of as the Messiah while he was living? For Wrede, he was not. The resurrection of Jesus was also the key to the Messianic Secret. Mark, for Mark 9:9 read: “And as they were coming down from the mountain [of transfiguration], he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead. . . .” Thus the revelation of the secret Messiah awaited the resurrection; that is Wrede reasoned, it was dependent on the view that Jesus became the Messiah after the resurrection. Thus the early church had read the messiahship back into Jesus’ life. For Mark this explained (said Wrede) why some of the stories he received were messianic and some were not: Jesus’ glory was at points revealed, but he had commanded silence until the resurrection. Mark thus knew the early church tradition of Jesus’ secret messiahship and made use of it to explain the non-messianic stories. Wrede concluded:

“There remains scarcely any other possibility than that the concept of the secret arose at a time when nothing was yet known of a messianic claim by Jesus while upon earth, at a time when the Resurrection was thought to be the beginning of the messiahship...

In my judgment this is the origin of the idea that we have shown to be in Mark. It is, so to speak, a transitional concept, and it can be designated as the aftereffect of the view that the Resurrection is the beginning of the messiahship, as a concept that arose at a time when the life of Jesus is being filled positively with messianic content...

If my deduction is correct, it is of importance for critical examination of the historical life the Jesus itself. If our view could only arise at the time when nothing was non of public messianic claim on Jesus’ part, we seem to have in it a positive historical testimony that Jesus did not actually represent himself as the Messiah. However, this question is not finally answered here.115

114 Acts 2:36; Rom 1:4; Wrede included Phil 2:6-11.
115 Ibid., 240-41
In short, Wrede provided a strong case for the possibility that Jesus did not claim to be a Messiah, for Mark did not write a historical account; more over, “Mark no longer has any real conception of the historical life of Jesus”!

By way of summary, recall against that in 1835 David Friedrich Strauss had caused doubt on the historicity of the gospels and as a consequence had lost his job; Bruno Bauer had caused even more doubt on the historicity of Mark in 1841 and had been required to case lecturing on the subject. In 1901 Wrede was making a strong case for Mark as a document of faith, not a simple historical document, at this time the point was not lost. Albert Schweitzer saw Wrede views as a fundamental alternative to research on the life of Jesus in the nineteenth century, though he believe that it was the wrong one. Bousset, in the religions geschichtliche camp, eventually came to admit Wrede logic on Mark, though he could never accept Wrede radical conclusions with respect to the historical Jesus. Most German critics would follow in Wrede’s footsteps, thereby sidestepping Schweitzer’s solution, what allowing Weiss’s more limited view that Jesus’ teaching was apocalyptic. Thus arise the inside the Jesus spoke of the Kingdom in eschatological (not simply ethical) terms, but that it was not possible to prove that many scholar build on Wrede inside, taking it up and modifying it in the light of for other study.

It is important to examine another scholar who was moving in similar direction, this time a Roman Catholic. He was labeled a “Modirnist”, and because he had been a priest, he was excommunicated from the Catholic Church. First, then, we must describe the general issue of Roman Catholic modernism; than it will be possible to see more clearly why Modernist views of Jesus were such a challenge to the orthodox Catholic status quo. The modernist in question was Alfred Loisy.

116 Ibid., 262.
3.7

JESUS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF RUDOLF BULTMANN
JESUS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF RUDOLF BULTMANN

Rudolf Karl Bultmann (1884-1976) was born on August 20, 1884, in the town of Wiefelstede in northwestern Germany. Rudolf was the oldest of three sons of an Evangelical-Lutheran pastor, Arthur Bultmann, whose father had been a Christian missionary to Sierra Leone, West Africa. His mother, Helene, was the daughter of a pastor in Baden, to the South. When Rudolf was in grade school, the family moved to Rested. From 1895 to 1903 Bultmann attended the Gymnasium at Olden-burg, his father having become pastor there in 1897. Bultmann recalled in his short autobiographical sketch of 1956,

I look back with pleasure on my school years, both in the elementary school and in the Gymnasium. What especially interested while at the latter, in addition to the study in religion, was the instruction in Greek and in the history of German literature? I also avidly attended the theater and the concerts.

One might think from the preceding that Bultmann would have nothing else to say on this subject. Yet some of these statements are from the introduction to a substantial book written in 1926 on Jesus, translated as Jesus and the Ward. On the basis of his form-critical studies, Bultmann located Jesus in the context of Palestinian Judaism and sought to show that as a Jew, he was both like and different from both the eschatological and rabbinic types of Judaism. Like Bousset, Bultmann thought of Jewish eschatology as having two streams, the nationalistic-political stream with its messianic hope in the Son of David, and the apocalyptic stream with its hope in the


119 Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, 8 (originally published in German in 1926).
Son of Man. Jesus rejected the nationalistic eschatology, even though he confined his earthly ministry to the Jewish nation. Thus, for Jesus, the Jew as Jew had no special claim before God\textsuperscript{120}, and Jesus could even picture the Samaritan as putting the Jew to shame.\textsuperscript{121} In contrast, Jesus accepted apocalyptic eschatology. He expected a tremendous eschatological drama, including the coming of a heavily messianic Son of Man, the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment of hell for some and heaven for others. Yet Jesus was unlike the apocalypticists in that he refrained from describing the details of the End and chided those who calculated when it would come or watched for signs.\textsuperscript{122} Such a “reduced apocalyptic” (Bultmann’s well-known phrase) was especially obvious in the main feature of his teaching, the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{123}

Nadia has very vividly introduced Bultmann in the following manner:

\begin{quote}
كان بولتمنن واحداً من أولئك الذين اعتمدوا منهج النقد الشكلي (Form Criticism) الذي يقول أن الأنجيل
كتب حسب أهداف خاصة، وهو السبب في أنها لا توفر حقائق تاريخية كافية لمعرفة حياة يسوع المسيح. إن أفكار

Martin

بولتمنن منفردة في نوعها لأنها خليط من مصادر مختلفة خاصة بالأولووودسكي الجديدة، الفلسفة الوجودية
والثيرالية.

Heidegger

Bultmann believed that the Liberals were incorrect in seeing Jesus idea of the kingdom as directed to individuals and their personal relations with God. In the same vein, he did not think Jesus teaching led to mysticism, pietism, or asceticism. On the one hand, the kingdom was miraculous, coming from beyond (Rudolf Otto: “Wholly Other”); on the other hand it was imminent, or “at hand.” a future event that would have eat bearing on the present. Thus the kingdom would transform the world and its communities. It was not that the world was evil as God Lad created it; rather, under the influence of the Devil and his demons, men had perverted it with evil wills. So Jesus appeared, proclaiming that the kingdom of God was “at hand,” summoning his hearers to repent, warning them of the impending disaster, and proclaiming

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{121} Luke 10:29-37.
\textsuperscript{124} Nadia, Shakhsiah al-Masih fi zil al-Dirasaat al-Naqdia wa al-Gharbiah al-Hadithah, p.143.
\end{flushright}
deliverance to those who heeded his call. He said that the kingdom was already beginning to break in, anticipated in his meals with his disciples, already coming upon those whom Jesus exorcized from the demons, present in the midst of the people, ultimately giving hope to the poor, hungry, and weeping. In short, Jesus was an eschatological prophet challenging his hearers to decide before it was too late; one had to count the cost of following him, realize that this was the last hour, and make the ultimate decision either for or against the kingdom. This decision, said Bultmann, is what Kierkegaard called “Either/Or”.

As to eschatology, then, Jesus was a modified apocalypticist. Yet he was also addressed as “Rabbi” that is, as one who interpreted the law, and in this regard he was related to than other great stream of Palestinian Judaism called rabbinic Judaism. Jesus was like the rabbis in that he taught in the synagogues, gathered disciples around him, and disputed questions of the law with the rabbis forms of argument and their style of teaching in parables. Jesus did not oppose the law, and many of his teachings are represented as being like those of the rabbis; likewise, Jesus did not openly attack temple sacrifices, prayer, alms-giving, and fasting. Yet he was different from the rabbis at least if the later rabbinic sources were representative to the rabbis in Jesus’ time. Rabbis did not associate with women, children, tax collectors, and sinners such as prostitutes; Jesus did. Moreover, Jesus could be found opposing any conventional piety that appeared to him elitist or hypocritical, and on one occasion he was accused of being a glutton and a drunkard in contrast to the ascetic John the Baptist.

Bultmann attempted to delineate the difference between the rabbis and Jesus on the basis of how the law was interpreted. The heart of Jewish interpretation was obedience to the commandments of the whole law simply because they were so commanded; if two commandments conflicted, one attempted to moderate between them in some way. Jesus, on the other hand, discriminated between what he

---

129 Mark 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45.
130 Mt 11:19.
considered essential and what he saw as nonessential. Although at this point Bultmann believed it was quite difficult to separate Jesus’ teaching from that of the early church, he was willing to state that the early church probably represented Jesus’ basic views here. Thus, whereas the rabbis thought of cleanness and uncleanness on the basis of externals (such as contact with a corpse or the menstruation of a woman), Jesus affirmed that cleanness was an internal matter.\textsuperscript{131} Whereas the law commanded assent, Jesus was willing to say, “You have heard it said [in the law] ...., but I say to you. . . .” As Jesus himself opposed his view of the demand of God to the demand of the law, so those who followed Jesus had to do the same. For Bultmann, Jesus’ notion of obedience required choice, or decision; in other words, one’s will had to be in line with the intention of the command. Not simply obedience for the sake of obedience, but radical obedience was indispensable:

Radical obedience exists only when a man inwardly assents to what is required of him, when the thing commanded is seen as intrinsically God’s command; when the whole man stands behind what he does; or better. When the whole man is in what he does, when he is not doing something obedient but (essentially obedient.\textsuperscript{132}

In contrast to a way of thinking that characterized the Greeks or, for Bultmann, many nineteenth-century ethicists, there were no unchangeable standards, no final and absolute forms for Jesus. Every new situation required a new decision, and the now took precedence over the past.

This really means that Jesus teaches no ethics at all in the sense of an intelligible theory valid for all men concerning what should be done and left undone. ... A man cannot control beforehand the possibilities upon which he must act; he cannot in the moment to decision fall back upon principles, upon a general ethical theory which can relieve him of responsibility for the decision; rather, every moment of decision is essentially new. For man does not meet the crisis of decision armed with a definite standard; he stands on no firm base, but rather alone in empty space. This is

\textsuperscript{131} Mark 7:15. 
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 77.
what shows the requirement of the good to be actually the demand of God not the demand of something divine in man, but the demand of God who is beyond man.\textsuperscript{133}

Bultmann then asked whether holding out a promise of reward did not contradict this demand for radical obedience. His answer was that it did, but that in Jesus' teaching the notion was paradoxical: “He promises reward to those who are obedient without thought of reward.”\textsuperscript{134}

In practice, Jesus himself stressed love of God and neighbor, but in such a way that each situation would determine the content of that love. Though one had to be prepared to surrender everything to God that did not necessarily lead to an “ethic” of poverty, asceticism, or renunciation of property. Likewise, Jesus did not make particular pronouncements about courses of social or political action. Neither did he think that emotional love, friendship, or family love was equivalent to the radical demand for love. What he required was “perfection,” that is, the Hebrew notion of “sound,” “whole,” “exact,” or “true,” which Bultmann interpreted to mean complete commitment, without divided loyalties.

Nadia has quoted Bultmann that the bible is not the word of God as she says:

آمن بولتمان أن يسوع المسيح التاريخي كان مركز الوحي الإلهي وأن الكتاب المقدس ليس بكلمات الله بل فيه إمكانية الحصول على هذه العبرة. المهم أن يفهم بولتمان هو أن الله قام بعملية الخلاص عن طريق ابنه يسوع المسيح. ولا يفهم كيف قد حدث ذلك لأن الإيمان بهذا الإيمان يسوع المسيح لا يعتمد على التاريخ كما قال: "إن رسالة يسوع المسيح كانت موجودة قبل لاهوت العهد الجديد فهي ليست جزء منه."\textsuperscript{135}

For Bultmann, then, Jesus was both an eschatological prophet and a rabbi, one who had an eschatological and an “ethical” message. There was an interconnection between the imminent End and the radical demand for love, the proclamation of the kingdom and the demand for “perfection,” the future and the present. Those who have thought of Jesus as an ethical teacher without real concern for eschatology (the Liberals) or as an apocalypticist with only an “interim ethic” (Schweitzer) have not

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 83-84 (with one phrase slightly revised).
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{135} Nadia, Shawksiah al-Masih fi zil al-Dirasaat al-Naqdia wa al-Gharbiah al-Hadithah, p.147.
found the proper balance.\footnote{Ibid., 122.}

The interconnection between prophet and rabbi, between eschatology and “ethics,” between the future kingdom and the present demand for love, had its parallel in Jesus’ teaching of God as both remote and near. Bultmann wrote that in the Hellenistic world God was conceived of as part of the world or identical with the world (pantheism); for Judaism, God had been both remote and near in theory, that is, both transcendent and in contact with nature and history, while in practice, radical eschatological dualism had pushed him so far into the future that his remoteness was stressed at the expense of his nearness. When God became removed from man in Judaism, man was no longer radically conscious of standing before God in sin, but believed that his good works made his sin pardonable. By the same token, he no longer conceived grace (the gift of overcoming sin) radically enough: “... Judaism did not achieve a really unified idea of God, because neither the idea of sin nor the idea of God’s grace is radically conceived.”\footnote{Ibid., 149.} What Jesus did was bring God’s nearness back into unity with his remoteness by announcing that the future kingdom was already dawning during his own ministry. Thus Jesus naively considered God to be taking care of both nature and humanity\footnote{Luke 12:22-31; Mt 10:29-31.}; the remote God came near to man through Jesus’ miracles;\footnote{Luke 11:20} Jesus taught his disciples to pray to the remote God as though he were as close as an intimate Father;\footnote{Luke 11:1-4; Mt 6:9-13.} and he taught them to have faith in miracle and prayer.\footnote{Mt 17:20.} God’s people were therefore children, or sons, and that was not a natural state, but one of God’s choice. In the radicalness of man’s sin, the remote God has come near to him, forgiving him:

Thus it has finally become clear in what sense God is for Jesus God of the present and of the future. God is God of the present, because His claim confronts man in the present moment, and He is at the same time God of the future, because He gives man freedom for the present instant of decision, and sets before him as
the future which is opened to him by his decision, condemnation or mercy. God is God of the present for the sinner precisely because He casts him into remoteness from Himself, and He is at the same time God of the future because He never relinquishes His claim on the sinner and opens to him by forgiveness a new future for new obedience.\textsuperscript{142}

Bultmann’s image of “Jesus” was a combination of the eschatological prophet who taught a reduced apocalyptic centering in the immediate coming of the kingdom of God and a somewhat unconventional rabbi who taught radical obedience (even to the extent of opposing the law) in the face of an ultimate decision. Similarly, God was remote, transcendent, the “Wholly Other”; yet he was near, imminent, the loving Father. On all fronts, Bultmann appeared to be keeping opposites in tension, or (to use a term from existentialism) to be presenting a “dialectic” alternating between future and present, eschatology and ethics, the distant God and the near God. Moreover, form criticism could not be absolutely certain that this was the ‘historical Jesus.’ Such a conclusion was not disturbing to Bultmann; rather, it fit his existentialized Lutheran theology: “Justification by faith” was a risk and was never built on any absolutely secure foundation, including the historical Jesus. Bultmann had wed a very radical form-critical conclusion with a very conservative theology buttressed by his Lutheranism and his existentialism: The church had never rested its faith on the ability to reconstruct the historical Jesus!

Nevertheless, Bultmann did put forth an image of “Jesus.” Built within this image was a factor which both his Liberal and his religionsgeschichtliche teachers had, he believed, sidestepped, but which Weiss and Schweitzer had made the center: apocalyptic eschatology. Likewise, Bultmann took into consideration continuing apocalyptic influences in Paul’s thinking (for example, the second coming of Jesus Christ) alongside Paul’s mythic views as influenced by oriental Gnosticism. Thus, for Bultmann, Jesus and Paul were not as far apart as the religionsgeschichtler had supposed: Even though Jesus’ primary vision was toward the future kingdom of God and Paul’s conception included a past orientation to Jesus Christ himself, both Jesus

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 211.
and Paul presented their messages cloaked in myth, or what Bultmann frequently called “mythology.”

The basic question for Bultmann as a Christian preacher and thinker was the meaning of such mythology for “the modern mind.” Bultmann had already addressed this question in his 1926 book Jesus and the Word and in several subsequent articles. However, in 1941, during the course of the Second World War, Bultmann delivered to pastors of the Confessing Church at Frankfurt a lecture that dealt specifically with the question. Titled “New Testament and Mythology,” this essay and various discussions of it became the center of a controversy among pastors and theologians and provoked comment by scholars in other fields. After the war, it made Bultmann internationally famous. This essay, Bultmann’s responses to criticisms of it, and his clarification of his position to English-speaking audiences in 1958 (Jesus Christ and Mythology) provided the basis for his third major contribution to an understanding of Jesus Christ. For Bultmann, ancient peoples lived in a “mythical” world. They thought of the universe as a three-storied structure with heaven “above,” hell “below,” and the flat earth in the middle. Heaven was the place of God or the gods and various celestial beings, including the angels. Hell was the place of torment, often associated with the and demonic powers. The earth was the place of both ordinary, natural events and of interruptions of the natural course of things by either

---


145 Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology; see note 29.
the demonic powers (resulting in natural catastrophes or human illnesses) or the
divine powers (resulting in miracles of natural deliverance or healing).

These outside powers, moreover, could temporarily determine the course of
nature and history and were beyond the control of humans; ultimately, at the End,
the divine powers would triumph, and the world would return to the paradisiacal
state that had originally existed. In such beliefs, it was thought that the course of
world history would become worse, bringing about divine intervention, resurrection
of the dead, judgment of good and eternal salvation and damnation.

Nadia has very finely described Christian scholars bent of mind about Jesus in
the following words:

For Bultmann, this general way of looking at the world was “mythical.” The
activity of the “powers,” especially of the gods, was considered on the same level as
natural human activity. Apart from their exceptional powers, the gods were viewed in
human terms, as acting like human beings.\textsuperscript{147} This perception led to the following
definition: “Mythology is a way of representing the otherworldly in terms of this
world, the divine in terms of human life, and the ‘beyond’ in terms of the ‘near.’ . . .
[Myth speaks] of the other world in terms of this world and of the gods in terms
derived from human life.”\textsuperscript{148} In myth, the gods and demons are conceived in terms of
space (above, below), time (past, present, future), and cause and effect (interrupting
the normal course of things).

\textsuperscript{146} Nadia, Shaksiah al-Masih fi zil al-Dirasaat al-Naqdia wa al-Gharbiah al-Hadithah, p.220.

\textsuperscript{147} Bultmann was frequently criticized for his view of myth. He responded that he was more concerned
with the conception than the term. Yet he did use that term, and since his definitions were not always
consistent, much discussion has centered on them.

\textsuperscript{148} Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” 10 and note 2; the translation is Bowden’s in
Schmithals, Introduction, 251.
CHAPTER 04

MUSLIM SCHOLARSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST: AN ANALYSIS OF CLASSICAL AND MODERN TRENDS
MUSLIM SCHOLARSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST: AN ANALYSIS OF CLASSICAL AND MODERN TRENDS

The first and foremost thing to be said about Muslim scholarship of Jesus Christ is that there are three significant affirmations in representing the Islamic Jesus. The first affirmation is that Jesus was not divine nor ever claimed to be. Jesus was a human, like every other human born of a woman. He was comprised of flesh and bone, and he made sure that his followers believed the same. He never asked to be called a God, or never claimed that he was to be worshipped. Jesus never claimed divinity, and neither did his earliest followers. Reference to the titles of Jesus, including those that suggest divinity, are really figurative ways of explaining relationship. The second affirmation is that Jesus was a mighty messenger of God, a prophet of God and the Jewish messiah. Jesus had a mission that was to the people of Israel, to Reform Judaism. His messianic message was that of directing people back to the worship of one God, to whom he referred as Father. The third affirmation is that Jesus led of miracles life. The miracles concerning Jesus began with the miracle of his mothers, birth, being born to a woman who was barren. Mary was blessed by to bear Messiah, who was set apart from before conception to be a Messiah, and one who was of the company closest to God. The life that Jesus lived was full of miracles many which are not described. He raised the dead, healed the sick, made the blind to see, and healed the leper, all which were done through him by God. Jesus miraculous life included his near death. God saved Jesus by allowing people to believe that he had died, although he had only fainted and was able to recover in the tomb of Joseph.
4.1

IBN ḤAZM’S SCHOLARSHIP ON JESUS CHRIST
IBN ḤAZM’S SCHOLARSHIP ON JESUS CHRIST

Abu Muhammad ‘Alî bin Ahmad bin Sa’d Ibn Ḥazm was born on November 7, 994 C.E., and died on August 15, 1064 CE. He himself asserts that his family was Persian in origin.¹

Ibn Ḥazm deals with the various aspects of the religious tradition of the Christians in some detail in his Kitâb al-Faṣl in the context of his typology of world views and philosophies of mankind. Except for his sporadic references in terms of comparison and similarities of ideas, beliefs, rituals, and customs, he primarily deals with Christianity at two places.

One of these is part 1 of Kitâb al-Faṣl where Ibn Ḥazm deals with the Christian concepts of God, the Trinity, and Christology, and with the early Christian sects and schisms and the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creed. Here he places Christianity in the fourth category of his religious world-views and philosophies that is, as those who believe in the reality, the creation of the universe and the world, but hold, at the same time, that the Creator and the Providence to be more than one. Despite the Christians’ claims of believing in the oneness of God, in the Israel’s prophets, in the revealed books (such as the Torah and the psalms), and in the religion of Abraham, Ibn Ḥazm justifies his classification on the basis of the Christian belief in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Although the Christians are Ahl al-Kitâb and believe in the prophecy of some prophets, yet their masses and their main sects do not believe in the absolute unity of God (bil-Tawḥîd Muṣarrad/ بالتوحيد مُجَرَّد). Rather, they believe in the Trinity (bal yaqūluṇa bi al-Tathlīth/ بِل يَقُولُونَ بِالثَّلَاثِيْثِ), and hence it is appropriate to deal with their doctrine here in the fourth category because they believe in three eternal beings (Fān-

Similarly, Ibn Ḥazm includes in this category other religious communities such as the Magians (al-Majūs) and the Manichaeans, who are also designated as Ahl al-Kitāb. He justifies their inclusion on account of their belief in eternal beings.⁴

The second place where Ibn Ḥazm deals in detail with Christianity is the Part Two of Kitāb al-Faṣl⁵ where he discusses the Christian scriptures. Here he places Christianity in the sixth category, which represents those who believe in the reality, the creation, and the origin of the universe, and in one Creator and the Providence who sent His prophets to mankind with his guidance; but who, at the same time, accept some prophets and deny others. This group basically embraces all those religious traditions which fall within the Qur’ānic category of Ahl al-Kitāb.

**IBN ḤAZM’S APPROACH TO CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES**

- **The Trinity**

As Ibn Ḥazm’s portrayal of various Christian sets indicates that he had some knowledge of the history of the development of Christian creeds, of the Christian councils, of the controversies in which these sects engaged and of their philosophical and theological differences regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. He believed that despite the differences among these different sects, there was general agreement among them as the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation, which are the essence of Christianity. Ibn Ḥazm addresses himself to the basic Christian doctrine and tries to show that the scriptures of the Christians lack consistency and coherence in respect of these doctrines and fail to provide any dependable philosophical or rational ground for Christianity. His discussion may be mentioned under two categories; scriptural: arguments and rational arguments.

---

³ Ibid., 48.
⁴ Ibid vol. 1, 48.
⁵ Ibn Ḥazm, Kitāb al-Faṣl, 1st ed.
ARGUMENTS FROM THE SCRIPTURES

The followers of all the three monotheistic religious traditions viz. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, share some common rational and religious principles. They all believe in the absolute and simple unity of God, and in His incorporeality and immutability. They also believe that their respective scriptures were revelations from God, were transmitted through the prophets who had received them either verbatim or by some form of inspiration, and that their scriptures were the Word of God in the literal sense of the phrase. On these commonly held scriptural and philosophical principles Ibn Ḥazm bases his critique and refutation of the Christian doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation. In his own words: They (Christians) hold that by God they mean three things: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All three are one and the same thing and each of them is equally the other. To Ibn Ḥazm this sort of thinking is sheer folly and confusion since if the three are one and the same, then what sense is there in calling as the last ‘Father,’ the second as ‘Son,’ and the third as ‘Holy Spirit’. Even the New Testament contradicts this understanding since it reports Jesus as saying: “I will be seated on the right hand of my Father” on one occasion, and on another he said: “but of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the ‘Son,’ but the ‘Father’ only.” Thus in these texts the ‘Son’ is not the same as the ‘Father’. And, as is evident from these texts, the ‘Son’ is less than the ‘Father’ in knowledge and in rank. This deficiency and lack of knowledge characterizes the ‘Son’ as originated, and an originated being cannot be the eternal being. Additionally, there are other texts as well such as Jn.

---

6 The well-known dictum in this regard has been “Sacra Scriptura est verbam”, (Sacred Scripture is the Word of God). Burcatchell notes that “Charles Billuart’s brief on its behalf is not untypical”. See James truncestead Butchaell, Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration since 1910: A review and Critique (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 121; “The attribution of the written Torah to Moses is affirmed by a tannaitic source (quoted in B.B. 146 and Tj, Sot.5-6-end) which relates that the Torah is literally inspired and is the revealed Word of God to Moses.” Encyclopedia Judaica. s. v. “Revelation”.

7 Ibn Ḥazm, Kitāb al-Faṣl, vol. 1, 50.

8 Mt. 24:36.

9 hab.1:13.

10 Ibid., vol. 1, 50. Generally Ibn Ḥazm’s quotations and citations from the Gospels are either in verbatim in Arabic or very close and literal translations. However, in the case of this verse, his
3:35 and Jn. 14:28 that corroborate the fact that the Son is other than the ‘Father’. Once it is proved that the ‘Son’ is different from the ‘Father’, it then follows that both cannot be God the eternal being. He concludes that neither Jesus nor the Son can be God, and that God, cannot be triune.\textsuperscript{12}

Ibn Ḥazm does not find any direct or clear statement in the Christian scriptures that might support the doctrine of the Trinity. He refutes the tradition referring to the psalms or Isaiah from which the divinity of Jesus is often deduced, saying that these do not speak of Jesus at all. In contrast, several passages in the New Testament attest to Jesus being “a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people”, and “a servant of God.”\textsuperscript{13} Nor does Jesus claim himself to be the ‘Son of God’. Rather he calls himself ‘Man’ or the ‘Son of man.’ Ibn Ḥazmalso confute deriving the divinity of Jesus from those verse of the New Testament in which Jesus, addresses God as ‘My Father’, citing several other passages in which God is addressed as the ‘Father’ of Jesus’ disciples. How does Jesus ‘referring to God’ ‘My ‘Father’ qualify him as divine, while the same usage for others does not make them divine.\textsuperscript{14}

Ibn Ḥazm contests the claim that Jesus’ working of miracles is an evidence of his divinity, saying that according to the Judeo-Christian scriptures, other prophets (e.g. Moses, Elijah) were also endowed with miracles and yet they were not considered divine. In Ibn Ḥazm’s view, the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine of the Trinity have rendering seems to be a free translation. His words are: “\textit{sa uq ‘adu ‘an yamini abi}”. “I will be seated on the right hand of my Father”. No verse that describes the exaltation of Jesus is found with the same words. Cf. Mt. 26:64; Mk.14:62; 16-19; Lk.22-69; 20:42-44; Col.3:1; Heb.1:3, 10, 12; 8:1; 12:2; 1 vol. 3:22; Rev.3:21.
\textsuperscript{11} jn.3:35 and Jn; 14:28.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., Vol 1, 56. Here Ibn Hazm cites only Lk. 24:19 to assert that Jesus was a human Prophet of God. But in his critique he hardly lets any passage go unnoticed that somehow alludes to it that Jesus was a created servant and a human prophet sent by God.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., vol. 1, 56. here Ibn Hazam refer only to Mt. 6:9 and Jn. 20:17 to argue that Jesus’ calling God “my father” metaphorical use of the world “father”, and does not necessary imply the dignity of Jesus. But in his critique his citations and references on the subject are extensive. See the section on “theological objections”.
been contrived by the elders of the Church without any scriptural basis, and others followed them blindly and uncritically.\(^5\)

**RATIONAL ARGUMENTS ON THE TRINITY**

It is rather well-known that the early church had to go through a long and complex process for the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. In some sense, it became a criterion of orthodoxy after the council of Chalcedon, in 451 C.E. but its uniform explanation and exposition remained far from reality. According to the Church Fathers the doctrine remained a mystery even to the best minds. They had to find some examples and analogies from nature to make some sense of this complex concept, which later became the subject of philosophical discussion on the Trinity.\(^6\)

To Ibn Ḥazm, these analogies and images are illogical and shallow. At one place, he expressed his opinion in the following words:

"إن كانت الثلاثة متغايرة - وهم لا يقولون بهذا - فقلهم أن يكون في الاب معنى الضعف، أو من الحدوث، أو من النقص به وجب أن ينحظر عن درجة الأب والنقص ليس من صفة الذي لم يزل".\(^7\)

In this statement, he has very finely exposed the reality of the concept of Trinity. Some say that we know by necessity that the Creator and the Originator must be living and knowing. Then it follows from this that God has Life and Knowledge. God’s life is called the ‘Holy Spirit’ and His knowledge is known as the ‘Son’.\(^8\)

Ibn Ḥazm argues that God cannot be described by means of retinal deduction or induction; rather, He describe Himself in the revelations that mankind received from Him. Neither in the New Testament nor in any other scriptures is there a statement describing ‘the Son’ as the ‘knowledge’ of God. Some Christian scholars claim that in Latin the knowledge of the knower is also called his ‘Son’. That,

---

\(^5\) Ibid., vol. 1, t.56.
\(^6\) Ibid., vol`.56. here Ibn Hazam refers only to Mt. 6:9 and Jn.20:17 to argue that Jesus ‘calling God “my father” is a metaphorical use of the word “father”, and does not necessarily imply the divinity of Jesus. But in his critique his citations and references on the subject are extensive. See the section on “Theological Objections”.
\(^7\) Ibn Hazm, Kitab al Fasl, vol.1, p.112-113.
\(^8\) Ibid., vol.1, 56.
however, is not sustainable because the New Testament was not originally written in Latin. The original languages of the old and new testaments were Hebrew and Aramaic, and there is nothing in the Hebrew language implying that the ‘Knowledge’ of the knower is called his ‘Son’. Additionally such a claim and understanding contradict Paul’s words characterizing Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God. Furthermore, if one derives the names of God from his attributes and actions then he also has the attributes of power, hearing, seeing, speech, intellect, wisdom, generosity, etc. Why, then, asks Ibn Ḥazm, should God’s names be derived just from his attributes and actions? If one holds that the ‘power’ of God is the same as His ‘life’, and then His ‘knowledge’ is the same as His ‘life’. If it is claimed that one may have life without having knowledge (e.g. as in the case of an insane person), one might similarly have life argues Ibn Ḥazm, without having power such as the one who has fainted. Finally, if the ‘Son’ is the ‘knowledge’ and the ‘spirit’ is the ‘life’ how can this be reconciled with the claims that Jesus is both the ‘Son’ and the ‘Spirit’? And if Christ is both the ‘knowledge’ of God and the ‘life’ of God how about the belief that Mary gave birth to the ‘Son’ of God? Does this means, then, that Mary gave birth to the ‘knowledge’ of God? To Ibn Ḥazm, therefore, all this is sheer nonsense, and results in confusion. Jesus, he asserts, was endowed with life and knowledge like all the other prophets of God and there is nothing in him to suggest divinity.¹⁹

Ibn Ḥazm also resorts to another speculative argument which is the following:

“Some say that we find all things in two kinds, animate and inanimate. The animate things are again of two kinds, nāṭiq or rational and irrational. This implies that God is ‘Living’ and ‘Rational’ or Ḥayy and Nāṭiq.” ²⁰

In response to that Ibn Ḥazm says:

“First, this categorization applies only to nature and the things that pertain to it. If we see God in the category of animate, things, then He belongs, to the genus of animate beings, and, hence, would be characterized by the limits and characteristics of

---

¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, 151.
animate beings. It will imply that God is composed of genus and differentia. Now, everything composed is limited and every limited thing is originated.”

“Second, this categorization or division in itself is false and refutable. If they have to properly make this division then they should start with the declaration that all things are either ‘jawhar’ (substance) or ‘la jawhar’ (not substance). After this they may categorize God in any of these two kinds. In each case they would commit the folly of describing God as originated and limited. God be exalted that He is described as the creature and originated!”

Ibn Ḥazm also mentions another Argument:

“Some maintain that we know by necessity that God is the perfect. The number three is the most perfect number as it includes in it both odd and even. Hence God is three and should be called as three rather than one.”

At this place, Ibn Ḥazm responds in this manner:

First, God the exalted and the creator is not described with the qualities of completion, perfection, wholeness, etc. These qualities are relative, and occur in terms of comparison and contrast. They apply to a thing as compared to its kind and species. There is no completion or perfection without its opposite, lack of completion or imperfection. But to think of God or describe him in terms of opposites is inconceivable.

Second, this argument implies that every number greater than three is more perfect than three. If the number three is prefect because it includes both odd and even, then every greater number than three becomes more perfect than three because the latter includes odds and even, evens and odd, or odds and evens. This entails that God then should be of infinite number which belongs to the category of the impossible. Third, this argument also contradicts their own belief that God as Trinity is not a triune God. Rather He is both one and three at the same time. If they call

---

21 Ibid., vo. 1, 51-52.
22 Ibid., vol. 1, 52.
God as three in terms of the number three that includes one in it as an odd and a part, the one as a part of the three cannot be the same as three, because a part of the whole cannot be the same whole. To consider of a part of the whole the same as the whole belongs again to the category of the impossible. Fourth, in relation to the concept of perfection in terms of a number, it can be argued that number two is more perfect that three because it includes odd in addition to its being even. Finally, to describe God in a number also implies that God belongs to the category of thins numbered because there is no number without things numbered. The number is always a relative category. If God is one of three as a number then this entails that He is also limited and originated as everything numbered is limited and originated. This sort of argument makes God originated and hence composed.23

Ibn Ḥazm further asserts that God is not called one in the sense of the number one. The term al-Wahid used for God does not mean the number one; rather it means a unique and self-subsistentreality.24

**THE INCARNATION**

In regard to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, Ibn Ḥazm says; they maintain that the divine is united with the human in such a way that the two became one thing. The Jacobites employ the analogy of water mixed with wine. They hold that this unity of the divine and the human is like mixing wine with water and becoming one thing. Nestorians see this unity like the unity of oil and water each maintaining its own nature. Malachite’s use the analogy of fire and a fiery iron bar.25

To Ibn Ḥazm, however the Judeo-Christian scriptures fail to provide any textual proof for these doctrines, or any evidence to support these analogies. His comments are extremely interesting, according to him ‘In their analogy the Melchites commit the mistake of putting accident in substance. According to their analogy, the divine becomes an accident and the human its substance. This is a sheer corruption of

23 Ibid., vol. 1, 52-53.
24 Ibid., vol. 1, 53. 64-65.
25 Ibid., vol. 1, 53.
the concept of God and man. The Jacobites’ view is even more shallow. One may ask then: If the divine became man then Christ becomes human because the divine and man when mixed together became one thing that is Christ and human. In such case, then, there does not remain any divinity in Christ. Similarly, if both Divine and man united became Divine then there is no humanity in the Christ. But if none of the two changes to the other then this is the view of Nestorians and not theirs [the Orthodox]. As for Nestorians, their view in fact boils down to the proposition that in Jesus man remained man and the divine remained divine. If this is the case, then in one sense every human being remains in himself divine and human. So, there does not arise any distinction between Jesus and other human beings.26

About this doctrine Ibn Ḥazm also argues that:

“...Verily what they believe belongs to the category of the impossible because the Eternal does not change into the nature of human, the originated, nor can the originated change to the deity, which is the Eternal. This is impossible in itself....similarly, the human and the originated cannot be in the same place with the Eternal one.”27

THE THEORY OF LOGOS INCARNATION

About the Nicaeno-Constantinopitan theory of Logos Incarnation, which in addition to ‘Father,’ ‘Son,’ and the ‘Holy spirit’, also refers to a fourth entity, ‘the Word’ (al-Kalimah), and which posits that the ‘Word’ was united with the human body, conceived in the womb of Mary and was born to her. Ibn Ḥazm contrasts the text of this creed with28 Jn. 1:14, 3:35, 14:28 and Heb.1:3 and asks. “Is this ‘word’, ‘Father,’ or ‘Son’or ‘Holy Spirit’ or something else and a fourth one? If their response is that this ‘word’ is a fourth thing, then they believe in al-Tarbi’ (Quaternity) rather than in al-tathlith (Trinity). But if they hold that this word is one of the three, then they should come up with evidence for that. Further one may ask them: is this ‘word’ ‘Father’ or ‘Son’? Or is it something else? And with this one may also ask them: who

26 Ibid., vol. 1, 53-54.
27 Ibid., vol. 1, 54.
was conceived in the womb of Mary? In case they hold that this ‘Word’ ‘is’ ‘Son’ who was also conceived in the womb of Mary, then they deny in 1:14 where (‘Word’) is described as ‘God’. But if they hold that this ‘Word’ is ‘Father’ who was also conceived in the womb of Mary, then they deny the formula of their creed where it is clearly admitted that it was ‘Son’ who was conceived in the womb of Mary. If they maintain that ‘the Word’ is both ‘Father’ and ‘Son’, then they deny which maintain that ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are two different things. In addition to all these questions there is another problem: What do they mean by ‘iltahama’ (became flesh)? If it is meant that ‘the Word’ became a human then this goes against the belief of the Nestorians and the Melchites”.  

Ibn Ḥazm drives the argument to what he considers its logical conclusion: “if they hold that it is neither He, nor other than Him, then they have gone mad”.  

He adds:  

“According to your creed, it is ‘Son’ who descended from the heaven and took upon himself the human body with the ‘Holy Spirit’ and became human and was killed and crucified. Was the ‘Son’ before his descending from the heaven an originated creature or an eternal being? Now if their response to this is that the ‘Son’, before his descending from heaven was a creature, then it implies that ‘Father’ and ‘Holy spirit’ are also creatures because they claim that ‘Son’ is the same as ‘Father’, and ‘Holy Spirit’. But if they answer is that the ‘Son’ before his descent was eternal and after his descent became human, this belief then belongs to the category of the impossible—that the eternal being changed into a human and a creature.”  

Concluding, Ibn Ḥazm raises the following questions:  

This incarnate one whom you view is ‘Son’ and in your concept of Trinity, you see this ‘Son’ as ‘Knowledge’ of ‘Father’, the question arises whether this ‘Son’ has knowledge and power, or not? If they respond to this question in the negative, then

---

29 Mt. 24:36, Jn. 3:35, 14:28, ad Heb, 1:3.  
30 Ibid., vol. 1, 54-55 Ibn Ḥazm’s of the Christian rule of faith or Creed is almost the same that Henry Bettenson documents, known as Niceano-Constatinopolitan Creed or the Creed of Jerusalem, describes. See herey Bettenson, documents of the Christian Church, second edition though 2nd edition ed. (London/Oxford University Press, 1963), 36-37 and compel it with Kitāb al-Faṣl, ed.1, 54/55.  
31 Ibid., vol. 1, 55.  
32 Ibid., vol. 1, 56.
their belief in Trinity would become false because the ‘Son’ with knowledge and power cannot be the same ‘Father’ who has knowledge and power. Hence this ‘Son’ is different from ‘Father’ and Trinity is denied. But if their response to the above question is in the positive, then again God does not remind Triune, rather He becomes Five eternal beings, i.e., ‘Father’, his ‘Life’, his ‘Knowledge’, That is, ‘Son’, and added to these are the ‘Knowledge of the Son’ and ‘the power of the Son’ too. The same question should likewise be posed in relation to ‘Holy Spirit’ as the life of the ‘Father’. 33

In sum, to Ibn Ḥazm the Christian scripture does not provide a coherent, uniform, and solid basis for the doctrine of Trinity and Incarnation, nor can those doctrines be sustained. On the basis of philosophical reasoning. Thus, he contends, the Christian religious tradition, as well the Christian creed, are the result of a blind following of the Church Fathers. 34

THEOLOGICAL CRITICISM

Under this section we shall take one of those passages which, according to Ibn Ḥazm’s deny the Christian doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation, and redemption. To him the gospel statements concerning these doctrines are hardly unambiguous and consistent. He selects passages that demonstrate and speak of the humanity of Jesus and describe him as a prophet sent by God who delivered his message and was dependent on him just like other prophets. As Ibn Ḥazm’s references on the subject of Jesus as a human prophet are numerous we have confined our analysis only to those passages that he cites exclusively relating to this subject.

This present section is divided into two parts: part (a) deals with those narratives of the gospels that stand for Ibn Ḥazm a clear proof that Jesus was a human being a prophet servant of God and there was no divinity in him. Part (b) concentrates on those narratives that in his view, deny Christological titles to Jesus in

33 Ibid., vol. 1, 56.57.
34 Ibid., vol. 1, 57ff.
the sense of an incarnate deity or an apocalyptic messiah. Rather, they describe Jesus unambiguously as a human prophet.

THE GOSPELS AND THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

Ibn Ḥazm’s first example relates to Jesus’ visit to his home country. Contrasting, and referring to, Ibn Ḥazm notes three problems. First, these texts state that Jesus had human relatives such as Joseph the carpenter, who was his Father, Mary his mother, four brothers known by their names, sisters, etc. They declare Joseph to be Jesus’ Father’, citing the testimony of his mother. As for Jesus’ mother, Mary, the Muslims, Jews and Christians in general agree that Mary conceived Jesus and gave birth to him in the manner of other women. However, there is a small group of Christians who believe that Jesus entered into Mary through her ears and came out of her vagina. So, how could Mary declare Joseph to be the Father of Jesus if Jesus was born to her when she was a virgin? In Hebrew, it is true, a husband of one’s mother, a foster Father, is also called a Father, but the children of a step Father are not called brothers and sisters in Hebrew. Add the gospels call Joseph’s children ‘Jesus’ brothers and sisters. Again, if these children were from both Mary and Joseph, throw their marriage after the birth of Jesus as the metropolitan of Toledo Elipandus argues, the question attributing human relatives to their deity still remains unanswered. If the word’ brothers’ here means ‘believers in him’ then this attempt at solution is thwarted by where Jesus disciples make a separate group form his relatives. Creates yet another problems by stating that Jesus’ brothers were disbelievers in him, asserts Ibn Ḥazm.

The second problem is raised such as: “And he could do no mighty works there” Such a description cannot suit a deity. Rather, this description fits a creature

---

35 Mt. 13:53-58, Mk.6:1-6, with Lk.4:16-30.
36 Lk. 2:33, 48, 8:19-21, Jn.2:12, 7:5.
37 Lk. 2:48.
38 Jn. 2:12.
39 Jn.7:5.
40 Mk. 6:5a, cf.Mt.13:58.
and a human prophet who does not have any control over God’s Will. In the case of
the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) the Qur’ān directs him:

وَقَالُوا: أَلاَّ أُنْفَقُ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا عَلَيْهِ عَنَّىٓ مِّنْ زَدَةٍ. قُلِ إِنَّا أَلْتَبِيْنَ جَدَّ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّا أَرْضَيْنَ مُنِيبَينُ

“Say, the signs (i.e. miracles) are in the power of God alone; I am but a plain warner”.

The third problem is raised when it is admitted that Jesus had heard people
calling him the ‘Son of Joseph’ and Son of the carpenter, thus ascribing a human
Father to him, but he did not refute them. Either Jesus took this attribution to be true
and hence did not refute or deny it, which goes against the Christian belief; or else
Jesus did not refute it, though it was a lie. This latter implies that he concurred with a
lie, which in turn implies an evil on his apart. In short, all this is tantamount to
confusion and ambiguity in religion (Talbīṣ fī al-dīn) asserts Ibn Ḥazm.

Ibn Ḥazm almost repeats the same objections when he comments on comparing them with, and he remarks that these texts ascribe a human Father and relatives to Jesus. To think of Mary living with Joseph for more than thirteen years in
the same house without having any marital relations raises another problem. Citing
the Qur’ān version of Jesus birth from the Virgin Mary, he concludes that human
relatives are ascribed to Jesus, a husband to Mary etc., because the Christians have
been deceived in their religion by the Jews.

The New Testament scholars are aware of the problem of Jesus relatives,
especially the brothers of Jesus. Not only the Protestants and the Catholics but also
the New Testament scholars are not certain about this exact relationship. To quote
William Albright:

41 29:50.
42 Lk.4:22.
43 Mt.13:55.
45 Lk. 2:41-52.
47 Mt. 33:53-58.
48 Mk. 6:1-6.
50 Ibn Hazam, Kitāb al-Faṣl, vol. 2, 57-59
We know nothing of the brothers of Jesus. How old the tradition is we do not know, but it has been commonly held in both eastern and western Christendom, that the brothers here referred to were either cousins, or children of Joseph by an earlier marriage,\(^{51}\) can be taken to mean that children were born to Mary and Joseph subsequent to the birth of Jesus.\(^{52}\)

Similarly the contrast\(^{53}\) which was noted by Ibn Ḥazm, has also led modern news testament scholars to theories of diverse sources and source criticism.\(^{54}\)

Ibn Ḥazm argues that there is evidence that Jesus does not have control over all things. It is not in his power to make the sons of Zebedee sit at his right and left. Rather, Jesus admits that it belongs to the Father alone to decide. This makes it evident, claims Ibn Ḥazm, that Jesus is different from and other than God, the Father. If both are still to be taken to be deities, it means that they are two different deities; one is stronger and the other is weaker; One has the power to make the sons of Zebedee sit at Jesus right and left and the other has no power to do that. Ibn Haz points out the divergence in passage such as Mt.11:27, 16:19, Jn.3:35, and 13:3, and remarks that one cannot understand while Jesus is unable to grant the sons of Zebedee this honour while it is still claimed that God has handed all authority over to Jesus, and when even Peter has been given the power, to blind and lose at will. Thus, to him, Mt. 20:20-23 clearly indicates that Jesus is different from the Father and hence is a human and not a deity.\(^{55}\) Similarly, quoting Mt.24:36 and Mk.13:31-32, Ibn Ḥazm argues that these texts imply that Christ was other than God:

We are informed in these texts that ‘the Father’ knows something of which ‘the Son’ has no knowledge. The text of the gospels clearly states that even ‘the Son’ does not know ‘that day and the hour of the end of time’. Only ‘the Father’ knows it. By this we know by necessity that ‘the Son’ is other than ‘the Father’. If one knows something of which the other has not knowledge, then it follows from it that the two

---

\(^{51}\) Mt. 1:25.

\(^{52}\) The Anchor Bible: Mathew.

\(^{53}\) Mt. 13:58 and Mk. 56; 5.

\(^{54}\) The Interpreter’s Bible.

are different from each other. Still taking both of them as deities’ results in association of others with God (Shirk). Reason negates there being two deities, one less than the other. Thus it becomes necessarily clear that the one that is deficient in knowledge is a creature and is dependent on God.\textsuperscript{56} Ibn Ḥazm also argues that Jesus is other than God and is different from ‘the Father’ as stated in Mk. 16:19.

This is sheer foolish association of others with God. A lord being taken up by another lord, and being seated at his right hand! These are two lords and two deities one who bestows the honour of seating at his right hand is more sublime than the other who is granted the honour of sitting at the right hand.\textsuperscript{57}

Discussing the tensions, contradictions, and unresolved questions found in the New Testament Christologies, Charlot reaches the same conclusion—i.e. the subordination of God and the otherness of Jesus from God. He is of the view that even the scheme of exaltation of Jesus intended to adopt him to the role of God in the redemptive history devised by the early Church could not do away with the pre-Johannine tradition that emphasizes the subordination of Jesus to God: “God is here clearly distinct from Jesus. Jesus is not God. In the order of all things, Jesus is at the head. But just as the order is subordinate to God, so is Jesus. Jesus is clearly subordinate to God.”\textsuperscript{58}

The narrative that relate Jesus’ pray to God at Gethsemane, and his request to God to remove the cup (death) from him if that conforms to the will of God, provide Ibn Ḥazm with another proof that Jesus was human and other than God. Quoting\textsuperscript{59} Mt. 26:39, Lk. 22:41-45, Mk.14:35-36, Mt.27:46, Mk.15:34, he jests and asks; “Are these characteristics of a deity? Does a deity need the consolation of an angel? A deity prays to another deity to remove from him the cup of death, a deity sweating when he sees his death near and certain, and a deity surrendering himself to another deity.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Charlot, New Testament Disunity, 86.
\textsuperscript{59} Mt. 26:39, Lk. 22:41-45, Mk.14:35-36 Mt. 27:46, Mk.15:34.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibn Ḥazm, Kitāb al-Faṣl, vol. 2, 61. The interpreter’s Bible, see Lk.23-34. See also Mt.11:27 in bols.7 and 8.
He rules out the interpretation that such references are to the human nature of Jesus, insisting that the text clearly states: “The Christ did such and such, The Christ said”, etc., and “The Christ is taken for both natures, divine and human nature together.”

Ibn Ḥazm also finds proof for the humanity of Jesus in Jesus’ prayer to God to forgive his crucifiers “for they know not what they do”. Quoting Lk.23:34 verbatim, Ibn Ḥazm argues that there are two problems. First, whether Jesus is deity or not. Second, why does a deity make a request to another deity to forgive his executioners? This is otherness and differentiation between the deities and the Christians do not believe in such a thing. If Jesus requested their forgiveness from himself, that is folly (hawas). Moreover, and despite all this, avers Ibn Ḥazm, the gospels also claim that God had handed over all authority to Jesus.

Whereas the phenomenon of prayer at Gethsemane and the cry of the dereliction have “given rise to no end” of theological speculation and mysticism and poetry. Jesus’ prayer for his crucifiers is now also considered a later, scribal addition. Lk. 23:34 is omitted in Codex vaticanus, Codex Bezae, and other important ancient manuscripts. Modern New Testament scholars do not regard it as a part of the original gospel of Luke.

Ibn Ḥazm argues that the text of the New Testament itself provides evidence that Jesus’ addressing God as “my father” does not imply his ‘sonship of God’, nor his divinity as such. Rather, his addressing God as “my Father” is a metaphorical usage prevalent at his time. It was also used in the case of Jews, and even in respect to Jesus own disciples. Ibn Ḥazm further argues; Jesus himself asserts that by the use of the term ‘Father’ he means nothing more than what it metaphorical sense implies. He clearly negates any sense of divinity and blasphemy to be inferred from it. Quoting Jn. 10:33-39, with its reference to Ps. 82:6, and comparing it with Jn. 14:8-10, 20, Ibn Ḥazm says that all these texts show that Jesus calling God ‘my Father’ is metaphorical.

---

62 Ibid., vol. 2, .59-61,60; Mt.11:27a, Jn 3:35,13:3.
63 The Interpreter’s Bible, see Lk. 23-34. See also Mt.11:27 in vols.7 & 8.
Jesus also calls God his disciples’ Father. He even teaches them to address God in the prayer as “our Father who is in heaven”. Similarly, quoting phrase from the Lord’s Prayer Ibn Ḥazm questions what makes Jesus’ calling God “my father” imply his sonship? “if this use in the case of Jesus implies sonship, then why it should not be taken in the same sense in the case of the disciples and even in the case of all Jews, who do not believe in Jesus?” And if the Christians still accept and infer this meaning only in the case of Jesus’ and not for others, then it means that they accept Jesus teaching in part, and deny him otherwise. The fact is that God is neither the Father of Jesus nor of anyone else.

In many other places in the gospels, continues Ibn Ḥazm, Jesus also calls himself the ‘Son of man’. It is impossible and a great folly that God should be the Son of man, or be both the Son of man and the Son of God—or that a man begets God. This is the height of foolishness, impossibility and disbelief.

Citing almost the same passages from the gospels (e.g. Mt. 6:9 Jn.14:28, etc.), Reimarus makes the same point centuries later. Like Ibn Ḥazm, he emphasizes that Jesus calling God his father did not imply Jesus divinity. Rather, to address God as Father was a common Hebrew expression at Jesus’ time used to show ones reverence, humility, and utter dependence on the belovedends of God. Explaining the proper meaning of the terms ‘Son of God’, ‘Son of man’, ‘God as Father’, etc., as these were employed in the Hebrew Bible and understood by the Jews and Jesus at this time, Reimarus’ remarks are similar to Ibn Ḥazm’s: And we find that Jesus most frequently and preferably calls himself the ‘Son of Man’ because this appellation demonstrates humility and a disdain of the self, and because Isaiah describes God’s beloved, in whom God has pleasure, by the trait of humility. He frequently calls God his father, but this too was a term customarily used of God at that time by everybody to demonstrate their reverence and veneration He makes no secret of confessing that

---

64 Mt. 6:9, 32, and Jn.20:17.
66 Ibid.,
“the father is greater than I.”⁶⁷ Thus he teaches the disciples to pray only: “Our Father who is in heaven”⁶⁸ but not “Our Father and Son of God”.⁶⁹

Although the modern New Testament scholars do not generally agree with Reimarus’ conclusions—that the New Testament, read critically, does not propound the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption—the difference that he demonstrated between the Old Testament and the Hebrew understanding of ‘Son of God’, and the Greek-influenced Christian understanding of it, is no longer debatable.⁷⁰

**THE GOSPELS AND THE CHRISTOLOGICAL TITLES**

To Ibn Ḥazm, the so-called Christological titles in the New Testament do not necessarily imply the doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. Rather, these terms, properly understood, stand for the humanity and prophethood of Jesus. In this category, Ibn Ḥazm refers to the passages that describe Jesus as full of ‘holy spirit’. Comparing Lk. 4:1 with Lk. 1:15, 41, he asks if John the Baptist and his mother were also filled with the Holy Spirit, just like Jesus, then what preference does Jesus have over them? What Ibn Ḥazm implies here is that if, in Lk. 4:1, Jesus’ becoming full of the holy spirit after his baptism in the river Jordan means that God became incarnate in Jesus, then why should not the same characteristics of John and his mother—i.e., “being full of the holy spirit”—be understood in the same sense? Hence, concludes Ibn Ḥazm, the term ‘Holy spirit’ employed for Jesus here neither means the third person of the Trinity nor that God became incarnate in Jesus.⁷¹ He also cites Lk. 12:10 reported to be the saying of Jesus, which clearly demonstrates that the ‘Son of man’ is different from and other than the ‘Holy Spirit’. Since speaking against one is forgiven, while speaking against the other is not, it becomes evident that

---

⁶⁷ John 14:28.
⁶⁹ Reimarus Fragments, 87
the one is different from the other. Now, if Jesus is the ‘son of man’, then he is not the ‘Holy Spirit’, and vice versa. Pursuing his argument still further, he states that if Jesus still is taken to be both the ‘son of man’ and the ‘Holy Spirit’, then it implies that Jesus lied when he made this statement.\(^\text{72}\)

Reimarus also argues that wherever the term ‘holy spirit’ is employed in the New Testament it commonly means ‘spiritual gifts’ or ‘hot stirrings and drives’ to praise God. Referring to Lk 1:41, 67, 12:10, etc., he also concludes that “there is no concept of special person of God hidden in them (i.e., John the Baptist, his mother and his father, etc.)”.\(^\text{73}\) Questioning the concept of Jesus as a Davidic Messiah, (Mt 22:41-46), Ibn Ḥazm says:

“The Christ is certainly true in his statement and he categorically denies that he is David’s son but the strange thing is that the Christians, who claim themselves to be followers of Jesus, neither deny Jesus’ denial to be the son of David nor refrain from attributing to him descent from David as maintained in all the gospels.”\(^\text{74}\)

What Ibn Ḥazm understands of this passage is that Jesus denied for himself to be taken as David’s son and the Davidic Messiah of the Jewish expectations, a Christological title later invested in the term ‘son of David’ and applied to Jesus. However, until Ibn Ḥazm’s time, either this passage was not understood as a proof of Jesus’ Davidic descent, or Ibn Ḥazm, at least, does not seem to be aware of this. Thus he takes this passage in its obvious and literal sense, and that the Christians are going against this teaching of Jesus and still calling him David’s son.

Modern New Testament scholars are divided in their understanding of the above passage. Bultmann, among others, for instance, believes that the early Church, not Jesus himself, has made the identification of Jesus and the ‘Son of David’. Similarly, Klausner, like Ibn Ḥazm, argues that Jesus’ argumentation implies that he is

\(^{73}\) Reimarus Fragments, 76-98 and 91.
\(^{74}\) Ibn Ḥazm, Kitāb al-Faṣl, vol. 2, 46.

As regards the term ‘son of man’, used by Jesus for himself as employed in the gospels, Ibn Ḥazm cites many such passages from the gospel according to John, and argues that many passages stand as proof that he was a human prophet sent by God to do His Will. Ibn Ḥazm wonders at the confusion and absurdity found in Jn. 5:26-27. To him, it is evident that Jesus sees himself as human albeit bestowed with authority from God, and thus is other than God. Quoting Jn. 6:38-40, 7:16, and emphasizing Jn. 14:28, Ibn Ḥazm asks what can be a clearer expression of Jesus’ servitude and creatureliness then. The import of these verses? Citing Jn. 3:35, 5:15-25, 31, and emphasizing Jn. 6:14, he remarks that though there is no less confusion and contradiction in these passages, it is clear that people at Jesus’ time knew and acknowledged him as a prophet.\footnote{Ibn Ḥazm, Kitāb al-Faṣl, vol. 2, 64-66. See also Sweetman, Islam and Christian Theology, vol. 2, vol. 1, 244-248.} Arguing again from Jn. 8:40 and supporting it with Mt. 12:18 with its reference to Is.42:1-4, Ibn Ḥazm asserts that it is a fact that Jesus was a prophet and a servant of God.\footnote{Ibn Ḥazm, Kitāb al-Faṣl, vol. 2, 67.} Modern New Testament scholars are now conscious of the complexities of the term ‘son of man’ as it is employed in the gospels, and of its having different import and meanings. Brown notes that there are three groups of ‘son of man’ sayings in the Synoptics—referring to (i) the earthly activity of the ‘son of man’, (ii) his suffering, and (iii) his future glory, Parousia, and the authority of Judgment. According to John, there are twelve ‘son of man’ sayings, but none refers to the group one of the Synoptics.

Ibn Ḥazm makes full use of Jn. 8:40 where the term ‘man’ is employed to prove Jesus to be a mere human being. Brown notes:

“This unqualified use of anthropos for Jesus without any implication of uniqueness is not encountered elsewhere in the New Testament. Some theologians have been disturbed by its
implications, perhaps because of Crypto-monophysitic strains in their thought.\footnote{The Anchor Bible; Gospel According to John I-XII.}

Ibn Ḥazm discards many Johannian passages that deal with the notion of the mystical union of disciples with Christ, and their dwelling in Christ, and considers these as sheer confusion and delusion. He considers Jn. 6:53-71 to be composed of lies attributed to Jesus, and of sayings that make no sense. Similarly, Jn. 1: 28, 34, and 36 wherein John the Baptist is reported as having recognized and called Jesus as the ‘Lamb of God’ and ‘Son of God’, fall in the same category.\footnote{Ibn Ḥazm, Kitāb al-Fasl, vol 2, 64-66.}

Likewise, Reimarus rejects the derivation of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption from such Johannine mystical verses, but, unlike Ibn Ḥazm, he does not consider them to be nonsensical. Reimarus explains them as emphasizing the unity of will and love.\footnote{Reimarus Fragments, 98.} Modern New Testament scholars differ in the proper reading of the term, ‘Son of God’, in Jn. 1:34, of its two variants—” This is the Son of God” and “This is God’s chosen one”. Bratton considers the latter as original, and suggests that scribal change can be imagined from the latter to the former, rather than in the opposite direction.\footnote{The Anchor Bible: Gospel According to John I-Xii.}

On the humanity and prophethood of Jesus, Ibn Ḥazm comments on Lk. 24:13-26 and quotes v. 19, emphasizing that the disciples themselves knew Jesus as a prophet: “Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in that this statement of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus was not refuted by Jesus.’ Similarly Ibn Ḥazm stresses Mt. 13:57, Mk. 6:4, Lk. 4:24, Lk. 4:24 to argue that Jesus claimed for himself that he was a prophet sent to his people.He claims that Lk. 24:19 belongs to the true teachings of Jesus and to the true Injil mentioned in the Qur’ān which Allah has preserved from the hands of Christian corruption and alteration.

Ibn Ḥazm also addresses the problem in Christian theology known to modern New Testament scholars and researchers as the ‘Messianic secret’. To him the sayings
that bear the ‘secrecy motif and portray Jesus’ unwillingness to work miracles in public, to reveal his identity, or to show signs except to his believers, not only rob Jesus of his proper function and purpose of prophethood, but also subvert and alter the true notion of prophethood and deprive it of its empirical and rational criterion. Mt. 24:24 and Mk. 13:22 like Dt. 13:1-3, he asserts; open the door to the denial of the prophethood of Moses and Jesus. If the false prophets and anti-Christs, and likewise the magicians, can work the same miracles and show similar signs and wonders, then there is no criterion left for humankind to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Ibn Ḥazm claims:

“To see false prophets and magicians working the same miracles as those performed by the true prophets results in confusion of the truth with falsehood, and there remains no way to distinguish the true from the false. This is corruption and falsification of reality, a denial of necessary truth, and a rejection of the senses." These are not the teachings of Jesus or Moses. Rather, these are the words of someone who is a Hindu (Barahmi) or a Manichaean or someone who neither believes in the prophethood of Moses and Jesus nor subscribes to the true criterion of prophecy."

Ibn Ḥazm raises the same issues in his objections to Mt. 12:38-40, Lk. 4:22-24 and parallels, and Jn. 7:3-5, which imply that Jesus used to hide and refuse to perform his miracles in public. In Jn. 7:3-4 he finds allusion to the fact that people at Jesus’ time recognized true prophets because they performed extraordinary wonders in public. Ibn Ḥazm’s main purpose in finding and demonstrating all these contradictions, tensions, and confusions in the Christological titles and in the mission and status of Jesus, as preferred by the gospels, is to prove that Jesus neither claimed himself to be the Messiah of Jewish expectations nor a redeemer of Christian belief. For him it is a fact that Jesus lived, acted, and preached God’s message as a human prophet, one among many, though endowed with a revealed book and a new Shari‘ah. He claims

---

82 Ibid., vol. 2, 47-98.
83 Ibid., vol. 2, 33, 59, 66.
84 Ibid., and passim.
that all the sayings that portray Jesus otherwise are lies and fabrications against him and his true religion.\textsuperscript{85} Interestingly, Reimarus reaches much the same conclusion as Ibn Ḥazm, viz., that Jesus had never taught the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption or even remotely hinted at the current Christological terms or titles with which the Evangelists and Western Christianity had later invested them. However, Reimarus’ view of the ‘Messianic secret motif’ is totally opposed to that of Ibn Ḥazm. Reimarus attributes the motif to the historical Jesus who, in his opinion, wanted to make the people “more eager to spread the news” by such a scheme. Explaining Jesus’ scheme of the secrecy motif, Reimarus writes: “The more he forbade them, so much the more they proclaimed it”\textsuperscript{86}

Both Ibn Ḥazm and Reimarus base their critiques on the principles of consistency and coherence in the contents of the revealed Scripture, but due to their different concepts of prophecy they reach different conclusions. Modern New Testament scholars, however, discard Reimarus’ observations on the “messianic secret motif”. In his classic study, Wilhelm Wrede showed in 1901 that the secrecy motif employed in Mark, and to a lesser extent also continued by other Synoptists, does not give a factual report of Jesus’ intentions. He suggests that it was the author of the gospel according to Mark who invented this device and applied it to the original material to teach his Christology and theology, which stands in striking contrast with the teachings of the gospel according to John. The author of the Fourth Gospel interpreted Jesus as a vicarious Messiah who was known from the very beginning of his ministry, whereas according to the Synoptists, and especially to Mark (9:9), Jesus concealed his identity as the Christian Messiah until after his resurrection. Charlot maintains that soon after Jesus his parables were misused. They were altered, wrongly interpreted, and even deformed to meet the new situations and new needs of diverse Christian communities. The Greek converts applied their allegorical interpretations to them. This had not only deformed them, but had also often altered their meaning.

\textsuperscript{85} Reimarus Fragments, 144.
\textsuperscript{86} Charlot, New Testament Disunity, 49.
and message. Due to this process of reinterpretation, alteration, and deformation, they became incomprehensible to the Christians. Hence Mark’s remark that “the parables were riddles”. They were not meant “to reveal but to conceal the true message of Jesus from the crowds”. In the words of John Charlot:

A more complete reversal of the function of parables could not even be imagined. One of Jesus’ most effective means of communication had been transformed into a block to understanding. This entailed also a very distinct theology of Jesus’ mission he had been sent, not to proclaim and communicate his message, but to hide it. This was, of course, very different from Jesus’ own view.\footnote{Ibid., 45.}

Some modern New Testament scholars also seem to be in agreement with Ibn Ḥazm in regard to the latter’s contention that Jesus did not employ any of the Christological titles for himself, and, for sure, Jesus did not do so in the sense in which Western Christianity for centuries has understood them and based its doctrines upon them. According to Charlot:

“The original teaching of Jesus was purely theocentric. But quite naturally, the place of Jesus himself was one of the greatest preoccupations of later Christian theology, and various attempts were made to define it. One of the methods of this later theology was to put words into the mouth of Jesus himself and he himself was made to speak about himself, to speculate on his place in redemptive history. No one of the passages in which Jesus is supposed to discuss his theological status—be it that of Messiah, Son of Man, or whatever—can be convincingly shown to be, in fact, from Jesus himself. On the contrary, most modern scholars accept that these passages have been constructed by the later communities as a form of their own theologizing. They speculated by creating stories of his speculations. Jesus himself, as far as the evidence goes, never departed from his purely God-centered preaching.”\footnote{Ibn Ḥazm, Kitāb al-Fasl, vol. 2, 16-17.}
4.2

A STANDPOINT OF IBN AL-ʿARABĪ ON JESUS CHRIST
A STANDPOINT OF IBN AL-‘ARABĪ ON JESUS CHRIST

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Ibn al-‘Arabī, a Sufi mystic, philosopher, poet, and sage, was born on the twenty-seventh of Ramadan in 560 Hijrah, or the seventh of August in 1165 A.D. in Murcia, Spain. His massive influence on Sufism and Islamic thought can be inferred from his epithet, al-Shaykh al-Akbar (the Greatest Master). Ibn al-‘Arabī aprominent teacher and writes many books and treatises including the famous Al-Fātūḥāt al-Makkiyyah [The Meccan Revelations] and Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam [The Bezels of Wisdom]. These two books along with others became the foundation of his teachings and doctrines, such as the doctrine of the Perfect Man and the Seal of the Saints.\(^{89}\)

Historically speaking, during the ‘Abbāsid period, there was an abundan amount of debates between Christians and Muslims regarding various topics of Christianity. Although there is no direct proof that Ibn al-‘Arabī was aware of these debates at the time, it is highly improbable that such an erudite person was oblivious to the issue. In fact, it can be postulated from his writings that he was aware of the debates. In Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, he presents a polemical attitude against Christianity, offering his refutation against the doctrine of the Trinity.\(^{90}\)

During the early ‘Abbāsid period, there were two main types of Muslim opinion regarding the Gospels. The first group accepted most parts of the Gospel. They regarded the Gospels as a genuine record of the teachings of Jesus. However, they believed that the followers of Jesus especially Paul of Tarsus interpreted the Gospels in an erroneous way. The second group accepted small parts or none of the Gospels, arguing that the most part of the Gospels are fraudulent. They blame Christians for interpreting the Gospels literary, instead of understanding the context.


\(^{90}\) Ibn al-‘Arabī argues in chapter, “The Wisdom of Prophecy in the Word of Jesus” of Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam that Christians were misguided for the belief in the deity of Christ. Certainly Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam is not a polemical work; but it contains several passages that contain polemical views about Christianity.
‘Alībin Rabbān al-Ṭabarī is a Muslim convert during the ‘Abbāsid period, who claims to have been converted at the age of 70. Al-Ṭabarī understands Christianity from the inside and accepts the bulk of the Gospels. He wrote a polemical work called, “Refutation of the Christians (Radd ʿala al-Naṣārā), in which he argues that Jesus did not think of himself as the Son of God in an exclusive sense but included himself among his disciples as children of God.91 Al-Ṭabarī was trying to teach Christians to return to the original teachings of Jesus and admit that their tenets had taken them extremely far from their masters true teachings.92

Ibn Ḥazm (d.1064 A.D.) is another writer during the Abassid period, who belongs to the later category of the Muslim scholars. His “Book of Classification of Religious Communities, Sects and Creed” is presented in four volumes, the second of which contains diatribe against the veracity of the Bible, Ibn Ḥazm asserts that the Bible was written by the writers, who did not rely much on actual witnesses of Jesus Christ. He argues that the true gospel was lost, with only fragments of it remaining in the modern gospels.93 Obviously, these fragments are in perfect coherence with the Muslim accounts of Jesus and the rest of the New Testament, which signify the deity of Christ, is either manipulated or misrepresented by the disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Ibn Ḥazm only accepted those parts of the Gospels that are coherent with the Islamic notion of Jesus.

These two categories encompass most opinions of Muslim writers at the time. Although it is uncertain which category Ibn al-ʿArabī would identify himself with, it can be inferred from his writings that he was certainly aware of the issue. In Ḩusūṣ al-Hikam, Ibn al-ʿArabī attempts to identify the core of the problem of Christianity. Ibn al-ʿArabī states that the Christians attributing the miracle of ‘reviving the dead’ to Jesus instead of realizing his true form as the son of Mary is the root of all the problems.94

92 Ibid., 181.
94 Austin, Ḩusus al-hikam, 178.
Although Ibn al-'Arabī had met many people during his life, one of the most influential teachers was Abu al-'Abbās al-'Uryabī. Ibn al-'Arabī recalls his teacher being Christic (īsawī) at the end of his life. On the other hand, Ibn al-'Arabī confesses that he began as an īsawīnīn the beginning, became mūsawī (Moses-like), then hūdī (Hud-like), and Muhammадan at the end. In various parts of his books, Ibn al-'Arabī mentions īsawī and Muhammādan saints. Ibn al-'Arabī shows his master’s proximity to Jesus: ‘Mymaster Abu al-'Abbās al-'Uryabī was on the foot of Jesus’. These īsawī saints are not Christians; however, they claim to experience spiritual relationship with Jesus through the intermediary of Muhammad. In other words, the īsawī saints play a very crucial role in Ibn al-'Arabī’s teachings. He devotes an entire chapter of the Futūḥāt to solely explain these ‘Christ-like’ saints. At the outset, the īsawī saints were applied to the direct disciples of Jesus. Ibn al-'Arabī asserts that these disciples possess two inheritances that are unique to them: one inherited directly from Jesus and the other inherited through the intermediary of the Prophet Muhammad. The necessary condition for the īsawī saints is that they realize the oneness of God. In other words, they have to reject the divinity of Jesus Christ. Ibn al-'Arabī states:

Christians fashion representations of the divinity and turn towards them in order to worship, because the very existence of their prophet proceeded from a Spirit who clothed himself in a form; and so it is to this day in his community. But then came the Law of Muhammad, which forbade symbolic representations. Now Muhammad contains the essential reality of Jesus and the Law of Jesus is encompassed within his own.

Here, Ibn al-'Arabī is criticizing Christians for cherishing a representation of the Divinity, which is Jesus. As stated in the previous chapter, Jesus was conceived by the Spirit of God, which was breathed into Mary by Angel Gabriel. Thus, Ibn al-'Arabī argues that Jesus is merely a physical representation of the Spirit. The Christians

96 Chodkiewicz, Seal of the Saints, 77.
97 Ibid., 75.
98 Ibid., 76.
misconstrued this and began to worship Jesus. Then, Ibn al-ʿArabī introduces the Law of Muhammad, which forbade worshipping symbols. The arrival of the Law of Muhammad, which obviously happened after the advent of Jesus, rectified distorted messages and restored the true monotheism. The first and the foremost requirement for any ʿisawi saints it that they accept this notion; thus these ʿisawi saints are by no means Christians and any arguments suggesting Ibn al-ʿArabī’s conversion or support for Christianity should be negated. Another attribute of ʿisawi saints that distinguishes them from other types of saints is that they inherit ability and characteristics of Jesus. Some of the ʿisawi saints possess the ability to walk on water, but they do not possess the ability to fly through the air. Jesus’ ability to walk on water has been inherited to these saints; whereas Muhammad’s nocturnal Ascension has been inherited to Muhammadan saints. The ʿisawi saints can also be distinguished through their spiritual energy, which operates effectively on men and on things - a probable allusion to the power of Jesus to heal the blind and the lepers and to bring the dead back to life.99

Finally, the last attribute of ʿisawi saints are their love and gentleness. Although all who profess religion must attain these characteristics, the Christic saints are singled out for their compassion and humbleness. Ibn al-ʿArabī also adds that there are ʿisawi saints even to this day. He gives several examples. The first example is ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamandhānī, who was a disciple of Ahmad al-Ghazālī. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, he was accused of being a heretic (zindīq) and was hanged at the age of thirty-three, the same age as Jesus. Many Sufi writers have often said of him: his source was Jesus.100 Another interesting example was Aḥrār, who said of himself as ʿisawi and explains that he has inherited the ability to ‘quicken hearts’, a distinctive ability of Jesus.101 A very recent example of an ʿisawi saint is Shaykh Ahmad al-ʿAlawi,102 who

100 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 82.
101 Ibid., 79.
died in 1935, and his face bore a Christ-like stamp which struck several of his European visitors.

The Christic or ṭṣawī saints are those who became a Muslim; yet inherit from Jesus through the intermediary of Muhammad. The ṭṣawī saints are those Muslim saints who bore similarities with Jesus Christ, as depicted in the Qur’ān and Aḥādīth. According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, each saint resembles one of the prophets at each moment of the saint’s life. For example, Ibn al-‘Arabī confesses that he began as an ṭṣawī, then became mūṣawī (Moses-like), then hūdī (Hud-like) and finally Muhammadan. At each point of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s life, he resembled one of these prophets of God. When someone is called ṭṣawī, it means that the saint has a particular attribute of Jesus that is unique to Jesus such as asceticism, appearance or even the age of death.103 Because these ṭṣawī saints claim to inherit spiritual blessings from Jesus through the intermediary of Muhammad, they do not necessarily conform to the historical Jesus recorded by the Bible.

IBN AL-‘ARABĪ AND JESUS

In early days of his life, Ibn al-‘Arabī names two persons as his teachers: his terrestrial teacher, Abu al-‘Abbās al-‘Uryabī and his celestial teacher, Jesus Christ. Ibn al-‘Arabī confesses that Jesus’ guidance had started even before he met his first terrestrial master. In various parts of his writings, Ibn al-‘Arabī mentions Jesus as his first master. Due to the nature of autobiographical confession, there is no way to prove the validity of his claim; but, Ibn al-‘Arabī recalls the moment of his conversion in several parts of the Futūḥāt:

“It was at his hands’, he states in the Futūḥāt, although without dating the event, ‘that I was converted; he prayed for me that I should persist in religion (din) in this low world and in the other, and he called me his beloved. He ordered me to practice renunciation (zuhd) and self-denial (tajrīd).”104

---

103 Chodkiewicz, Seal of the Saints, 83-86.
Ibn al-‘Arabī speaks as if Jesus were alive next to him. Because Ibn al-‘Arabī claimed to have the ability to recall spirits from heaven, it is plausible that Jesus could have been the first one to visit Ibn al-‘Arabī. As the word ‘conversion’\(^{105}\) implies, this event marks a decisive moment in the life of Ibn al-‘Arabī, renouncing the world and seeking God. Although Ibn al-‘Arabī did not date his conversion experience, it probably took place in his early years, not long after his first revelation. Reinforced by repeated conviction and encouragement from Jesus, Ibn al-‘Arabī decides to repent of worldly life and renounce all material possessions and fully enter the Sufi path. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s renouncement of the world reveals Jesus’ influence, because Jesus is the symbol of asceticism in Islam. However, at that time, I had no [terrestrial] teacher to whom I could entrust my affairs and hand over my possessions.\(^{106}\) At the time, it was a popular practice to entrust one’s belongings to one’s Shaykh. Ibn al-‘Arabī confesses that he did not have a terrestrial teacher to entrust his belongings to; therefore, he entrusts all of his belongings to his father. At the time of his conversion when Ibn al-‘Arabī was fighting to enter the Sufi path, the Spirit of Jesus was the only one there to guide him. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s claim to an intimate relationship with Jesus is also revealed in his confession. He confesses that he became an ‘īsawī saint when he was converted. Claude Addas, the author of the *Quest for the Red Sulphur* explains how Ibn al-‘Arabī became ‘īsawī. He declares that thanks to the spiritual influx (*ruhaniyya*) of Jesus he obtained at the start of his wayfaring the station of the famous Qadib al-Ban, who through his imaginal strength (*quwwat al-khayāl*) had the power to assume any form he desired. Elsewhere he states specifically that in his own case he only assumed either human or angelic forms, never the form of animals.\(^{107}\) In the Qur’ān, Jesus is given several names and attributes: the Spirit of God, the Word of God, the Breath of God and the Mercy of God. Because Jesus was represented in various forms, assuming a representation was a unique ability that only ‘īsawī saints could attain. Inferring from

---

\(^{105}\) Although the Word ‘tubtu’ was translated as converted, this really means ‘I repented’.

\(^{106}\) *Addas, Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 39.

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 47.
the above text, Ibn al-‘Arabī probably attained this ability when he was converted at the hands of Jesus.

**REPRESENTATION OF JESUS IN FUṢŪṢ AL-ḤIKAM**

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s personal relationship with Jesus along with his position as the Seal of the general Saints made the fifteenth chapter of *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* more salient than other chapters of the book. In this chapter, Jesus Christ is described by several names: the Spirit of God, the Word of God, the Breath of God, the Mercy of God, and the Slave of God. The first two names are explicitly used to call Jesus. The third and the fourth name are the Divine names that illustrate the attributes of Jesus. The fifth name, ‘the Slave of God’, demonstrates evident hierarchy between God and Jesus. The main goal of the fifteenth chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* is to teach the readers that the power to create belongs to God. The four names listed above are associated with the power to create. By explaining each of these names, Ibn al-‘Arabī seeks to prove that God is the source of the divine power not Jesus.

**DEFINING THE SPIRIT (RŪḤ)**

The majority of the chapter fifteen is devoted to explaining various models and manifestations of the Spirit (rūḥ) and the way it is imparted to the matter and form, especially its role in Jesus’ miracles and his extraordinary ability to raise the dead. Before the function of the Spirit can be discussed, it is imperative to study the definition of the Spirit defined by the Qur’ān and the Ṣaḥīḥ. In the chapter of Mary, verse 17, Gabriel is called *rubūnā*, which means ‘Our spirit’ - the word ‘our’ referring to God.¹⁰⁸ Instead of saying Gabriel, the Qur’ān uses ‘Our Spirit’ to refer to Gabriel. Sometimes, Jesus is called, ‘the spirit proceeding from Him’.¹⁰⁹ The disciples of Jesus also called him ‘the Spirit of God’ in different Ṣaḥīḥ.¹¹⁰ There are many

---


¹¹⁰ Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 61. In a *ḥadīth* translated by Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 37, Jesus
reasons why the two are called the Spirit of God. When Jesus and Gabriel are called ‘the Spirit of God,’ it does not mean that they are the Spirit of God in essence.\textsuperscript{111} More precisely, it means that Jesus and Gabriel are manifestations or representations of God. If the Spirit of God were Gabriel or Jesus, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) would have been instructed to answer this question differently:

They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration). Say: “The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you. (O men!)\textsuperscript{112}

When the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was asked by the people concerning the Spirit, he is instructed to give a vague answer. Nowhere in the answer can Jesus or Gabriel be found, which implies that neither of them is, in essence, the Spirit. If Jesus or Gabriel were the Spirit, God would have simply instructed the Prophet to say: ‘the Spirit of God’ is Jesus or ‘the Spirit of God’ is Gabriel. Perhaps, rather than trying to define the Spirit, it is better to examine various forms of the Spirit.

**THE FUNCTION OF THE SPIRIT**

There are several places in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, where Ibn al-‘Arabī discusses the function of the Spirit. In the chapter of Noah, Ibn al-‘Arabī briefly discusses the function of the Spirit. Ibn al-‘Arabī writes:

The truth is that the Reality is manifest in every created being and in every concept, while He is [at the same time] hidden from all understanding, except for one who holds that the Cosmos is His form and His identity. This is the Name, the Manifest, while He is also unmanifested Spirit, the Unmanifest. In this sense He is

\textsuperscript{111} The Christian Trinity asserts that the Spirit or the Holy Spirit and Jesus are equal and they are both God.

in relation to the manifested forms of the Cosmos, the Spirit that determines those forms.\footnote{R.W.J. Austin, trans., \textit{The Bezels of Wisdom}, 73.}

Before he introduces this quote, Ibn al-\textsuperscript{2}Arab\textsuperscript{i} begins the chapter severely criticizing those Muslims who claim that God is purely transcendent. He calls them fools and rogues and rebukes them for misunderstanding the core: being like those who believe in part and deny in part. Ibn al-\textsuperscript{2}Arab\textsuperscript{i} explains that God is both Outwardly Manifest and inwardly hidden (\textit{zahir wa batin}). For example, when someone understands a person, one must understand his inner and outer attributes. God, too, has Manifest and Unmanifest attributes. According to Ibn al-\textsuperscript{2}Arab\textsuperscript{i}, what God manifests and does not manifest is determined by His Spirit. In other words, the Spirit of God determines what to manifest and what not to manifest in God and believers. Ibn al-\textsuperscript{2}Arab\textsuperscript{i} quotes a saying from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to elucidate this notion:

\begin{quote}
“In this connection the Prophet said, “Who [truly] knows himself knows his Lord,” linking together knowledge of God and knowledge of the self. God says, \textit{We will show them our signs on the horizons}, meaning the world outside you, \textit{and in yourselves}, self, here, meaning your inner essence, \textit{till it becomes clear to them that He is the Reality}, in that you are His form and He is your Spirit. You are in relation to Him as your physical form.”\footnote{R.W.J. Austin, trans., \textit{The Bezels of Wisdom}, 74.}
\end{quote}

It can be inferred from the passage that God manifests his attributes through human beings both inwardly and outwardly; thus, through the Spirit, God manifests His attributes. Eventually, when a person is repeatedly exposed to the manifestations of God, he will acknowledge that he is ‘His form and He is his Spirit.’ When God declares that He will manifest Himself in a person, they are manifested as inner signs of a devout Muslim. For example, when a Muslim lives a life of prayer, alms-giving and discipline, the person will experience manifestations of godliness and holiness both inwardly and outwardly. An example of inward manifestation could be
overflowing mercy towards others; whereas, an outward manifestation could be greater alms-giving.

The two types of manifestations are the result of the fullness of the Spirit of God in the believer. The three Seals perfectly manifest both inward and outward attributes of God. Jesus is called the Spirit of God, because he is the incarnate form of the Spirit of God. Thus, one principle can be observed; since, Jesus, who is the Spirit himself, manifests the attributes of God perfectly, the attributes are manifested in a believer in accordance with the amount of the Spirit in them. A similar notion is introduced later on when Ibn al-‘Arabi compares the Seal to a mirror. In conclusion, the Spirit of God manifests attributes of God more when the believer is filled by the Spirit more.

Another function of the Spirit revealed in the fifteenth chapter of *Fusūṣ al-Ḥikam* is the unveiling of the function of the Spirit, which must begin from the extraordinary nature of the birth and the conception of Jesus Christ. Ibn al-‘Arabi commences his chapter with the narration:

> “From the water of Mary or from the breath of Gabriel, in the form of a mortal fashioned of clay. The Spirit came into existence in an essence... A spirit from none other than God.”

The virgin conception of Jesus Christ is asserted as adamantly in the Qur’ān as in the Bible. Normally, the conception of a child begins when the water [womb] of a woman and the seed of a man combine. For Jesus Christ, the water of Mary and the Spirit of God combined; thus, the Spirit of God serving as the seed. This is why the Qur’ān and Ibn al-‘Arabi call Jesus, ‘a spirit from none other than God’, equating the Spirit of God and Jesus. The Spirit composes the essence of Jesus. Then, Ibn al-‘Arabi uses the story of Al-Samiri to explain the nature of the Spirit of God.

---

The nature of the Spirit of God is that It gives life. In other words, the Spirit of God has the power to raise the dead. Since Jesus is the Spirit of God, it explains how Jesus performed innumerable miracles. In order to understand the mechanism of the Spirit more precisely, examining the story of Al-Samiri is imperative.\footnote{The text from the Qur’an was translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., \textit{The Meanings of the Holy Qur’an}. 020.087-020.096. In Exodus Chapter 37-38, the Bible narrates a similar story. When Moses went up to the Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, people of Israel were distressed that their leader disappeared for about forty days. Frustrated in horror, they insinuated and threatened Aaron, the cousin of Moses, to make a God they can worship. Unlike the Qur’an, the Bible narrates that Aaron was the one who made the golden calf. Also, Ibn al-‘Arabī states in \textit{Fusus al-Hikam} that the calf bellowed, which appears to imply that the calf was alive. In the Bible, it is clear that the calf was only an object. The Bible also does not appear to suggest Gabriel’s presence or his role in creating the calf.}

The story takes place in the desert with Moses and the people of Israel. Moses climbs up the mountain to ‘meet’ God. Although it is not specified in the Qur’an, the climbing probably took some time, because when Moses finally meets God, He tells Moses that He tested the people of Israel in his absence. God informs Moses that the people had failed, because of a man named Al-Samiri. When Moses disappeared into the mountains, the people of Israel were anxious to have no one to protect them. Al-Samiri suggested the people throw their ornaments into the fire to create a calf idol. Furious at Al-Samiri, Moses rebukes him and asks what he has to say. Then, Al-Samiri gives a peculiar answer that explains the function of the Spirit:

\begin{quote}
He replied: “I saw what they saw not: so I took a handful (of dust) from the footprint of the Apostle, and threw it (into the calf): thus did my soul suggest to me.”\footnote{Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., \textit{The Meanings of the Holy Qur’an}. 020:088.}
\end{quote}

From the Qur’an alone, it is not certain whether the calf was alive or not. It just says that the image of a calf was brought out by Al-Samiri.\footnote{Ibid., 020:088.} Judging from this statement alone, the calf could just be an inanimate idol. The verse above, however, is followed by a statement, “It seemed to low”\footnote{Ibid.} which means that it made a sound of a calf. Ibn al-‘Arabī elaborates further in \textit{Fusus al-Hikam}:...
Thus did al-Samiri arrogate [to himself] some of the influence of the messenger Gabriel, who is a spirit. When he realized that it was Gabriel, and knowing that all he touched would come alive, al-Samiri snatched some of it (his power), either with his hand or with his fingertips. Then he transferred it to the [golden] calf, so that it bellowed, which is the sound cattle make.\textsuperscript{121}

When Al-Samiri saw an “Apostle”, he knew it was Gabriel. Because he was aware of the identity of the Apostle and the power of the Spirit of God, Al-Samiri snatched the dust that was touched by Gabriel and used it to animate the calf the same principle can be applied to the conception of Jesus. During the conception, it was not God who appeared before Mary, but Gabriel, who breathed into the womb of Mary. When Mary’s womb was touched by the breath of Gabriel, she conceived Jesus. From these two events, it can be concluded that the Spirit of God gives life.

The purpose of all this is to show that the power to give life comes from the Spirit not Jesus. When Jesus was conceived by the Spirit of God, he became the Spirit of God. Just like the ‘dust’ touched by Gabriel gave life to the calf, Jesus, when conceived by the ‘breath’ of Gabriel, possessed the power to give life. By illuminating the mechanism of the Spirit, Ibn al-‘Arabi attempts to explain how Jesus performed divine miracles during his life. To further affirm this notion, Ibn al-‘Arabi presents the case of Abu Yazid al-Bistami. Ibn al-‘Arabi says:

When he [Abu Yazid al-Bistami] blew on an ant he had killed and it came alive again. At that very moment he knew Who it was that blew, so he blew [into it]. In that respect he was like Jesus.\textsuperscript{122}

Abu Yazid al-Bistami is a famous Persian Sufi, famed as the “King of the Gnostics” (\textit{Sultan al-‘arifin}).\textsuperscript{123} Ibn al-‘Arabi claims that Al-Bistami could give life to

\textsuperscript{121} Austin, \textit{Fusus al-hikam}, 175.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 179.

The Persian Sufi mystic is famous for his antinomian utterances, such as his claim to have visited the Court of God, his derogatory reference to scholars specializing in traditions of the Prophet as “dead
the dead, just like Jesus, Gabriel and Al-Samirī, highlighting the fact that the ability to quicken the dead is not confined to Jesus. If Gabriel, Jesus, Al-Samirī, and Al-Bisṭāmī all possessed the power to quicken the dead, Jesus should not be called God when they are not. Therefore Jesus is only a representation of the Spirit and the power to give life belongs to the Spirit not Jesus.

Then, Ibn al-ʿArabī explains how the Spirit of God creates life by introducing the concept of actual and imaginal (notional). As mentioned above, Jesus was a combination of the water of Mary and the breath of Gabriel. The water of Mary was ‘actual’ because the actual womb of Mary conceived Jesus. The breath of Gabriel was notional, because in essence, it was the Spirit of God who made Mary conceive not Gabriel or his breath. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, they would be impotent without the power of God working in him. Thus, Ibn al-ʿArabī explains how by combining the actual and the notional, the Spirit of God creates life. The same principle can be implemented to the miracles of Jesus Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

“Thus, bringing the dead to life was attributed to him both actually and notionally. Concerning the former, it is said of him, And He revives the dead, while of the latter, You will breathe into it [the clay] and it will become a bird by God’s leave.”

The clay bird serves as the ‘actual in this miracle, just as Mary’s womb was the ‘actual’ in the conception of Jesus. When God creates a life, there is always a physical form to which God breathes in His Spirit. On the other hand, the breath of Jesus is the notional. The breath of Jesus does not contain any power or life. It is the Spirit of God embedded in the breath of Jesus that creates life. Therefore, in reality, Jesus’ breath is only notional and the Spirit of God is the actual actor of the miracle. Ibn al-ʿArabī summarizes this in one sentence: “It used to be said of him, when he revived the dead, “it is he and yet not he”.

---

124 Austin, Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 176.
125 Ibid., 177.
The name, the Spirit of God, implies several things about Jesus. First, it implies that Jesus was conceived by the Spirit of God, which also indicates the virgin birth. Second, Jesus performed miracles assisted by the Spirit of God. This proves another important point: Jesus’ miracles misled Christians to believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ. Lastly, Jesus is the perfect manifestation of the Spirit of God. As the Seal of the general prophethood, Jesus is perfect before the Eyes of God, which enabled the spirit of God to manifest itself perfectly through Jesus.

**THE BREATH OF GOD**

Another term used to describe Jesus Christ in *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* ‘the Breath of God’. The Breath of God is often mentioned together with the Spirit of God. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, “Accordingly, He shaped him, balanced him, and breathed His spirit into him, which is His breath.”\(^{126}\) The Breath of God is considered almost equivalent to the Spirit. Looking at other parts in *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* helps to construct a better picture of the role of the Breath. In the chapter of Shu‘ayb titled, ‘The Wisdom of the Heart in the Word of Shu‘ayb’\(^{127}\), Ibn al-ʿArabī discusses the function of the Breath:

> The Reality first expressed the Breath, which is called the Breath of the Merciful, from Lordship by creating the Cosmos, which both Lordship and all the Names require by their very nature.\(^{128}\)

Similar to the Spirit of God, the Breath of God also has the power to create. Unlike the Spirit of God whose main function was to impart life to ‘individual’ creations such as humans and animals, the Breath of God is associated with creating the cosmos, though individual creations are included in the cosmos. Ibn al-ʿArabī also says:

> “Because of this the Cosmos has been set forth in the form of its Creator, which is nothing other than the divine Breath.”\(^{129}\)

\(^{126}\) Ibid., 275.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 147.

\(^{128}\) Austin, *Fusus al-hikam*, 148.

\(^{129}\) Austin, *Fusus al-hikam*, 180.
Ibn al-‘Arabi states that the cosmos is ‘nothing other than the divine Breath’, which implies that the essence of the cosmos is the Breath of God. When God was creating the cosmos through His Breath, it made an imprint in the cosmos. In other words, there is a manifestation of the Breath in every creation.

“Thus, the Gnostic sees things in principle and in forms, so being complete [in his knowing]. If, in addition to that, he sees the Breath [of the Merciful], he is perfect as well as complete [in his knowing]. He sees only God as being that which he sees perceiving the seer to be the same as the seen.”

Ibn al-‘Arabi provides an example: When a person kills another person, people often perceive that the murderer is the former. According to Ibn al-‘Arabi, these people are mistaken because they fail to know that it is God in the person who killed the latter. In other words, because God is in everyone, the former and the latter are both simply manifestations of God. The notion assumes that the Breath of God permeated all creations. The true Gnostic, therefore, perceives God in everything he sees, because he sees through the creation and perceives its true Reality.

The pervasion of the Breath of the Reality has another dimension. In chapter three hundred and seventy-one of the Futuhat, there is a long account of the birth of the cosmos in which Ibn ‘Arabi describes the successive appearance of the forms of beings in the original ‘cloud’ (al- ‘ama), which is nothing other than the “Breath of the Merciful One” (nafas al-Rahman). The first being created through the Breath of God is the ‘divine Calamus’, the ‘first Intellect’, who is also called the ‘Muhammadan Reality’, also known as the ‘universal Holy Spirit, the ‘point of balance of the divine Names’. Ibn al-‘Arabi argues that this Muhammadan Reality (Haqiqa Muhammadiyya) is the Reality out of which all things were created. Ibn al-‘Arabi says in Futuhat:

130 Ibid., 235.
131 Chodkiewicz, Seal of the Saints, 68-69.
“Now there was nothing in the dust that was closer to the light, or more disposed to receive it, than the Reality (haqiqa) of Muhammad, which is also called the Intellect. He [Muhammad] is thus the head of all the universe and the first being to come into existence ... And the universe proceeds from his epiphany.”\(^{133}\)

The Muhammadan Reality existed before God created the cosmos. It is the first creation and the source of all creations. The Muhammadan Reality also appears in the last chapter of \textit{Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam}, in the chapter on Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Ibn al-'Arabi stresses the importance of Muhammadan Reality and its relationship with the Prophet:

He is the most perfect creature of the human race. For this reason things begin with him and will be sealed by him: indeed, he was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay; and then [when he manifested himself] through his elemental form, he was the Seal of the Prophets.\(^{134}\)

This passages in the \textit{Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam} provides several important attributes of the Muhammadan Reality. First, he is perfect. Although perfection certainly does not mean divinity in Islam, it suggests that the Muhammadan Reality is not an ordinary creation.\(^{135}\) The second attribute is that he existed before Adam. Again, this shows his superiority over all other creations and his preexistence. Third, the Reality of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the source of all creations. God created all the other creations through the Muhammadan Reality. The last attribute is that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Seal of the Prophets. Muhammad could satisfy all of these conditions because although he existed before Adam, he manifested himself in a physical form in 570 A.D. in Mecca. Therefore, the Prophet is the ultimate genus who contains all other genuses, the supreme father of all creatures and of all men, even though his clayonly appeared afterwards.\(^{136}\)


\(^{134}\) Chodkiewicz, \textit{Seal of the Saints}, 69.

\(^{135}\) Ibn al-'Arabi is also famous for his elitist view on things. His view is manifested in several parts of writings where he clearly states that only the elite will able to understand his notions. But, Ibn al-'Arabi also does not in any way intend to debase the non-elites.

\(^{136}\) Chodkiewicz, \textit{Seal of the Saints}, 69.
Jesus is called “the Breath of God” for several reasons. First, just as he was conceived by the Spirit of God, Jesus was conceived by God’s Breath. According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, the power of the Spirit and the Breath made it possible for him to possess the power to create. Just like the Breath, which became the source of creations, Jesus, in his ministry, served as the source of life for many people: he healed the blind, lepers and the sick and most importantly, raised the dead. On the other hand, just as Jesus was not the Spirit of God in essence, he is not the Breath of God in essence: the Muhammedan Reality is. If Jesus were the essence, the universe would have been created through him yet, Ibn al-‘Arabī clearly states that the Muhammedan Reality was the essence and the first creation of the Breath, which puts Jesus in a secondary position. This further buttresses Ibn al-‘Arabī’s perspective that the power of life does not originate from Jesus but God.

**THE WORD OF GOD**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The famous John 1:1 is one of the few places in the Bible, where Jesus is called the ‘Word of God’. Interestingly, Jesus is mentioned as the Word of God more frequently in Islam. Numerous *Aḥādīth* and various verses in the Qur’ān attest to his epithet. Ibn al-‘Arabī joins his fellow Muslims saying; thus he is [at once] the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the slave of God, and such a [triple] manifestation in sensible form belongs to no other... All creatures are indeed words of God, which are inexhaustible, stemming as they do from [the command] Be, which is the Word of

---

138 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, trans., *The Meanings of the Holy Qur’an*. 004:171. In this verse, Jesus is specifically labeled as ‘His Word,’ ‘His’ meaning God’s, in a *ḥadīth* translated by Tarīf Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 159, it is written: “If you wish, you may repeat what the Possessor of the Word and the Spirit [of God], Jesus the son of Mary, used to say: "Hunger is my seasoning." Here, Jesus is referred to as the Possessor of the Word. This could be interpreted differently from the Word of God, but it has similar implication that Jesus is related to the Word of God. In another rather peculiar *ḥadīth* translated by Tarīf Khialidi, *The Muslim Jesus*, 40, it says: “Jesus passed by a cow which was calving in great distress.” 0 Word of God,” the cow said, "Pray that God may deliver me." Here Jesus is also called as "the Word of God" even by a cow. Although the message of the Hadith may not be such, it is possible to infer from the Hadith that even the animals, the creations of God, referred to Jesus as the Word of God.
First, it is important to understand why Ibn al-‘Arabī calls Jesus the Word of God. When God creates, he speaks. God only needs to speak, “Be”, to create the entire cosmos. That is why Ibn al-‘Arabī says that all creatures are indeed words of God. Jesus, on the other hand, is a purer form of the Word. How Jesus came to be the Word of God starts with his conception. It was the Word of God who permeated Mary to conceive Jesus Christ. “Gabriel was, in fact, transmitting God’s word to Mary, just as an apostle transmits His word to his community. God says, *He is His word deposited with Mary, and a spirit from Himself.*”

Jesus is called the Word of God, because the Word of God created Jesus, which is in accordance with the previous quotation, where Ibn al-‘Arabī says ‘all creatures are indeed words of God’. Every other man is attributed to his formal father, not to God. The case of Jesus is unique, since his body in human form was included in the Word of God, which is not so of other men. When an apostle preaches the words of God, he is obligated to preach the exact words, unaltered and uninterpreted. Then, although the words of God are invisible, the people are obligated to obey these words in a visible way. For example, intangible words of God to perform the *saldh* becomes ‘tangible’ by physically praying. Similarly, when Gabriel imparted the Word of God to Mary, it was the perfect and intangible Word of God. Then, unlike other human beings, who receive their physical from their father, Jesus’ form was included in the Word; thus Jesus became the Word in a tangible form, also inheriting the ability to create. The Word also represents the Law of God. The Words of God usually contain commandments that the commanded ought to obey. As the Seal of the general Sainthood, Jesus manifested the Law of God perfectly through his life, which was possible only because he was the Word himself. Ibn al-‘Arabī, however, highlights that the true essence of the Word is Muhammadan Reality. Another important attribute revealed from the name, “the Word of God” is that Jesus in complete obedience to the Law of God.

---

139 Austin, *Fusus al-hikam*, 179.
140 Ibid., 175.
God. As mentioned above, Ibn al-‘Arabi mentions the perfect nature of the Seal several times in his books. The Seal is asserted as the “scourge of His justice”, “guidance”, “enforcer of the divine laws”, “key to the right direction” and “flaming torch”, which imply that the Seal represents the justice of God. Jesus, as the Seal, who is the incarnate Word of God, will execute perfect justice of God on the Judgment Day. The Merciful (al-Rahmān) is one of the Names of God. According to Tirmidhī’s questionnaire, the true Seal of the Muhammadan Saint knows what the greatest divine name is. Ibn al-‘Arabi chooses “the Merciful” as the greatest name of God. He says:

This is because the divine Wrath, like error, is an accidental [nonessential], all things stemming ultimately from the Mercy, which embraces all things and which has precedence.\(^1\) In another part, Ibn al-‘Arabi writes:

> His Mercy has precedence over His Wrath, which is to say that mercy is attributed to Him before Wrath. Since every [latent] essence has an existence that it seeks from God, his Mercy must embrace every essence.\(^2\)

> “The Merciful” is the greatest name of God. Every name of God originates from the name, “Merciful”. For example, the reason God becomes wrathful towards His creations is because they disobey His commandments. A murder could be an example of disobedience. God will show His wrath towards the murderer, but not simply because the murderer disobeyed one of His rules, but because the person committed an action that is contrary to his primary Name, “the Merciful”. The commandments of God are not just a list of things God wants His believers to obey. The commandments are in perfect accordance with the Nature of God, which is the ‘Merciful’. That is why even the commandments that appear rather peculiar should still be obeyed, because of the faith that His commandments are good and merciful. If God is truly merciful. He must despise those things that contradict His Name. For example, a person who adores a child must hate those who murder and rape children. Therefore, when His creations contradict His Nature, “the Merciful”, God becomes

\(^1\) Austin, \textit{Fusus al-hikam}, 130.

\(^2\) Ibid., 223.
“the Wrathful”. Therefore, the name, “Wrathful”, is a responsive attribute of God; whereas “the Merciful” is the natural or primordial attribute of God.

Although Jesus is not explicitly called, ‘the Merciful’, as it is one of the Divine Names, in various parts of Ḩṣūṣ al-Ḥikām, Ibn al-‘Arabī presents loving, merciful and humble attributes of Jesus. Ibn al-‘Arabī writes:

The humility of Jesus was such that his community was commanded that they should pay the poll-tax completely, humbling themselves, that if any one of them were struck on one cheek, he should offer also the other, and that he should not hit back or seek retribution. This aspect [of his teaching] derives from his mother.¹⁴³

Ibn al-‘Arabī presents two quotations from Jesus to prove his mercy. First, Jesus’ humility is manifested through his command to pay the jizyah. Paying the jizyah implies that the person paying is an inferior or secondary citizen. Commanding his people to pay the tax willingly proves Jesus’ lesson of humbleness and humility. Next, Ibn al-‘Arabī refers to one of the most famous sayings of Jesus - if anyone slaps your right cheek, turn the other cheek also - which is the paradigm of love and humility. Ibn al-‘Arabī explains how Jesus attained the character of mercy. He writes:

This aspect [of his teaching] derives from his mother, since woman is lowly and humble, being under the man, both theoretically and physically.¹⁴⁴

“Humble” and “merciful” are the words that are also shared by the Seal. It is written: “for it is by him that the Reality looks on His creation and bestows the Mercy [of existence] on them.”¹⁴⁵ The Seal is the instrument of God’s mercy to His creations. Even though in the case of Jesus, it is not as explicit, Jesus is considered the manifestation of God’s mercy on this Earth; thereby suggesting that through Him, God is representing His mercy.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 51.
The slave of God is another name Ibn al-ʿArabī uses to describe Jesus. He explicitly says: “Thus he is [at once] the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the slave of God.” The name, “slave of God” offers humanistic attributes of Jesus. Although Jesus is a human in Ibn al-ʿArabī’s perspective, the names mentioned above i.e. the Spirit of God, the Breath of God, the Word of God, and the Mercy of God are all names shared by God. The term, ‘slave of God’, is different from these names because it provides an attribute that is confined solely to humans for God can never be a slave.

A slave is a person whose entire being is submitted to his owner. Complete submission and obedience are expected from slaves. A clear hierarchy also exists between the slave and the owner. In order to affirm such attribute of Jesus Christ, Ibn al-ʿArabī quotes a dialogue between God and Jesus:

*Did you say to the people, “Take me and my mother as gods rather than God?” ...* Jesus replied, emphasizing the divine transcendence. *May You be exalted ...It is not for me ...to say what I have no right to say ... If indeed, I said such a thing, You know of it... only what You commanded me to say ... [So I said], Worship God... My Lord and your Lord.*

Here is a dialogue between God and Jesus without the commentaries of Ibn al-ʿArabī. God inquires Jesus whether he commanded his believers i.e. Christians take him as God. Jesus says that the only one to be exalted is You, who is God. Then, Jesus asserts that if he had said something other than he was commanded to say, God would have known. He emphasizes that he preached to worship God, who is his Lord as well as everyone else’s. Since the command descends according to the regime of ranks, Jesus must be in a lower rank than God. Although the chapter is not devoted to Christian readers, Ibn al-ʿArabī’s desire to rectify Christians and disprove the Christian theology of the Trinity is evident in this passage.

---

146 Ibid., 178.
147 Ibid., 182-183.
148 Ibid.
One of the most important traits of the Seal is servant-hood. It is written: “He is a servant whom God has taken into His charge.” The Seal listens, sees and acts through God, which indicates his total submission to the sovereignty of God. Jesus is called, “the slave of God”, which is a stronger implication of the servant hood. Again, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Jesus contains attributes that are congruent to the traits of the Seal.

Ibn al-‘Arabl uses various names to describe Jesus: the Spirit of God, the Breath of God, the Word of God, the Mercy of God and the Slave of God. By elaborating the nature of these particular names, Ibn al-‘Arabī distinguishes Jesus and God. The Spirit of God gives life to individual creations such as a bird, cow or even a human being. The Breath of God created the cosmos. The Word of God represents both the power to create and the perfect representation of the Law. The Mercy of God manifested in all creations as the act of creating itself is dispensing God’s mercy to His creations. These names were employed to delineate Jesus because Jesus, too, possessed the power to create, lived a perfect life before God, and represented overflowing mercy and love. By revealing the nature of these names, Ibn al-‘Arabī proves that Jesus is a mere instrument of God. The last name, ‘the Slave of God’, summarizes these names. As a slave who is completely submitted to his owner. Ibn al-‘Arabi argues that Jesus never intended to defy himself.

Ibn al-‘Arabī established a unique relationship with Jesus. In fact, Jesus served as one of the most important role models in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s life, being his first teacher and helping him at his conversion. Even Ibn al-‘Arabī’s first terrestrial teacher, Abu al-‘Abbās al-‘Uryabī, was heavily influenced by Jesus; however, the role of Jesus is not confined to these.

---

4.3

A STUDY OF IBN TAYMIYYAH ON JESUS
A STUDY OF IBN TAYMIYYAH ON JESUS

It is very pertinent to know briefly the contents and the method of Ibn Taymiyyah’s *Al-Jawāb al-Sahīh* which contains rich information on Islam, Christianity, and such extinct Islamic sects which were attracted to Christianity. This work was written in 1320 on public demand and in response to a short treatise of 24 pages entitled “A Letter to a Muslim” by Paul of Antioch, the Melkite Bishop of Saida. This treatise, written after due consultation with Church leaders, attempts to establish six points. They claim that: (1) Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not sent to mankind, but rather to the pagan Arabs; (2) Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) extolled Christianity as a religion; (3) previous religions and scriptures bear testimony to the truth and validity of their religion; (4) Christians are monotheists; (5) their belief concerning the Trinity is demonstrable by rational argumentation; and (6) Christianity as a religion is perfected by Jesus who came after Moses and hence they are not in need of any new message or religion.

In response, Ibn Taymiyyah wrote the six volumes published by Daā al-ʿĀṣimah publication, Riyādh. The first volume analyzes the Christians’ claim that Muhammad (PBUH) was sent only to the Arabs of the *Jāhiliyyah* period and argues that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as a messenger for all mankind. The second volume attempts to prove that the Christians distorted (tāḥrīf) their scriptures and altered (tābdīl) the tenets of their beliefs. The third and fourth volumes are devoted to the question of trinity explaining the doctrinal origins of this belief, its theological position, and revelational as well as rational grounds upon which this belief is based. He argues that the doctrine of the Trinity is an innovation unsubstantiated by any authoritative injunctions. In the fifth volume, Ibn Taymiyyah presents epistemological questions on the Trinitarian concept, particularly on the

---

150 Paul of Antioch is called Bulus al-Rahib al-Antaki. He lived in Lebanon between 1140-1180. He wrote “Letter to a Muslim” approximately in the year of 1150 mainly to convert Muslims and hence he adopted quite a conciliatory approach and attempted to show affinity between Islam and Christianity. See [http://www.sjweb.info/dialogo/document/doc-show.cfm?Number=5](http://www.sjweb.info/dialogo/document/doc-show.cfm?Number=5).
logical relationship between the intellectual (‘aql) knowledge and the knowledge obtained from the revealed tradition (naql). The final volume summarises the arguments and concludes by showing the superiority and necessity of Islam, which is a perfect combination of all that is good and just. The book teaches the Muslims and others how to think when studying Christianity. It presents both logical and scriptural arguments in its refutation of Christianity.

In the introduction to the volume, Ibn Taymiyyah makes it clear that his intention is not to list the Christian sects and their historical background, but to analyse their theological positions and concepts of God, Trinity, incarnation and other Christian beliefs. His main objective is to substantiate the distinction between the creator and His creations. Since God is the “Realm of Ideal Being” which is totally other than the realm of actual being or creation, He is really the one and only Transcendent being. His assessments are based both on scriptural and theological analyses.

Though Al-Jawāb al-Saḥīḥ is concerned with Christianity that has deviated from the original teachings of its Prophet, it also discusses some heretical practices among the Muslims. He sought to show that the Christians’ errors in “changing the religion of Christ” were also prevalent among Muslims of earlier generations as well as his contemporaries. Ibn Taymiyyah calls them hypocrites and the innovators. Hypocrites are those who outwardly profess faith in all the teachings of the Prophet (SAS), but secretly loath his message, like the renegades (mulāḥidah) and the Bāṭīnīs. Renegades, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, are in greater error than the Christians, whereas the innovators are those who profess the generality of the message of the Prophet (PBUH) but are confused about the true teachings of Islam. Unless Muslims reject these tendencies toward unverified innovation in theology and practice, they would also depart from the true teachings of the Qur‘ān and hadith.151

Ibn Taymiyyah presents a critique of the Trinitarian theology from an Islamic perspective. He employs both revelation and rational evidence to refute Paul of Antioch’s defense of the concept of Trinity. He did not rely only upon the Qur’anic verses and ahādīb but also quoted relevant passages from the Bible to substantiate his arguments on the inaccuracy of the Trinity.\(^\text{152}\) For Ibn Taymiyyah, this is crucial, since verifications and justifications ought to be based on evidence taken from texts and traditions.

In his theological evaluations and analyses of beliefs and Trinity, Ibn Taymiyyah adopted a consistent methodology. He presents, first, the reasoning and argumentation of Christians, and the background in which the arguments are presented. He quotes the exact wording of what they have stated, chapter by chapter. This is followed by his response and commentaries based upon rational and scriptural verifications and justifications. For instance, in his argumentation against the Christians’ understanding on divine indwelling, he preceded his exposition with the relevant quotation from Paul of Antioch’s writing.\(^\text{153}\) Then, he proceeded with the analysis of each statement and even words cited therein. He refuted the pantheistic idea, that is, *hulul* (divine indwelling) as attributed to Abu Yazid al-Bistami. He substantiated his arguments by citing and explaining relevant Qur’anic verses and *Ahdith* invalidating such concepts.\(^\text{154}\) Ibn Taymiyyah takes the arguments adduced by the Christians and turns the same arguments to prove the error in Christian thinking and to manifest the corrupt nature of their teaching. The same applies to the arguments of hypocrites and the innovators in Islam. He turns the arguments used by the innovators to prove that they are indeed in manifest errors.

\[ذﻛﺮ أﻗﺎﻧﻴﻢ ﷲ، ﻻ ﺛﻼﺛﺔ وﻻ أﻛﺜﺮ، وﻻ إﺛﺒﺎت ﺛﻼﺛﺔ ﺻﻔﺎت، وﻻ ﺗﺴﻤﻴﺔ – ﻻ اﻟﻤﺴﻴﺢ وﻻ ﻏﻴﺮﻩ – ﻓﻠﻴﺲ ﻓﻲ ﻛﻼم اﻷﻧﺒﻴﺎء

شيء ﻣﻦ ﺻﻔﺎت اﷲ اﺑﻨﺎء، وﻻ ﺗﺴﻤﻴﺔ ﺣﻴﺎﺗﻪ روﺣاً، وﻻ أن ﷲ إﺑﻨﺎء ﻫﻮ إﻟﻪ ﺣﻖ ﻣﻦ إﻟﻪ ﺣﻖ ﻣﻦ ﺟﻮﻫﺮ أﺑﻴﻪ، وأﻧﻪ...

\]^152\] See, *al-Jawab al-Sahib*, 310, 350 and 351.


\[^\text{154}\] *Al-Jawab al-Sahib*, 290-310.
The central idea in Ibn Taymiyyah’s argumentation is his conviction that all aspects of the Trinitarian doctrine are contrary to the teachings of all Prophets and even against the teachings of Christ. The Qur’ān denounces the notion that Jesus is God or part of God, but it recognizes Jesus as one of the prophets of God. The Qur’ān says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ ﺟِبْرِيْلَ أَبْنُ مَرْيَمَ اَئَذَانِيُّ مّنْ أَلْهَيْنِيَّ فَلْتَ إِلَى الْمَلاَئِكَةِ الْمَجْدُودَةِ فَأَتِيْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ﻓَقْدَ عَلِيَّتُهُ. فَعَلَّمَنَّهُ ﻓِي نَفْسِهِ وَلَا أَلْمَعْنِهُ ﻓِي نَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ ﻓِيهِمْ ﻣَنْ فَاءِرَ ﻣَنْ أَمَلْفَهُ بِهِ إِنَّ آمِنَوْا ﷺ وَرَأَسُوهُمْ وَزُوُّوهُمْ عَلِيَّهِمْ فَهْيَا مَا ذُكِّرَ فِيهِمْ ﻣَنْ أَنْيَنَى ﻓِيهِمْ ﻳَدُوُّهُمْ ﻏَرِيْبَهُمْ. ۚ أَتَأْتَ عَلَى ﷺ ﺧَبِيرٌ شَهِيدٌ ۚ

And behold! Allah will say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?’ He will say: ‘Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, ‘worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.’

On Trinitarian questions, Ibn Taymiyyah divided his discussions into six sections beginning with the philosophical explanation of Trinity, followed by the divine hypostases (aqlānīm), the incarnation of the divine word in Christ, the ḥulūl (indwelling of God in Christ), the Qur’ānic teaching of Jesus, and lastly on the ittihād (union of God with a creature). The following discussion follows the same sequence.

**EXPLANATION OF TRINITY**

On the explanation of Trinity, Ibn Taymiyyah quotes Paul of Antioch’s claim that “the Muslims reject our belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as well

---

156 Qur’an 5:116-117.
as our view that they are three hypostases, and that Christ is the Lord, God, and Creator.... If they really understood that by this belief of ours we mean that God is something living and speaking, then they would not reject our holding it.”

Ibn Taymiyyah responded by stating that the Christians were only portraying the three hypostases as something philosophical. They seemed to prove the life and speech of God as something proven with observation and reason. However, the belief of these three hypostases had originated from the Gospel where Christ said “Baptise in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” Ibn Taymiyyah said:

“The origin of their belief is what they claim to have been received from revealed religion, not that they have proved the life and speech of God which they then assert by these expressions. But this is what they have claimed in their argumentation.”

Hence, the three hypostases are not something deduced from observation and rational approach. He argues that the Christians’ descriptions of “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” could neither be traceable in the terms used by followers of any religion nor preached by the Prophets. Hence, their explanations contain no religious or rational basis. In fact, to him, all beliefs related to trinity, the divine indwelling and hypostatic union contradict reason. Even the Christians alleged that these beliefs originated from the revealed books and had no rational basis. Hence, these beliefs verify the superiority of the divine Books over the use of intellect. Then, they employed rational methods to explain and substantiate these “revelations.” However, it is discerned that the divine Books did not elucidate any of these doctrines. As a result, the Christians appear to have imagined things that could not be justified. He said:

“They claim that the divine Books have revealed these views and that they constitute a matter beyond reason. They hold this belief to be of a degree beyond that of the intellect. They report that the sacred books, according to their thinking, have delivered

157 Ibid., 255.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid., 256.
These views, not that rational argumentation has indicated them. This is in spite of the fact that there is nothing in the divine Books which indicates such things; rather they contain what proves the contrary.”

This rational absurdity leads to the similarity between the Christians and some heretical Muslims who claimed the authenticity of pantheism and divine indwelling as something beyond reason. For example, the saying of al-Tilimsani the shaykh of the people of pantheism: “Among us there is proven by insight (al-kashf) what contradicts sound reason.”

Ibn Taymiyyah then concluded that both adherents of Christianity and heretical doctrine are just following their teachers blindly. The belief of many people is like that of their Shaykh, who is either well known for goodness or thought to possess goodness but actually do not. The views of all these people are of the same kind as those of the Christians, and some of them are worse than those of Christians.

Ibn Taymiyyah suggests that the Christians themselves differ in explaining the formulation of trinity though they agree that what united with Christ, and dwelled in him, was the hypostasis of the Word. Some of them maintained that the Father is the existence, the son the word, and the Holy Spirit the life. Others maintained that the Father is the existence, the son the Word, and the Holy Spirit the power. To still others, the Father is divine Goodness, the Son the Judge, and the Holy Spirit the All-Powerful. Then, they alleged all attributes of God to be included under these three. Even Arius who was in agreement with the expression “the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,” denied the divine indwelling and hypostatic union on the precept that Christ was merely a servant of God sent by Him like the rest of the messengers.

---

160 Ibid.
161 Ibid., 257.
162 Ibid., 258.
The differences in explaining this formulation led Ibn Taymiyyah to conclude that the hypostases do not permit one to assert the position that God exists, He is living and speaking. He said:

“There are those among them who deny divine indwelling and the hypostatic union, such as the Arians. Arius said that Christ was a servant of God sent by Him, like the rest of the messengers. In agreeing with the others on the expressions ‘the Father, the Son, and the Holy spirit’ he did not explain it according to what controversialists held about hulul and ittihad. Similarly, the Nestorian agree with them on this formulation, and dispute with the Jacobites and Melkites on the belief in the hypostatic union held by the latter groups.”

Ibn Taymiyyah also shows that the belief in Christ as the Son of God either through the regular pattern of sonship or as an intellectual production is more irrational than claiming that God has a wife, for he who gives birth must have a spouse. Those who maintained that God has a spouse will formulate their own argumentation as those who claimed begetting. On both accounts, Ibn Taymiyyah sees a clear contradiction to rational thinking. He then offers a sound interpretation to the terms Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. He asserts that whenever the prophets spoke about God as “Father,” their intention was to imply the mercy of God over the creatures. Here, it means that God is a Creator and one who nurtures mankind by providing sustenance, support and guidance.

Hence, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, there are no implications of a unique relationship between God and Jesus. Their view of Christ as creator is false by revelation and reason and is not mentioned in any of the prophecies which they possess. They try to provide it by producing arguments which do not indicate this at all.

---

163 Ibid., 257.

He also contends that in the biblical books, the Holy Spirit is referred to as one of two things - either the holy angel such as Jibril, or the support and guidance which God implants in the hearts of prophets and upright persons whether or not that was done through the mediation of the angel. Thus, it is not God. Likewise, when Jesus is called “son” in the Gospel, it could be interpreted to mean “he who is reared or nurtured” that is God’s creature. Ibn Taymiyyah even cited the words of Christ to indicate that he did not consider the term “Son” as singularly applicable to himself alone; the words of Christ are “My Father and your Father.” Nevertheless, the Christians make the term “Son” ambiguous by saying that Christ is a son by nature and the others are sons by adoption, when they put Jesus Christ as a part of His substance. Then they say.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only son of God, born of the Father before all ages, light form light, true God form true God, from the substance of his Father, born not created, equal to the Father in substance....He is true God from true God, from the substance of his Father.”

Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that the sound interpretation of “Baptising people in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” would be a command for people to believe in God, the Prophet whom He sent and in the angel by which God sent down the revelation. Since the Christians identified the “Son” with the word of God and the “Holy Spirit with the life of God, Ibn Taymiyyah contends that they had actually committed a corruption to the intended meaning (taḥrif al-ma’-nā) of the texts of their own sacred books.

The divine hypostases, according to the “Letter” by the Paul of Antioch, is that “the three names are one God, one Lord, one Creator, called one from eternity to eternity, one living speaking thing - that is essence, word, and life. We hold the essence to be the Father, who is the origin of the other two. The word is the son who

165 Al-Jawab al-Sahih, 270,
166 Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmuat al-Tawhid (Damascus; MaktabDar al-Bayan, 1992), 9.
is born from Him as the birth of speech from the mind. The life is the Holy Spirit.”

Ibn Taymiyyah analyzes the meaning of “born from God” as follows:

They say about the son that he is born from God. If they mean by that he is a necessary attribute of God, the Holy Spirit would be a second son, since life is also God’s necessary attribute, if they mean that he resulted from God after he had not existed, it would necessarily follow that God be knowing after He had not been. This view, rescinding from its falsity and blasphemy, also necessitates a parallel view of God’s life, that is, that He becomes living after He had not been living.

Ibn Taymiyyah responded that the names of God are numerous as stated in the Qur’ān. Even in the hadith, it is reported that God has 99 names. To limit them to three is definitely wrong. Furthermore, God is living, knowing and speaking from the very eternal since these three resemble God’s perfect attributes. To say that the life is the “Holy Spirit” indicates that He is only living after He had not been. Likewise, to interpret the “Son” as the Word of God implies that He is only speaking after He had not been. Hence, it portrays God’s imperfection.

In addition, the knowledge of God could not be united with Christ since knowledge is an attribute inseparable from the knower and hence, it is impossible that the knowledge of God could be united with Christ without His essence. Likewise, since knowledge is an attribute, it is impossible for an attribute to create or provide sustenance. It is opposed to the Christians’ claim that Christ is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Ibn Taymiyyah also refers to the Nicene Creed, in which he saw an expression of faith in two Gods, especially in the statement: “And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, from the substance of his father.”

---

167 Al-Jawab al-Sahih, 266.
168 Ibid., 268-269.
169 Ibid., 270.
In response, he reasserted that God’s knowledge is an attribute of God, and the attribute itself is not a God. In analyzing the Christians’ claim that Christ was born not created, equal to the Father in substance, he found that this claim is born of confusion. It is because nothing is equal to the Father in substance except a substance, and therefore, the son is supposed to be a second substance while the Holy Spirit should be the third substance. Thus, there will be three substances and three Gods, which indeed contradict the claim they hold for one substance and one God.

**THE INCARNATION OF THE DIVINE WORD IN CHRIST**

Paul of Antioch states that:

> We hold the incarnation of the creative Word of God in a created man and the birth of both together, i.e., the word with the humanity.... If those things which are subtle like the Holy Spirit and other things do not manifest themselves except in those which are solid, would the Word of God who created the subtle things manifest Himself in that which is not solid? Never! In this way Jesus the son of Mary appeared, since mankind is the most exalted of what God created....

Ibn Taymiyyah responded that God’s words are found in the Tawrah, the Gospel, and other speeches. However, Muslims never call any of these words creator, lord or God. He also stated that the Qur’an and other words of God are generically eternal (qadim al-naw’) that is, God is always a speaker by will or He always speaks whenever He wills.

Additionally, Ibn Taymiyyah posed counter arguments against this doctrine by asking which of the two is actually united with the humanity of Christ; the Word with the essence (God) or the Word without the essence. If the first possibility were to be accepted, then Christ would be the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (all Divine). This possibility is incompatible with the revelation, sound reason, and even to the Christians’ perceptions. If the second possibility is accepted, then it would be subject to refutation since the Word itself is an attribute inseparable from its essence, and

---

170 Ibn Taymiyah, Majmd ‘at al-Tawhid, 10; al-Jawab al-Sahih, 86-287.
thus, it does not subsist except in what it describes. Moreover, an attribute itself is not a creating God whereas Christ is perceived to be the creating God. Here, Ibn Taymiyyah portrayed a kind of rebuttal to both possibilities and thus, leads to the invalidity of the so called “divine incarnation of Word in Christ” thesis. About the divine hypostases, Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that the Christian claims of Jesus’ incarnation have neither rational grounds nor revelational evidence. He said:

“The hypostases which they profess besides the falsity of this notion from reason and revelation are never mentioned in any sacred book among them, nor is this expression found in a single one of the books of the prophets which they possess, not in the teachings of the apostles. Rather, this is a term which they have invented, and is said to be ‘Roman’.”

Ibn Taymiyyah further analyzes the Christian theological and scriptural data about the “Divine Incarnation.” He stated that though Christians embrace the truthfulness of divine incarnation, various rational and revelational proofs against divine incarnation are very much prevalent. He quotes Paul of Antioch’s and other Christian theologians’ statements about the divine hypostases and analyzes them for comprehension and correction. To take one example, Paul of Antioch wrote about the “Divine Incarnation” that: “when we see things coming into existence, we know that something other than them has brought them into existence, since it is not possible that they come into existence from themselves, for there is contradiction and fluctuation in them.” Ibn Taymiyyah refutes as follows:

• You have not seen the coming into existence of all created things, but you have only seen those things whose creation in time may be mentioned, such as clouds, rains, animals, plants and the like. Where is your proof for the rest of the things?

• You should have said, “when the coming into existence of temporal things is known, or the creation in time of created things, or the creation in time of all that is other than God” or something like that which makes it clear that what comes

---

into being in time is everything other than God. To affirm absolutely the coming into existence in time of all things is false.

- Knowledge about something created in time demands knowledge of One who brings into being, that is, knowledge of a necessary creator.  

Paul of Antioch states: “In this way God became manifest in Jesus the son of Mary, since mankind is the most exalted of what God created.” Ibn Taymiyyah admits that the prophets often spoke of God’s dwelling on earth, or with His people or in the hearts of believers. However, this dwelling does not mean that the essence of God resides in a person or place. He maintains that elsewhere in the teachings of the prophets, such statements are reiterated as the intellective representation [mental image, similitude] of the knowledge, power, guidance, and love of God resided in believers. Ibn Taymiyyah quotes several Qur‘ānic verses and sound hadith to substantiate his viewpoint.

In addition, Ibn Taymiyyah reasons that if the hulūl were to take place, God will choose to dwell in either the body of Ibrahim or Muhammad rather than in Christ. These two prophets are considered the most exalted of mankind since God took them as special friends (khalīlayn). Hence, preference of divine indwelling would be more noble and reasonable in either of the two khalīlayn. Ibn Taymiyyah is of the view that the error committed by Christians with respect to the divine indwelling is shared by many of the innovators. In fact, he argues that the renegades of Islam are in greater error than the Christians. Hulūl, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, are of two kinds: Universal which asserts that “Allah has taken residence in every place” and in particular in which divine indwelling is claimed for a member of the family of the Prophet or to the Sufi masters and others. Ibn Taymiyyah believes that whoever says that Allah has taken residence in or united with one of the companions of the

172 Ibid., 264.
173 Ibid., 288.
174 He quoted, for instance, from the Qur‘ānic verses 6:3 and 30:28. He also quoted a number of Ahddith al-Qudsiyyah to validate the idea on the dwelling of God’s love and remembrance in man, and not His very essence.
Prophet or one of the Shaykhs is more unacceptable than Christians who hold divine union and indwelling in Christ. This greater error is manifest due to the fact that Christ is superior to all Sufis and companions of the Prophet.

**QUR’ÂNİC TEACHING ABOUT CHRIST**

Paul of Antioch: “In the Qur’an which this man has brought says: The Christ, Jesus the son of Mary, is the messenger of God, His word which He sent down upon Mary and a Spirit from Him.” Allah says in the Qur’an:

> بالله لا تغلوا في دينكم ولا تُقْرِروا على الله إلا آتاه إنا نشاءب عيسى ابن مريم رسول الله وروح منه ألقفنا بهاني السماوات ومن الأرض وَكَفَّى بِالله وَكِتَابهُ ۚ إِنَّ الله يُحَذِّرُ الْجَهَّالِينَ

O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His apostles. Say not “Trinity,” desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah. Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

This agrees with our view, since it bears witness that he is a man like us in his human nature which he took from Mary, and the Word of God and His Spirit united in him, except that the Word and the Spirit of God is creative, while we are creatures. It also says: “They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but it seemed so to them.” Allah says in the Qur’an:

> وَلَمْ يَمُتُّنَّمُن إِنَّا قَفَلْنَا الْمُسْلِمِينَ عِبَادَنَا مَنْ مُنِيَ مَرَّةً وَإِنَّا قَفَلْنَاهُمْ وَرَحْمَةً وَلَعَظْمَانَ شَكْرٌ لَّهُمْ

> إِنَّ الْاَلْبَیْنَ أَخْتَفَلُوا فِيهِ فَلِيُعْلِمُنَّهَا مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِن عَدُوٍّ إِلاَّ أَنْبَأَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ مَنْ قَتَلَوْا يَعْبِدُونَ

175 Qur’an 4:171.
176 Qur’an 4:157.
That they said (boastingly), ‘We killed Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah, but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not.’

From this statement, the Qur’an gives evidence for the divine nature of Christ which is the Word of God, which “neither pain nor scorn could touch ... by this is indicated his divinity.” Ibn Taymiyyah reiterates the same ayah highlighting that the ayah is addressed to the Jews, Here, God cursed the Jews for their allegation that they succeeded in killing Christ. Ibn Taymiyyah vehemently opposed the claim that Muhammad (PBUH) demonstrated the divine and human nature in Christ in his teachings. It is clear that his teachings affirmed the messenger ship of Christ. The Qur’an explains the nature of Jesus’s mission on earth which was like any other prophets as follows:


But said Christ: “O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.” Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the Garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help.

Thus, if any Jews claimed that Muhammad (PBUH) rejected Christ and denied his prophetic mission, it would be like the claim of the Christians. They claim that Muhammad (PBUH) said that Christ was the Lord of the universe that the divine nature united with his human nature. However, Muhammad (PBUH) brought what was revealed to men from God and he declared as unbelievers people who said such things. The Qur’an explains the nature of Jesus who was one of the prophets as follows:

\[\text{Qur’an 5:72.}\]

\[\text{Al-Jawab al-Sahih, 303-304.}\]

\[\text{Muslim Scholarship of Jesus Christ: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Trends}\]
Christ the son of Mary was no more than an apostle; many were the apostles that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how Allah doth make His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!

The preceding *ayah* is also meant for them since they alleged that Mary, the mother of Christ, committed fornication. He also explains the meaning of the word *al-tawaffi* mentioned in the Qur’ān:

\[
\text{إذ قال الله: } \\
\text{أَن يَحْكُمُ عَلَى الْمَأْمُوتِينَ فَتَحْكِيمٌ أَن يَحْكُمُ عَلَى الْمَأْمُوتِينَ }
\]

Behold! Allah says: “0 Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection: Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute.

This verse makes it clear that God, the Almighty, raised Christ from the state of the people of the earth to verify the idea of his descent to earth before the Day of Resurrection, not as the verification of the raising up of Christ’s divine nature as upheld by the Christians.

In the last section dealing with Trinity, Ibn Taymiyyah quotes the writing of Said Ibn Bitriq who stated: “Through union with that one substratum, the substratum of the creative word of God, Christ was one with the trinity by nature of his divinity and one with the people by nature of his humanity. He was not two, but one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for he was it [the divine nature], and he was one with all

---

179 Qur’an 5:75.
180 Qur’an 3:55.
people by combining two different substances—that of the creative divine nature and of the created human nature—by the union in one substance of that of the Word who is a son born from God before all ages and that of the one born of the Virgin Mary at the end of the ages without any separation from the Father or the Holy Spirit.”

In response, Ibn Taymiyyah maintains that the formulation of essential *ittihad* as understood by the Christians portrayed the dependency of God upon the created beings. If the Creator has the creature as His substratum, it leads to the understanding that both the Creator and the creature have subsistence through the other, and hence, each of the two will be in need of the other, which is clear blasphemy and repugnant to reason. Finally, Ibn Taymiyyah offers what he perceived as the correct understanding of *ittihad*. He maintains that *ittihad* which exists between the prophets and upright believers and God is the unity of will and action. This unity enables a believer to desire what God desires, hates what He hates, and do what He commands. Hence, such a believer could be described as metaphorically having a union with God.

**CONCLUSION**

The entire account of Ibn Taymiyyah’s criticism towards the Trinitarian beliefs found in the writings of Paul of Antioch justify the former’s decisive stand in upholding what he perceived as the accurate and authentic teachings expounded by all messengers, especially the one taught by Prophet Muhammad (SAS). His assertion that many of the errors committed by Christians is paralleled by deviations committed by Muslims of earlier generations as well as his own contemporaries signifies his impartiality in assessing the extent of heretical tendencies among the adherents of both religions.

Ibn Taymiyyah’s approach in employing both revelation and reason to invalidate all aspects of Trinitarian beliefs is in conformity with Islamic commandments. Islam is a religion which encourages the use of sound mind, on the premise that the mind (*aql*), if used accordingly, will bring one to the truth. Thus, in numerous verses of the Qur’ān, God exhorts the importance to activate one’s mind,
particularly in proving His Own Existence and Singularity. However, the rational approach could not be utilized to visualize or to perceive His very Essence, lest the Muslims will fall under the same category with those Christians who visualize God in Christ or even those adherents of other religions including the pagan Arabs during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who visualized God through the created beings.
4.4

JESUS CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY: A VIEWPOINT
OFRAḤMATULLĀH KAIRĀNWĪ
**JESUS CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY: A VIEWPOINT OF RAḤMATULLĀḤ KAIRĀNWĪ**

It was Maulanā Raḥmatullāḥ Kairānwī who regained the lost initiative. In the introductions to several of his books he mentioned the reasons which had prompted him to take up ʿAlī-Ḥasan’s role. He reviewed the sequence of events since the arrival of the British and emphasized the opinion by then current among the ʿulamaʿ that British policy had recently undergone a significant change of direction on the question of religion. He had no complaint about the first phase of British rule and even tendered moderate praise to the good organization and sense of security which the British presence had at first guaranteed. But the touchstone of this security had been the fact that there was no religious proselytism. He identified the beginning of the second phase of British rule with the abandonment of this religious neutrality in favour of support to missionary activity. In the preface to the Izhār al-Ḥaq he recounted that.

For a time the ordinary Muslims shrank from listening to their preaching and from studying their books and pamphlets, therefore neither did any Indian scholar pay any attention to the refutation of those pamphlets. But after some time had passed there began to be a weakening in some of the people of the aversion they had felt, and some of the illiterate people were in danger of stumbling. Therefore some of the scholars of Islam turned their attention to their refutation.

---

181 Raḥmatullāḥ was born in 1818, and was educated at home in Kairana until the age of twelve, when he went to Delhi to study at the madrasa of Maulana Muhammad Hayat. He then studied for a period in Lucknow, and in 1841 took the post of Mir munshi on the Delhi estates of the Maharaja Hindu Rao. After the deaths of his wife and son he left the raja’s service and returned to Kairana where he established a madrasa and occupied himself mainly with teaching. It was probably during a visit to Agra in the 1840’s that he met and became a close friend of Dr. Wazīr Khān, was informed about Pander’s activities in that city, and began to contemplate the preparation of a counter-attack against the missionaries. See for more detail; Muhammad Taqī Usmanī, Baʿibile se Quran tak, Karachi, 1968, 179-84. For biographical details about Maulana Raḥmatullah see also Imdad Sabri, Asar-I Rahamt, Delhi, 1969, and Muhammad Salim, Ek mujahid me’mar Mecca, 1952.

The situation steadily worsened during the 1840’s, and his realization of the responsibility of the learned for the illiterate finally impelled him to leave the life of scholarly retreat which he preferred in order to plan a counter-attack which would destroy the current supposition that the ‘ulama’ were keeping silent because they were incapable of refuting the arguments level against Islam. It seems that his association with Dr. Wazīr Khān now became of vital importance because he himself still lacked intimate knowledge of Christian sources, and the lull in the controversy continued while Wazīr Khān acquainted him with the results of his London researches. By 1852 he felt sufficiently well prepared to commence his counter-attack.

He sought to achieve his objectives through the publication of books on various aspects of Christianity, the prior instruction of the ‘ulama’ through this medium being necessary before any communication could be achieved with the Muslim masses. But he chose the language medium of his books with the linguistic skills of his missionary readers in mind as well as the needs of the Indian Muslims. His first books were written in Persian, but he soon decided to adopt Urdu also, arguing that:

The reason for my writing in two languages [Persian and Urdu] was that the first language was extremely familiar among the Indian Muslims, and the second language was actually their mother tongue, and the padris who were residing in India and were going about preaching were certainly expert in the second language and were somewhat acquainted with the first language, except that padre who held the religious debate with me [Pfander] who was more expert in the Persian language compared to Urdu.183

Discussion of two of Rahmatullāh’s books will show that he utilized two main types of argument. The first of these was the refutation of the doctrine of the Trinity on rational grounds, and the second the charge that the Christian scriptures had been altered at various times in history and therefore were not divinely inspired. It will be shown that his original contribution to Indian Muslim thinking on Christianity lies in

---

183 Ibid., 223.
his treatment of the second type of argument. He has very clearly expressed his opinion about the sonship of Christ in these words:

لا يصح أن يكون لفظ الابن ومعاه الحقيقي، لأن معاه الحقيقي باقلاً لعنة أهل العالم من تولد من نطفة الآباء،

وهذا مثال هنالك، فلا بد من الحمل على المعنى المجازي المناسب لشأن المسيح عليه السلام، وقد علم من

الإنجيل أن هذا اللفظ في حقه بمعنى الصالح." (184)

REFUTATION OF THE TRINITY

His purpose in writing this ‘refutation’ was to produce a short pamphlet which would draw together the arguments used by Pfander’s earlier opponents and which would demonstrate also the logical weaknesses of the type of reasoning from analogy which some missionaries used in the course of bazaar preaching when trying to explain the Trinity to a Muslim. His main argument was that if the Christians accept a real distinction between the three persons of the Trinity they are believing in a conjunction of contraries, and are logically inconsistent, for although they accept the conjunction of real unity and real Trinity in the Godhead, they nevertheless consider any other conjunction of unity and plurality to be impossible. He has very vividly given his opinion in the following words:

من المنازعه بين أهل التنليث والتوحيد كلهما حقيقان وإن قالوا التنليث حقيقي والتوحيد اعتباري بينا وبين لكنهم

يقولون إن كلا منا حقيق كما هو مصرح به في كتب علماء البروتستانت، قال صاحب ميزان الحق في الباب الأول

من كتابه المستنبط بحل الإشكال هكذا: "إن المسيحيين يحملون الوحيد والتنليث كلهما على المعنى الحقيقي." (185)

Having established his argument in terms of pure logic he then demonstrated the logical implications of the doctrine, basing his points on the words of the Athanasian Creed which he considered the definitive Christian statement of the belief in the Trinity. Turning to the methods used by the missionaries to explain this creed he pointed out logical inconsistencies in their use of analogy. A favourite analogy seems to have been a comparison between the Trinity and a triangle. Here he argued

that although the three sides of a triangle might be ‘equal’, they did not constitute the ‘essence’ of the triangle itself and therefore did not prove the possibility of the existence of “three in one and one in three”. Other “bazaar arguments”, such as the attempt to prove Christ’s divinity on the grounds of his birth without a human Father and his power to do miracles, came in for criticism because he felt that such phenomena were true of other prophets besides Christ. In the final section he denied the missionary argument that the Qur’an contains testimony to the divinity of Christ. Part of Rahmatullah’s purpose in this last section was to demonstrate that Pfander’s argument was falsely based because ignorance of the rules of Arabic grammar had caused him to misunderstand the relevant passages in the Qur’an. This was significant for the controversy as a whole at a time when Pfander was making an explicit effort to orientalize even the outer appearance of his books in an attempt to convince the less learned Muslims that he knew their religion as well, or better, than they did themselves.

So Rahmatullah’s concern to reassure both the ‘ulama’and the masses became very explicit in this pamphlet, for it was directed to those ‘ulama’who might be momentarily disconcerted by Pfander’s apparent technical comprehension of their religion and languages, and to the illiterate Muslims in their care who might be swayed by the disturbing simplicity of the “triangle” analogy. However, from the point of view of advancing his specific controversy with Pfander it achieved very little, for the main lines of this rational type of argument had already been laid down by Ali Hasan and Muhammad Hadi, and the manner of treatment did not differ substantially from metheval treatises on the Trinity. In any case Pfander, in his evangelical certainty that the Trinity was a revealed mystery not explicable by reason, did not himself make use of the sort of logical analogies which Rahmatullah was attacking. In this sense, therefore, the subject was not even open to debate. Rahmatullah felt, however, that repeated publicity of this admission in an atmosphere where the test of reason was considered all important must eventually harm the missionary case and thereby assist in the process of reassurance.
‘IQĀZ-I- ‘ĪṢWI (THE MIRACLE OF JESUS)\textsuperscript{186}

The second and more important type of argument used by Raḥmatullāh was the charge of \textit{tahrīf}-the charge that the Jews and Christians had altered the original scriptures for various purposes necessary to the propagation of their own beliefs and to the detriment of Islam. The type of argument was not in itself new, and in missionary writings of the early 19th century the word \textit{tahrīf} had usually been translated as “corruption”\textsuperscript{187} Historically, and in the context of the Bible, the charges laid against the Jews and Christians had fallen into one of two categories, firstly \textit{tahrīf-i ma’nawī}, or alteration of the sense or meaning of the text, and secondly \textit{tahrīf-i lafzī} or alteration of the actual words of the text. From an early date various Muslim theologians had expounded each of these views. But the reason why the second of these categories, \textit{tahrīf-i lafzī}, provided a real platform for discussion between the ‘ulama’ and the missionaries in mid-19th century India in a way which the Trinity argument had failed to do, was because the age-old charge that the Scriptures had been corrupted was revived by Raḥmatullāh at a time when the Protestant churches of Europe were themselves in turmoil over the same issue. Pfander’s study in Basel in the early 1820’s had taken no account of the critical stirrings in the university theological departments, and missionaries were generally being sent overseas to preach a fundamentalist acceptance of the Bible which was meanwhile undergoing radical challenge and revision in Europe both by acknowledged skeptics and by reputable theologians within the fold of Christianity. Pfander only became aware that the ‘ulama’ of Agra had collected a library of such critical literature during the debate of 1854 when he was astonished to find that Dr. Wazīr Khān had the books of T. H. Horne, \textsuperscript{188} “D. F. Strauss,”\textsuperscript{189} and other German theologians piled in front of him.

\textsuperscript{186} Maulana Raḥmatullāh Kairanawi, Ijazi, Iswi, Agra, 1854.
\textsuperscript{187} It has been defined more recently as “the corruption of a document, whereby the original sense is altered”. The various way this result can be obtained include, “by the alteration of the written text, by arbitrary alteration in reading aloud the text which is itself correct, by omitting parts of it or by interpretations or by a wrong exposition of the true sense”, Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, ed. H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, Leiden, 1961, 560.
\textsuperscript{188} T. H. Horne, and introduction to the critical study and knowledge of the holy scripture, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., London, 1822.
Ignorant about Wazīr Khān’s period of study in England he suggested two probable channels of communication between the ‘ulama’ and such books, namely Muslim students who had imbibed especially ideas from the secular education provided by the English-medium government colleges, and the Roman Catholic Capuchin missionaries in Agra whom he suspected of abetting, the Muslims in their animosity against Protestantism.

The main strength of Raḥmatullāh’s argument in the I’jāz was that, while availing himself of the researches of both skeptics and Christian commentators and critics, he based his main arguments only on the opinions of the avowedly Christian writers and utilized the skeptics only to introduce the more scurrilous remarks about the nature of God which he found in some of the apocryphal books of scripture, but which he hesitated to voice in his own words. The Biblical commentaries which he used were Nathanial Lardner’s The credibility of the Gospel history, in the edition of 1827, G. D’Oyley and R. Mant’s Notes, practical and explanatory to the Holy Bible, in the edition of 1840, M. Henry and T. Scott’s A commentary upon the Holy Bible, published 1831-5, and T. H. Home’s Introduction to the critical study of the Holy Scriptures, in the edition of 1822. He placed heaviest reliance on Home’s Critical study, which from the date of its first publication in 1818 until the late 1860’s seems to have been a handbook and source of solace for Anglican clergymen worried by the havoc which was being created by the influx into England of more extreme critical works from Germany. Its usefulness for Raḥmatullāh’s purposes was that, while retaining, for example, the literal account of the creation and Moses’ authorship of the Pentateuch, Home admitted the existence of numerous readings and interpolations in the Bible, although he denied that they made any difference to the overall integrity of the essential doctrines of Christianity. Raḥmatullāh’s main purpose in citing from a wide range of commentators was not to show which of them he considered correct, but to demonstrate what a wide and irreconcilable range of

---

189 D.F. Strauss, The Life Of Jesus, 4 vol., Birmingham, 1842-4, a translation from the German Das Leben Jesus which had been published in 1836.
opinion existed within the Christian camp on almost every point of Biblical history. So the greater part of the book contained arguments and evidence for the occurrence of alteration, omission, and interpolation, the three types of textual corruption which he claimed had taken place in both the Old and New Testaments, and discussion of when, and at whose agency it had happened. Significant though the book was in marking the absorption of a new line of argument into the age-old reproach, its somewhat encyclopedic character, which contrasted sharply with the pamphlet-like character of the Ibtāl al-Tathlīth, precluded its making much impact before its subject matter was widely publicized through a new channel of communication.

**AGRA DEBATE OF APRIL 1854**

It seems that even Pfander had not read the Ijāz-i-ʿīswī when, a few months after its publication, the vast researches involved in its compilation were utilized in a highly dramatic manner. For meanwhile, Pfander’s persistency in public preaching on anti-Islamic themes had led Raḥmatullāh to the conclusion that a policy of countering the padre by publication of books was insufficient: he, and the other ‘ulama’ who shared his fears, should step on to the public rostrum like Pfander himself, and give a visible and dramatic demonstration to the Muslim masses that the padre’s arguments were presented, and by the effect of public humiliation restrain him from his daily bazaar preaching. Hence his decision early in 1854 to make a personal visit to Pfander’s house for the purpose of challenging him to a public debate.

Pfander was away from Agra when Raḥmatullāh called to see him in January 1854. The arrangements were therefore established by letter. Pfander’s initial reluctance to accept the challenge was naturally interpreted by the Muslims as a wish to avoid confrontation. In a letter to the Church Missionary Society he stated that in the end he had no alternative but to accept although “I was well aware that generally very little good is done by verbal public discussion”. Further letters between them settled that the mandara should be held at the mission school compound in Agra, and

---

190 Pfander to CMS, Church missionary Intelligencer, V, 1854, 254.
that Pfander should be assisted by the Reverend T. V. French, an Oxford graduate who had recently joined the German group, while Rahmatullah should be seconded by Dr. Wazir Khan. The subjects for discussion in the following order were; abrogation and corruption of the Christian scriptures, the doctrine of the Trinity, Muhammad’s claim to prophethood, and the inspiration of the Qur’ān. It is significant that the order of the agenda gave the initiative to the Muslims whose objections to Christianity would therefore be presented first.

As Rahmatullah had intended, the Agra debate brought into the open both his sense of crisis and his determination to retaliate. It gained considerable publicity among a broad cross-section of the population of Agra, and the next year Pfander heard references to it as far away as Peshawar. Invitations were extended to official and legal opinion on both sides. On the Christian side were Mosley Smith, judge of the Sadr Diwani and Nizamat courts, George Christian, secretary to the Sadr Board of Revenue, and William Muir, secretary to Government, N.W.P., noted previously for his interest in the earlier controversies. On the Muslim side legal opinion was represented by Mufti Riyaz al-Din, and publicity was ensured by the presence of Munshi Khadim ‘Ali, the editor of a local Agra newspaper. The first day of the debate was attended by an audience of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians which has been variously estimated as numbering between 200 and 600. All accounts agree that the attendance on the second day was considerably higher, suggesting that news of the first day’s proceedings must have spread rapidly round the city that same evening. Rahmatullah, and Muslim opinion generally, hailed the 1854 debate as a great victory for Islam, and Pfander was clearly disturbed about the outcome. The main reason for this was that the strategy of Rahmatullah and Wazir Khan in concentrating on the three aspects of Christianity usually singled out by Muslims (namely, abrogation, corruption, and the Trinity), with the new and crucial advantage of being able to employ arguments derived from their study of recent Biblical criticism, made it impossible for the missionaries to regain the initiative and resume their usual offensive position.
This situation became quickly obvious during the first discussion, which was on abrogation. After explaining the Muslim belief that the revelations in the Qur'ān had abrogated certain passages of earlier revelations, Rahmatullāh and Wazīr Khān tried to secure an admission from the padres that their own scriptures were indeed liable to such cancellation. They presented two types of objection to Pfander’s repeated affirmation that the words of Christ were immutable and “shall not pass away”. First were references from the Old Testament, the Gospels, the letters of Paul, and from contemporary Christian practice which they had chosen with the purpose of showing that some Biblical injunctions had actually been subject to various changes over the centuries. Second were citations from recent Biblical criticism which seemed to conflict with Pfander’s interpretation of Christ’s words about the impossibility of abrogation. Pfander’s difficulty with the first type of attack was that the terms of debate which had been agreed on before the commencement had very precise and technical meanings within Islamic theology. The ‘ulama’selected their examples of abrogation from the more ritualistic aspects of Judaic and Christian doctrine, arguing, for example, that the concept of haram and halal had undergone various changes between eerily Biblical times and the 19th century and thus justified their charge of abrogation. Since the Islamic connotations of such terms were naturally uppermost in the minds of most of his audience, Pfander’s repudiations seemed verbally and logically inconsistent. His attempt to rephrase the implication of the term “abrogation” by suggesting that the New Testament had “fulfilled” rather than “abrogated” the Old Testament, because the coming of Christ had transformed the external rites and precepts of the Old Testament into internal and spiritual principles, only struck his audience as mere evasion of an unpalatable fact. Secondly,

191 “Heaven and Earth shall pass away: But my words shall not pass away”. Luke 21:23 (King James version)
192 Haram is defined in the shorter encyclopedia of Islam, as anything “Forbidden by the sacred Law”. An example of Wazīr Khān’s application of the term Haram to the contents of the Bible was his argument that according to the Torah many things were Haram, but the time of the apostles only meets offered to idols, blood, things strangled, and fornication were considered Haram; St. Paul. On the other hand, said nothing could of itself be Haram, whereas contemporary Christians considered only fornication to be Haram. In the opinion of the Muslim doctor these changings in the application of the term meant that abrogation must have taken place.
when Raḥmatullāh introduced quotations from commentaries such as D’Oyley and Mant’s to the effect that Christ’s testimony to the immutability of his words referred only to one particular chapter of the Bible, and not to the whole of the gospel message, it became apparent that Pfander was not familiar with such recently published commentaries and was therefore unable to frame a precise answer. According to the Muslim accounts the discussion of this point came to an end when Pfander admitted that abrogation of the scriptures was a theoretical possibility, although he still adhered to his denial that it had actually occurred. For the moment this admission was sufficient for Raḥmatullāh’s purposes as he intended to postpone substantial proof until the discussion should turn to the Qur’ān.193

Another significant discussion made by Kairanwi is about the birth of Jesus. He is of the view that his miraculous birth cannot be taken as he is God. For instance, he very emphatically says:

The second point for discussion was the charge that the Christian Scriptures had been corrupted, the theme of the Ijāz-i ʿīswī. The ‘ulama’had a carefully-prepared plan of assault which was designed to enable them to demonstrate the flaws in Pfander’s initial categorical denial of taḥrīf, thereby forcing him to redefine his terms until they had secured from him what would amount to an admission of the point.

The first stage was easily gained when Pfander quickly admitted the existence of what he termed “copyists’ errors” in the various texts of the Bible. The ‘ulama’then


Muslim Scholarship of Jesus Christ: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Trends

proceeded to show that errors of a more fundamental type could also be identified. At this juncture they brought out a full battery of charges based on quotations from various commentators. The disconcerting factor from Pfander’s point of view was that they employed this attack at two levels. Whereas he might have succeeded in rejecting the quotations from recent 19th-century publications as mere reflections of the latest fashionable idea momentarily dominating the university theological departments, he could not dismiss so lightly the quotations from the “Fathers” of the early Christian Church which were introduced via the 19th-century works of criticism. The accusation, for example, that Justin Martyr had charged the Jews with alteration of the Scriptures was based on the writings of Eusebius and Augustine, which had become familiar to the ‘ulama’ through the recently-published secondary works of such commentators as Watson, Home, and Scott. The two Muslims, and particularly Wazir Khān, were clearly in thorough control of these sources and usually used them to good effect for the purposes of their arguments. Once, however, Raḥmatullāh departed from the concise logical thrust of Wazir Khān’s line of attack and allowed the argument to slip for a moment into somewhat inconsequential channels by retorting to Pfander’s objection that he did not accept Paley’s opinion on a particular point, “If you don’t believe what Paley says then we don’t believe what you say.”

But in spite of this lapse the weight of Wazir Khān’s numerous examples soon forced Pfander to modify his initial categorical denial into an admission that a few “mistakes” had actually been made of a kind more significant than mere “copyists’ errors”, an example of this type being the account of Christ’s genealogy given in ML 1:17. He still insisted, however, that “a mistake is one thing, and corruption is another”. Earlier on he had attempted to demonstrate this distinction by moving the discussion away from secondary writers back to the Bible itself, on the grounds that the words of Christ should form the basis of any real discussion. But Wazir Khān

---

195 OP.cit., 191
196 Ibid.
had rejected this line of argument as a logically invalid procedure of debate which would mean drawing proof from the very source whose integrity was the main issue of debate. Pfander’s maintenance of the distinction between “mistakes” and “competition” now settled on his challenge to the ‘ulama’ to produce for inspection a copy of the Bible which contained the relevant passages in their “uncorrupted” form.

At a moment when it seemed that both sides would continue to maintain their incompatible claims, events came to a sudden climax. The crucial passage was verse 7 of the fifth chapter of John’s first epistle, which Wazîr Khân quoted as an example of an interpolation which had not been present in the original Scriptures. When he heard this verse, Pfander is reported to have said, “Yes, this passage has been altered, and there are one or two other places like it.” This was the first and last time he admitted the occurrence of without adding any qualification to the meaning of the term. Immediately the atmosphere became different with excitement and Muslims in the area began to urge the newspaper editor who was present to print Pfander’s important admission in the next day’s edition of his paper. Pfander at once realized that the Muslims were putting an interpretation upon his words which he had not intended to give, and he now tried to retrieve lost ground by redefining his terms in a new way. He argued that, although certain passages of the Bible might have been altered in a way which would constitute “ordinary corruption”, none of the doctrines which were essential to Christianity had been in any way affected by these changes. Among the essential doctrines he mentioned the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the doctrines of atonement and intercession. His objective was to convince the ‘ulama’ that, even if the literal integrity of the Bible is not complete, no doubt can be cast upon the inspiration of the Christian scriptures on this ground, because both the

197 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”, First Epistle General of John, 5: 7. 19th-century and modern commentators agree that this verse is an interpolation which is not to be found in any manuscript earlier than the 4th century A.D. It has been omitted from the revised versions of the Bible but is included in the A.V. from which were made the translations into Persian and Urdu which were circulating in India in the 19th century.
text and the meaning of the spiritual and necessary doctrines remain utterly free from any suspicion of alteration. *\(^{198}\)

One of the important activities of Raḥmatullāh during his first visit to Turkey was the writing of his last book on Muslim Christian Controversy. Stimulated by the resurgence of the missionary threat, this time in the heart of the Turkish Empire, Raḥmatullāh proceeded with the writing of the book which Sayyid Ahmad Dālān had been encouraging him to produce ever since his arrival in Mecca. He still considered that the issues crucial to the controversy were the five subjects which had been on the agenda at the Agra debate. At that time discussion had foundered after dealing only with abrogation and corruption. His new work, which he intended both as a summary and a commentary on at the stages of the controversy, would therefore include the remaining three issues. In fact, however, ten years’ reflection had produced very little change in the content of his argument. He again based the assertion of taḥrīf on the opinions of European scholars, but it seems that he had not done much further reading on Christianity since 1854, and his main sources, which he documented carefully, were those utilized earlier for the writing of the Ijaz-i ‘Iswi. The theme to which he gave most stress was again the charge that the Christian Scriptures had been altered, which suggests that he realized that this was his most valuable contribution to the argument. In the section on the Trinity he supported the predominantly rational type of argument he had used in Ibṭāl al-Tathlīth by references to the New Testament to try to show that the Christian revelation contains no testimony to the doctrine. In the second volume he turned to the defensive in a detailed refutation of missionary arguments against the Qur’ān, the Ḥadīth, and Muhammad’s claim to prophethood.

But the main significance of the Izhar rests less in any claim to originality than on the synthesis it represents of all Raḥmatullāh’s researches on Christianity. The Foreword and Introduction provide a retrospective assessment of the Muslim

*\(^{198}\) Muhammad Taqī Usmānī, op. cit., 192.
Muslim Scholarship of Jesus Christ: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Trends

dilemma under British rule in India, his own reasons for taking upon himself the leadership in the refutation of Pfander, and a criticism of Pfander’s strategy and arguments which is more analytical than anything he had written previously. Some indication of the importance of the book lies in the history of its publication and dissemination throughout the Muslim world.

The two volumes were written in Constantinople in 1864, and the first edition was published there in Arabic that same year. During the next few years it was translated into

Turkish, Urdu, Gujarati, and English. A Tunisian student made a French translation from the Arabic, and in 1880 P. V. Carletti, professor of Arabic in London University, revised and published this French version. Carletti, who had worked in Tunisia from 1860 to 1877 and styled himself a free thinker, was motivated towards the publication by his own hostility to evangelical Christianity, his view being that Islam was preferable to Christianity because of its greater degree of rationality. He thought the importance of the Izhar consisted in its being the first work written by a Muslim of the modern age which succeeded in challenging Christianity on its own ground.

Although Raḥmatullāh left the Indian scene in 1857, participants in later phases of the Muslim-Christian controversy in India based their arguments on Pfander’s Mizān al-Ḥaq on the one hand, and on Raḥmatullāh’s books on the other. For instance, Muhammad Abul Manṣūr, who was the most prolific writer and debater on the subject in the 1870’s, used Raḥmatullāh’s works as one of his main sources, and the Ijāz-i ‘Īswī was the standard work of reference for Muslim controversialist such as Hafiz Wali Allah and Muhammad Nurat ‘Ali. The long term significance of Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī’s stand against missionary activity in northern India in the period prior to 1857 is indicated by the fact that the Iharr al-haqq has been republished recently in Morocco and Pakistan.
At this juncture, Rahmatullah Kairaanwi’s opinion about the sonship of Christ is crystal clear in the following words:

"وَالإِتِّحَادْ بِبَينِ الْجَوُهرَ الْلَّاهِوَيِّ وَالْبَطُورَ إِذَا كَانَ حَقِيقِيًا لَّكَانَ أَقْفُومُ الْأَبِينِ مَحدودًا مُّطَنِيًا وَكُلُّ مَا كَانَ كَذَٰلِكَ كَانَ قَبُولُهُ لِلْزِّيَادَةِ وَالْنُقْصَانِ مُسْكَنًا وَكُلُّ مَا كَانَ كَذَٰلِكَ اخْتَصَاصُهُ بِالْمُقَدَّرَ المُعْتَينِ لْتَخْصِيصٍ مُخْصِصٍ وَتَقْدِيرٍ مُقَدَّرٍ وَكُلُّ مَا كَانَ كَذَٰلِكَ فَهُوَ مُحَدَّثٌ فَيْلَزِمُ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَقْفُومُ الْأَبِينِ مَحْدُوًّا وَيَسْتَلْزَمُ حَدُوْنُهُ حُدُوْنَ اللَّهِ ﻋَلَىٰ عَمَّا يَقُولُهُ الْظَالِمُونَ.

The editor of the Urdu version has expressed the strong opinion that nothing written in the intervening hundred years on the theme of Islam and Christianity has replaced the books which were generated in the mind of Maulana Rahmatullah Kairānawi by the situation of extreme tension which faced the ‘ulama’ of northern India in the first half of the 19th century.

4.5

MODERN EGYPTIAN SCHOLESTIC APPROACH TO

JESUS CHRIST
MODERN EGYPTIAN SCHOLASTIC APPROACH TO JESUS CHRIST

Since the early 1950s, a number of biographies of Christ or allegorical works relating to the Jesus story have appeared in Egypt. In a cultural atmosphere where Christianity is not seen only as a Western adversary, but as a respected partner in the dialogue between cultures, innovative approaches to the person of Christ himself have emerged.

Intellectually, most of the thinkers to be presented in the following text may be characterized as modernizing reformers. Their national context is that of Nasserite nationalism in the 1950s and ‘60s. Nasser’s era (1952-1970) is characterized by a number of crucial events and developments - such as the decisive break with the remnants of British colonial domination; a shift from liberal democracy to a one party system; large scale nationalization and collectivization of the economy; a socialist vision of the welfare state; and the introduction of mass education on higher levels. From 1961, Egypt also took on leading role in the so called non-aligned movement (consisting primarily of Asian and African states that were once colonies and were wary of being drawn into new forms of dependence by the West or by the communist bloc).

In the field of culture, Nasser’s regime actively sought to involve writers and other intellectuals in its socialist-nationalist project. In terms of religion, the era of Nasser (as well as the whole movement of Arab nationalism) was marked by the predominance of nationalist over Islamic discourses. This means that the cultural climate was also conducive for the formulation of visions of Muslim-Christian unity, in tune with the joint Muslim-Christian resistance to British rule earlier in the twentieth century (symbolized by banners that were used during the uprising against the British in 1919 with the crescent and the cross side by side). As we shall see, the thinkers in focus were also keen on formulating visions of ‘humanity’, symbolized by the bond of conscience across religious divides. This went well together with the internationalist orientation of Nasser’s regime.
As for three writers whose work will most thoroughly be presented - al-Aqqād, Ḥusayn and Khālid – their works have been researched by the present author with emphasis on their faith-transcending notion of conscience.200

**ABD AL-ḤAMID GUDAH AL-SAHHĀR**

The first modern biography of Jesus written by an Egyptian Muslim appears to be ‘Abd al-Hamid Gudah al-Sahhār’s Al-masīḥ ‘Isā ibn Maryam (‘Christ Jesus, Son of Mary’), which was published in 1951 (i.e. on the threshold to the Naserite era).201 Al-Sahhār’s most well-known work is a series of books on the life of Muhammad. Besides his Christ-biography, he has also examined the stories of Old Testament figures like Abraham, Moses, David and Esther (in Stories from the Holy Books).

In his Christ-biography, the author makes use of both Qur’ānic and biblical information about Christ, but (apart from the Lord’s Prayer) without quoting directly from the New Testament. It is true that specific biblical featuring Jesus’ life and teaching - like his addressing God as Father and the centrality the theme of the Kingdom of God - are reflected. As for the way the Kingdom perceived, the author states that:

“Jesus has not come with the order to found a new law. He has not come with a religion that would abrogate the religion of Moses. He has come only to announce the nearness of the Kingdom of God.... He has brought the Gospel as the good news of hope and true happiness.”202

Differently from Muhammad, however, Jesus was not able to put his message into effect other than among a small group of disciples. As the author sees it, the


turning point in Christ’s mission lies in his failure to use force in order propagate his message “The true revealed laws are not enforced in this world with olive branches and sweet words.”\textsuperscript{203}

Thus, it was left to Muhammad to bring the new order, based upon ‘Islam which joins politics together and gives the spiritual heritage an organized form.\textsuperscript{204} As Goddard summarizes the author’s concept of the kingdom:

Elaboration of what the kingdom means . . . reveals that the kingdom comes through the descent of the Word of God and the lordship of the sharia (path) and the spread of the teaching of patience. Moreover, the kingdom ‘united religion and the state [din wa dawla]’, and so it is seen very much in Islamic terms.\textsuperscript{205}

When coming to the climax, the author reproduces the traditional substitutionist theory, having judge crucified. Jesus appears to the disciples after a period of concealment, before he was raised to God. In Gethsemane, Jesus is portrayed as resigning to his tribulations and yearning for another prophet to come – a prophet who will more dynamic and successful then himself in confronting the enemies of God.\textsuperscript{206}

In the concluding words of al-Sahhār, in a significant paraphrase of the servant Songs in Isaiah:

“Jesus departed. He did not establish truth on earth. His enemies broke him. But the final one, the servant of God and his chosen, will not be weary nor will he be broken before he has set truth in the earth, and until the kingdom of God holds sway over this world. ‘Isa came finally into the heavy dark of night whence God raised him to power and glory and immortality.”\textsuperscript{207}
‘ABBĀS MAHMŪD AL-‘AQQĀD

The most well-known of the Egyptian Jesus-biographies from this period is Abqariyyāt al-MasĪḥ, ‘The genius of the Messiah’, first published in Cairo in 1953 by the autodidact and prolific writer ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād (1889-1964). In the second edition of his book in 1957, under the title Ḥayāt al-MasĪḥ (‘The life of Christ’), he included a chapter on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Al-‘Aqqād’s work has attracted considerable interest in circles committed to Christian-Muslim understanding. Olaf Schumann paid much attention to this ground-breaking work in his study Der Christus der Muslim (1988). More recently, al-‘Aqqād’s biography (in its 1957 version) has been translated into English and thoroughly discussed by Peter Ford.

Al-‘Aqqād’s work originally appeared in a series of books on ‘religious geniuses’, and made a wide, popular impact. His work on Christ relies on and relates critically to well-known Western portraits of Jesus like those of Emil Ludwig (Der Menschensohn. Geschichte eines Prophet, 1928) and Ernest Renan (La Vie de Jesus, 1863), both of which were available to al-‘Aqqād in English translation. As for the genre of genius biographies, it should be noted that Emil Ludwig wrote a whole series of books (in the 1920s and ‘30s) about lives of great men. As for al-

209 Schumann (1988:ch.8 [first ed. Gutersloh 1975])
210 Ford. a book based on Ford’s work in the following are my own translations, although checked in some detailed with those of Peter Ford.
‘Aqqād, he characterizes his version of the nexus biography genre as sura nafsiyya, a portrait of the person’s inner character rather than a historical exposition.212

Contrary to the later suggestions made by Yusseff (1990b) and others, that Jesus movement may have emerged from the ranks of the Essene community, al-‘Aqqād maintains that the legalistic rigor of the Essenes was rather a negative preparation for Jesus’ mission. According to al-‘Aqqād, the novelty of the Qumran discovery is that it confirms the necessity for the mission of heist. He emphasizes the Gafitean background of Jesus’ ministry, and the Universal outlook of his mission. The universalism of Christianity is seen by al-‘Aqqād as rooted in Christ’s insistence on conscience and the law of love, and is significantly not regarded to be a later product of Pauline theology (as, traditionally implied by Muslim apologetics). He views Paul rather positively and regards Jewish Christianity as a deviation from the implicit universalism of Jesus’ ministry.

Al-‘Aqqād treats the Gospels as reliable historical documents for extensive information about Christ, and discusses thoroughly the historical context of Jesus’ mission. Up till the dramatic climax, where he takes exception to the historicity of the crucifixion, the Gospels are explicitly stated to be relief sources of information, allowing us to search behind the events in order identify the personality of Christ, and elucidate his genius.213

Al-‘Aqqād portrays a Christ who is distinguished by preaching the law love, confronting legalism and hypocrisy, aiming at transforming the motive of our actions and appealing to freedom of conscience. Christ is placed in prophet-teacher tradition, and al-‘Aqqād describes the progress in prophetic consciousness when he is confronted with increasing adversity, the essence of his call (al-da’wah) was... that is God is the Lord of the children of Man (bānī al-insān) and that he is the Son of Man (ihn al-insān); that love is the best of virtues and that the best kind of love is love for one’s enemy; that generosity means that you, more than you are asked for or

212 Ibid., 89-19.
213 Ibid., 150.
without being asked; that the kingdom of heaven is not conquered by riches; that what belongs to the emperor [should be given] to the emperor and what belongs to God [should be given] to God and that the glory vied for by those who desire it does not deserve desired, and that the glory that deserves to be desired is not a cause of rivalry.\textsuperscript{214}

In the book’s chapter about the religious law (al-saria), the author reveals trust in the reform of outward laws and regulations. Instead, consciences should be reformed (bi-iṣlāḥ al-dhamār), and manners and morals re fined (tahdīb al-adab al-insāniyya). This is shown by Christ. However, as a reformer Christ does not abolish the Jewish Law (sarfat al-nāmus), but fulfils it through the law of love (sariat al-ḥubb\textsuperscript{215}). In several places he equates the ‘law of love’ with ‘the law of conscience’ in expressions like sariat al-ḥubb aw/wa’ sari at al-dhamār.\textsuperscript{216} As for the importance of love over against law, he states that:

The law (nāmus), then, is a covenant with man aimed at settling that which is obligatory (wājib), whereas love surpasses the obligatory, and does not await command nor expect recompense. Love is not counted in letters and lines. Love does not deal with people in terms of legal contracts and witnesses. It does what is required of it, and then goes beyond that. It was to give, and does not expect recompense. By this sari’a – the sari’a of love - Christ abrogated every letter in the sari’a of forms and outward appearances.\textsuperscript{217}

The law of love is rooted in conscience, and expressed in service and self-denial. The Sermon on the Mount and other passages from the Gospels are quoted extensively, to illustrate what the law of love is all about.

With regard to the miracles, al-‘Aqūd emphasizes that the miracles presupposes faith for a proper reception. It is not Christ’s birth or his works of healing that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 80.
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 99.
\item \textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 101, 102, 105, 106, 107.
\item \textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 101.
\end{itemize}
are considered as the essential miracle, but rather the fact that the message of love preached by the Galilean Son of a carpenter conquered the entire Roman world.\textsuperscript{218}

The absolute titles of Jesus (like ‘the Light of the world’ and ‘the Son of God’) appear to be acceptable to al-‘Aqqād as metaphorical expressions: ‘Everyone who is born of the Spirit is a Son of God’.\textsuperscript{219}

As to the end of Christ’s life, al-‘Aqqād is seemingly loyal to the Qur’ān denial of the crucifixion. After referring to the cleansing of the temple, he states that when it comes to the climax of Christ’s life, ‘here ends the stage of history, and the stage of creed/doctrine begins’.\textsuperscript{220} In the last chapter of the book, al-‘Aqqād retells Dostojevsky’s scene of the during Christ and the Grand Inquisitor, and states that if Christ came back to the earth, he would probably repudiate much of what is done today in his name. Thus, the freedom of conscience established by Christ turns out to be a constant effort, a struggle of conscience (Jihād al-dhamīr):

\begin{quote}
... the religions are to be measured by the values and incentives they consign to the soul, and by how much they increase the share of man in the freedom of conscience, or the freedom to distinguish between the good and the despicable. The religions have done a lot, and are still capable of doing a lot. But they can never relieve man of the struggle of the conscience.\textsuperscript{221}
\end{quote}

In another work, about God (Allāh\textsuperscript{222}), al-‘Aqqād sees the Christian religion the first religion to base service of God on human conscience, and to proclaim the mercy of heaven to humankind.\textsuperscript{223} But the final perfection of religion and clarification of the idea of the divine is left to Islam. With his very notable appreciation of Christ and Christianity, al-‘Aqqād remains a faithful Muslim. Summarizing the importance of al-‘Aqqād’s biography, Hugh Goddard comments:

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 160.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 173.
\textsuperscript{222} A recent edition of Allah is Cairo: Dar Nahdat Misr (1994)
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 109.
what al-‘Aqqād has done . . . is to introduce the fruits of western critical “biography of Jesus into the field of Muslim biography of Jesus, and while his agnosticism about the historicity of the crucifixion may leave a Christian reader frustrated at the end, that is immediately an advance on a blanket region of traditional Islamic beliefs about the crucifixion.224

Al-‘Aqqād’s interest in Christ was apparently not restricted to a historical presentation of Christ as a law reformer in Judaism, neither to a sympathy exposition of basic Christian tenets. There are many indications that his writings about Christ should also be read as a critique of rigorist attitudes an out wardens in traditionalist interpretations of Islam. When denoting the adversaries of Christ, he often employs traditional Islamic terms for legal and religious offices such as fuqahā’,225 ulamā’and ḥuffāż.226 He also makes an explicit reference to literalist conservatism among Islamic jurists in Egypt.227

As for the book’s contribution to Muslim-Christian dialogue, Peter Ford notes that there is no clear indication in ‘Abqariyyāt al-Masīḥ as to why al-‘Aqqād wrote this particular book. But he suggests that the implied Authence would be Muslim rather than Christian:

The prevalence of Islamic terminology, the occasional reference to passages from the Qur’ān, and above all the presentation of a Jesus that remains within the parameters of Islamic prophet hood all point to a Muslim authence reference... Jesus was a prophet, asserts al-‘Aqqād, who continues to speak with authority and eloquence to the masses of today. At the same time, is a word from Jesus to the religious elite in Islam who would emphasize rituals and interpretations which only serve to stifle true faith.228

224 Goddard, H. Muslim Perceptions of Christianity, 121.
225 Ibid., 103.
226 Ibid., 113.
227 Ibid., 99.
Nevertheless, claims Peter Ford, ‘al-‘Aqqād must certainly have had Christ readers in mind as well’. His utilization of the Gospels as reliable sources clearly points in this direction. In Ford’s judgment he has thus endeavored, as a Muslim, to comprehend the founders of Christianity, and to appropriate for himself the substance of his life and teaching, from within a Christian framework. In the process, he has which he snares common with believers...

The question remains, however, whether al-‘Aqqād was able to tackle; constructively what is actually different in Muslim and Christian faith. This might also be a critical point when it comes to utilizing the notion of ‘conscience’ as a conceptual bond between Christians and Muslims: Does ‘conscience’ only between the two faiths - that which they know together-or can it contain differences as well? The Same questions may be rail connection with Khalid Muhammad Khalid’s notion of conscience (see below), and more generally, when discussing the general relevance of the notice of conscience in interreligious dialogue.

FATİḤİ UTHMÂN

In 1961, Fatîh Uthmân (b. 1928) published his voluminous book Ma‘al-Masîḥ fil-Anâjîl al-Arb‘ah (‘With Christ in the Four Gospels’). Uthmân approaches Christianity with the conviction that each religion must be interpreted from the vantage point of its own self-understanding. He refers frequency to al-‘Aqqād, like him, he relies on the Gospels as historical sources. His work reveals familiarity not only with the New Testament, but with standard works by Christian and other Western scholars and writers.

In the book’s chapter about ‘Christ and the Law’, he cites the radical entity from the Sermon on the Mount, and characterizes Christ’s teachings as of altruism’ (sari at al-itar). He emphasizes the need to proceed from what is demanded by the

229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
232 Ibid., 285.
law (al-namūs) to ‘what reassures conscience’-underpinning his argument with a quotation from the Qur’ān:

![Qur’ānic verse]

Citing ‘Aqqād, he characterizes the law sought for by Christ as ‘a law of love and conscience’.

Like al-‘Aqqād, he also refers positively to Paul. In the subsequent chapter on ‘The Disciples and the Law (al-namus)’, he cites Romans 2-3 and Gala-2-3, as well as Hebrews 7 and 10, for the critique of a petrified legalism, the shortcomings of the outward law in reforming human nature. He ends this chapter by citing John 8:4-16. In accordance with the prevailing Arabic Bible translation in Egypt, he includes the following passage in John 8:9: ‘and their consciences pricked them’.

In the final main chapter of the book (‘... and peace on earth’), ‘Uthmān further elaborates his view of the law of conscience. Loyalty to conscience as taught by Christ is both a question of exercising the necessary ‘curbing forces of the soul’(dawabit al-nafs, cf. Husayn), and a way of transcending the outwardness of religious legislation (tasri). The latter can only be achieved if law is founded in ‘the depths of the soul’. Religious law does not rest on letters, but on conscience. Christ gave to the formalities of legislation (qawalib al-tasri) ‘the warmth of conscience’. He also made each and every man ‘his own judge’, under the supervision of the hidden God.

In these matters, ‘Uthmān implies, Christianity and Islam basically teach the same. Like Christianity, Islam teaches the golden rule. Christianity has greatly

---

233 Qur’ān 35:32
235 The so-called ‘Bustani-van Dyck Bible’ follows the Greek manuscripts underlying the so-called textus receptus in this respect.
236 Ibid., 413.
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid.
enriched humanity by revealing that ‘God is love, and that’ sufficiency. Notwithstanding his search for uniting elements in Christian and Muslim belief and ethics, ‘Uthmān also discusses the difficult issues between Christians and Muslims. The questions in focus are Christ and God, crucifixion and redemption, and the appreciation of Muhammad (peace be upon him). As for the event of the crucifixion, ‘Uthmān asserts that this is more a question of interpretation than of a (contested) fact. Quoting Qur’ān:

لكن أخذنا ميثاقاً بين إسرائيل ورسلنا إلىهم رسلنا، كلما جاءهم رسول بيتاً لا تقهرون أعملهم.

 Forgivingly we take a treaty with the Children of Israel and their messengers. If they come to you, do not disgrace their work.

He reminds the reader that the Qur’ān itself affirms that many messengers of God have been killed. ‘Uthmān is emphatic that the Qur’ān does not deny Crucifixion for the reason that the violent death of prophets cannot be conceived of within an Islamic universe. Instead, it is the doctrine of redemption by the death of Christ that constitutes the problem. Islam rejects the (theology of) crucifixion because the idea of redemption is unacceptable.

In spite of different understandings of redemption and salvation, both religions teach salvation through faith and works. ‘Uthmān cites Galatians 6:1-5 and James 2:14-16 as New Testament references for his argument. Citing Matthew 7:21-23 - the decisive thing is not the confession of lips, but doing the will of God - ‘Uthmān suggest that Christians and Muslims, instead of concentrating all their efforts on polemics over dogmatic, should join forces to put redemption into practice.

Kenneth Cragg sees ‘Uthmān portraying Jesus as a reformer of Judaism opting for ‘a true ethical Shari’a as opposed to the formalism to which Torah had been reduced’. In his approach to Jesus, and in his distinction between the namūs of

---

239 Ibid.
240 Ibid., 434.
241 Qur’ān 5:70.
242 Ibid., 436.
243 Cragg, K. Jesus and the Muslim. An Exploration, 56.
legalism and the sarta of neighborly love, ‘Uthmān opts for a renewed ijtihad within Islam to restore the original dynamism of Shari’a. He sees the centre of the Christian message in the call for love and in the demand for equality and justice. Both modern democracy and socialism may be seen as partly foreshadowed by Christianity, which should therefore not be accused being an individualistic religion.  

The essence of Jesus’ teachings is thus held to be valid (and challenging) for Muslims too, and ‘Uthmān’s declared aim is to bring Christians and Muslim together by the ethical connection.

In the context of the USA, where he has been teaching for a number of years, ‘Uthmān has been much involved in interreligious dialogue. In the late 1970s, he expressed his view on Christ in a Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue documented by the Journal of Ecumenical Studies. His contribution has the form of a commented reading of the Catholic scholar Dermot A. Lane’s book The Reality of Jesus. ‘Uthmān responds favorably to Lane’s distinction between ‘the historical side of the Christ-Event’ and ‘the theology; significance’ of this event, as well as to his distinction between a ‘low”high’ Christology. For his own part, ‘Uthmān confirms that:

“The Qur’ān refers clearly to a special place of Jesus in his relation to God which is different from the place of any other prophet. A special read between Jesus and the ‘Holy Spirit’ the ‘Spirit of Holiness’ as expressed in the Qur’ān is also mentioned.”

As for the seemingly contradictory references in the Qur’ān as regards the end of Jesus’ life - with 3:55 affirming Jesus’d death, and 4:157-158 denying death by crucifixion- the latter reference ‘may not be seen as really contradictory if it is not interpreted literally as dealing with the historical event or physiological death’. With regard to the concept of a ‘low-ascending’ Christology put forward by Lane, ‘Uthmān

---

246 Ibid., 451.
247 Ibid.
comments that ‘In this light, a Christian may see the Muslim’s faith in Jesus as preliminary, but not false or intentionally depreciating’.  

‘Uthmān appreciates Lane’s admission that the decision about Jesus’ relation to God comes later than the early preaching of the Apostles, and regards this as an important improvement of the climate for interreligious dialogue. He also responds favorably to Lane’s distinction ‘between the revelation of a reality and the reality itself, and his conviction that ‘The mystery of God... is not exhausted in Jesus.’ Apparently, this distinction appeals to the Muslim sensitivity of ‘Uthmān, and even more so the views of some contemporary Christian theologians that faith in Christ does not rely upon certain classical dogmas like the pre-existence of Christ or the Hellenistic definitions of the deity of Christ, (the man also endorses Lane’s view on the co-operation between faith and good works when it comes to the question of salvation.

As for ‘Uthmān ’s sensitivity for Christian concerns in general, it should be noted that his views on interreligious dialogue correspond with recognition of the Copts’ bad memories of oppressive rule that has been administered in the name of Islam, and their subsequent apprehension that their legitimate rights must not be violated in any way.

**Najeb Mahfūz**

We have seen that the focus on Jesus as a teacher of an ethic based on individual conscience has been a recurring theme in the more liberal approaches to Jesus on Egyptian writers. It seems that the focus on conscience invites the writers not only to reflect on the adversity that he met, but also on the theme of offering and even the symbol of the cross.

---

248 Ibid., 452.
249 Ibid., 453.
One of those approaching defeat, suffering and death as a fictional theme related to Jesus is the 1988 Nobel Prize winner, Najib Mahfūz. In his allegorical story of humanity, Awlad haratina (‘The Children of Our Quarter’), Jesus is represented by the character of Rifa’a- along with two other restorers of justice in the quarter (Jabal/Moses, Qasim/Muhammad). Commentator’s difference in the interpretation of the novel: Some highlight the religious allegories - reference to the obvious connotations with the history of the Abrahamic Religions and the role of their common ancestor Gabalawi (a metaphor for God?). Others emphasize the political aspects of the novel - claiming that the trail theme is the reformers unsuccessful struggle against the ruling chiefs and their strong-arm men, the futuwwat. Although commentaries vary as to whether the book should be read as a political and/or religious allegory, Mahfūz raises several questions that should be central in any dialogue between the Abrahamic faiths.

Jabal/Moses is presented as the first to riot against injustice. But he is only concerned about those in his own alley, and acts according to the principle of retribution: an eye for an eye. In contrast, Rifa’a/Jesus is depicted as a preacher of non-violence, and characterized by a great interest in spirits and exorcism. He resorts to the desert to achieve inner strength, and he is reluctant towards marriage. But out of pity, he marries a girl, who eventually betrays him to his enemies. He regards it better to be killed than to kill, and he consistently speaks out against violence: ‘the wisdom of your work is that you overcome evil with good’. He is not concerned with rights (the novel’s content ‘estate’), only with inner purity. He freely grants

---


health and happiness to all for the sake of God’s love: he opens the gates of happiness without any estate or power.\textsuperscript{254}

The love of the poor for this reformer was unprecedented. Despite Rifa’s gentleness, he was considered a threat by the chiefs and cudgelled to death without any protecting intervention from the house of Gabalawi. To no avail, he shouted from deep down: have: Gabalawi! He was re-buried by his friends – two of them carrying the same name as the tragic heroes of Shifted Islam, ‘Alī and Ḥusayn. Because of the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death, rumors spread, and:

After his death Rifa’a enjoyed respect and glory and love which he had never dreamed of in his lifetime. His story became glorious, repeated on every tongue... in particular the removal of his corps....\textsuperscript{255}

The author records a discussion between Yahya, an old disciple of Rifa’a Qasim/Muhammad. Yahya recalls that with Jabal, it was all about strength and force, and with Rifa’a, all about love and mercy. He presents Qasim with both options. Qasim replies: ‘Force when necessary, and love always.’\textsuperscript{256} Only then Can the honour that Jabal gave to his people, and the love that Rifa’a preached, be achieved. Justice and peace can only rule by power: ‘our force ... will first just force.’\textsuperscript{257} After Rifa’a’s demise, his disciples were not (according to Qāsim) able to follow his example. Some of them resorted to violence and the logic of power.

Mahfūz takes it as a fictional presupposition that his Jesus-figure was infact killed. In the author’s pessimistic outlook towards religion as well as politics, the death of Jesus is not avoided as a fictional theme, but acquires significance. His death scene resounds with Rifa’a’s/Jesus’ despairing invocation of God, known from the Gospel of Mark.

\textsuperscript{254} Ibid., - 173.
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., 197.
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid., 251.
In the novel, the restoration efforts of ‘Moses’, ‘Jesus’ and ‘Muhammad’ (peace be upon them) all fail. Also the seeming victory granted to Qasim did not last. The novel’s final character, ‘Araf’a, who represents modern science and theology, ends up killing Gabalawi in the search for his book of magic - with the ensuing reflection in it was easier to kill Gabalawi than to see him.  

Maḥfūẓ’ book met with a ban from the religious authorities of Al-azhar, because of his allegorical treatment of the stories of the prophets and their failure, and the eventual killing of ‘God’ (Gabalawi) carried out by ‘Arafa.

**KHALID MUHAMMAD KHALID**

Summarizing the works of al-‘Aqqād, Husayn, al-Sahhar and Khalid (to be dealt with in the following), Fr. Jomier of the Dominican Institute of Oriental studies in Cairo identifies a clear focus on the personality of Jesus:... in the Middle Ages, this Muslim sympathy showed itself towards Jesus as wonder-worker, ascetic and mystic, today it seems rather to seek the deeply human side of the doctrines of Christ. In the middle Ages, Jesus was seen as prophet who had fought against the formalism of the doctors of the Law and had reminded men of the duty to live an interior religion, the religion of the spirit. In our four works, on the contrary, Jesus’ struggle against the Pharisees appears firstly as that of natural conscience and justice in the face of hypocrisy and clericalism. In the middle Ages, Jesus was seen in regard to God. In these four works, He is seen rather in regard to men and humanity.

This Focus on the dynamic personality of Jesus is clearly paralleled by a similar emphasis in the way some of the same authors approach Muhammad (peace be upon him). In twentieth-century Egypt, several literates (such as Muhammad Ḥusayn Haykal and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm) have approached the Prophet with a focus on his

---

258 Ibid., 322.
259 Ibid.
260 Jomier, J., Quatre ouvrages en Arabe sur li Christ, 367-86.
personal qualities. A similar personal list approach is found in al-
Aqqād’s books on the early heroes of Islam. Furthermore, we have noted that the major work of another Muslim biographer, al-Sahhar, is a 20-volume series of books on the life of Muhammad, and like al-
Aqqād, he wrote also a number of biographies of prominent Muslim figures.

The author to be dealt with extensively in this and the following chapter, Khalid Muhammad Khalid (d.1996), is the only one of the Christ-biographers that presents Muhammad and Christ side by side in the same book - ‘together on the road’.

Different from al-
Aqqād and Husayn, Khalid was educated as a shaykh from al-Azhar University, but did not serve in any official religious position, instead he dedicated his life to writing and to cultural and political involvement from an independent position. In 1950, he published a book advocating the separation of state and religion, which brought upon him the wrath of the ‘ulama’. A censure was initially imposed, but was later removed by a civil court, reflecting the dominant secularism of the time.

In the 1970s-after a long period of extensive writing on Muhammad and Muslim personalities Khalid began to revise his secularism. He linked his previously and persistently strong defence of democracy to the idea of an Islamic state, and became known as a moderate Islamist or ‘Islamic democrat’ under Sadat and Mubarak.

---

263 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
Throughout his life, he was committed to peaceful Christian-Muslim coexistence and dialogue. He had many close Coptic friends, and not withstanding his later inclination towards (moderate) Islamism, he was regarded by the Coptic community as a friendly and highly esteemed partner in dialogue. In his books from the 1950s and the 60s, one often finds him citing the Bible and the Qur‘ān side by side when dealing with general issues such as democracy, human rights and social justice.

In 1958, he published his book ‘Together on the Road - Muhammad a Christ’ (Ma’an ‘ala al-Ṭariq. Muhammad wa-l-Masih). The front cover cites’ well-known Ḥadīth: ‘The prophets are brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one’ (Muslim). The book presents itself as written in a spirit of dialogue, and for the sake of ‘man’ and ‘life’:

That is exactly what I want to say to those who believe in Christ and those who believe in Muhammad: If you are sincere, the proof of your faith is that today, one and all of you embark upon the task of protecting the human being... Protecting life!

Unlike the somewhat elitist approach of al-‘Aqqād, Khalid’s is influenced by socialism, and reinterprets religious virtues in the light of a basically egalitarian position. In this work, he retells some decisive stages in the history of philosophy and religion - focusing on Socrates, the ancient Egyptians, Buddha, Confucius and the biblical prophets (with an emphasis on the vigorous social criticism of the prophets). He praises the prophetic spirit, and laments modern philosophy’s turning from the hidden to search for evidence, and from prophet hood to mere experiment (tajriba). The prophetic task has always been, and still is, to develop the human mind (al-‘aql)

267 See the report from a visit made by Pope Shenouda to the hospital shortly before Khalid died on March 1, 1996 - in Al-Musawwar, February 23, 1996 (‘Liqa’ mutir bayn al-baba Sanuda wa-Khlid Muhammad Khalid’).
268 See the collection of speeches given in radio broadcasts at the beginning of the 1950s, first published in 1953 with the title Al-din fībidmat al-sab, and re-edited with the title Al-dīn li-l- sa‘b (‘Religion to the people’), latest edition by Dar al-Muqattam, Cairo (1994).
269 Jomier, J., Quatre ouvrages en Arabe sur li Christ, 367-86.
and to disseminate visions of goodness, courage and a proper human conscience.\textsuperscript{271}

Coming to Christ and Muhammad, he presents Christ as summarizing the entire philosophy of love, whereas Muhammad - announcing the doctrine of tawhīd is presented as the one who rescues man from the last shackles of subordination.

In the chapter ‘Together on the road of the Lord’, he depicts the dark ground of the two messengers’ coming. According to Khalid, Judaism at the time of Christ was characterized by blind adherence to tradition, hypocrisy, self-interest, formalistic rites devoid of spirit and ignorance of the innermost cores of the law.\textsuperscript{272}

Christ and Muhammad (peace be upon them) are consistently depicted as models and brothers in genuine prophethood. Already in the preamble, Khalid characterizes Christ as a man with a lofty soul and an honest conscience. In this sense, he is the ‘Son of Man’.\textsuperscript{273} Similarly, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is characterized by honesty of conscience (istiqamat al-damir). There was something in his heart (sayun fi ru’ibi) that said ‘halt’ to the polytheistic practices of his tribe.\textsuperscript{274} Muhammad (peace be upon him) liberated people’s minds from superstition, their emotions from falsehood and their entire existence from destruction.\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{275} Ibid., 115.
4.6

SAYYID QUTB’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS JESUS CHRIST
SAFYID QUTUB’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS JESUS CHRIST

Sayyid Qutub, who was executed by President Naseer in 1966, was the leading ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood in the nineteen fifties and early sixties.\textsuperscript{276} At this place we will discuss his attitude towards Jesus in \textit{Fi Zilāl al-Qur‘ān} (“In the shade of the Qur‘ān or under the Aegis of the Qur‘ān”).\textsuperscript{277} It will focus primarily on his treatment of the following verses:

\begin{quote}
فُتِّلَوْا الَّذِينَ لَبِينُونَ بَيْنَ الْهَيْدَرَ وَلَبِينَ الْأَبَاهُ وَلَبِينُ مَا حَرَّمَ أَللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَبِينُونَ
\end{quote}

It will focus primarily on his treatment of the following verses:

\begin{quote}
فُتِّلَوْا الَّذِينَ لَبِينُونَ بَيْنَ الْهَيْدَرَ وَلَبِينَ الْأَبَاهُ وَلَبِينُ مَا حَرَّمَ أَللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَبِينُونَ
\end{quote}

This particular passage has been chosen not only because of its intrinsic interest but also because of the importance of which Qutub evidently ascribed to it. In

\textsuperscript{276} There is a useful introduction to Qutub and his thought in Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, intellectual Origins of Islam Resurgence in the Modern Arabic World (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996) pp.219

\textsuperscript{277} Syed Qutub, \textit{Fi Zilal al-Qur‘ān}, 30parts in 6 volumes (Cairo: Dar al-Shurq, 1992). Qutub’s comments on parts 30 (Suras 79-114) have been translated into English as Sayyid Qutub in the shade of the Qur’an volume 30 (New Delhi: Taj, 1990) Since this paper was written, the Islamic Foundation (Leicester) has announced its intention of publishing a translation of the whole community.

\textsuperscript{278} Qur’an 9:29-35.
his commentary, Qutub allotted a disproportionately large amount of space to sura 4, 5, 6, 8, 33, and 49- sura which focus on the structure of the Muslim community, relation with non-Muslim, the conduct of war, and the struggle for social justice, all of which are key issues for the Islamic movement. Moreover, of the 180 pages which he devoted to sura 9, no less than thirty concern this sequence of six ayas. We propose to summarize them and then offer a brief critique. Before doing this, however, we shall try to convey to the reader something of the extent and complexity of the Qur’an material about Christians.

Sayyid Qutub’s approach is very significant and needs special attention. Qutub notes that Christians still claim that Christ is the Son of God; the Jews do not nowadays say the same of Ezra. He has no fresh light to shed on this problem but quotes Rida’s treatment of it in the Manar Commentary. Rida stressed that Jews believe that God revealed the Law of Moses to Ezra after it had been lost, and that consequently for them Ezra is closely associated with God’s word. In view of the fact that the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria said that “God has a Son; he is his word by whom He created things,” Rida thought it likely that some of the Jews of Arabia did in fact refer to Ezra as the Son of God.

As for the Christians’ erroneous belief that Christ is the Son of God, Qutub states that it originated with Paul, who falsified Christ’ smessage-Christ himself having taught the unity of God. He then quotes Rida’s standpoint on the Trinity. Rida explains that Christians believe that the Godhead comprises three persons-Father, Son and Holy Spirit- and that this is the teaching of the Catholic Church, the

---

280 The unfinished commentary begun by Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and continued after his death by Rida. The edition I have used is Muhammad Rashid Rida, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Karim al-Shahir bi-Tafsir al-Manar (Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifa, n.d.) 12 volumes.
Eastern Church, and most Protestants. He says that those who hold to this doctrine think that it is in conformity with the Bible because they interpret the Bible in the light of the writings of the Church Fathers and council. The Old Testament text which they cite are open to different interpretations. The New Testament does, however, contain two groups of text which they allege as proofs: those which refer to Father, Son and Holy Spirit together and those mention them separately but imply their interrelationship. Rida states that the dispute about the person of the Godhead began in Apostolic times under the influence of Hellenistic and Gnostic philosophies; that Bishop Theophilus of Antioch was the first Christian writer to use the Greek word trias to denote a divine triad; and that Tertullian coined the Latin term trinities. After this, he gives a brief account of early heresies; the decisions of the Council of Nicea in 325 and Constantinople in 381; and the ongoing dispute between the Greeks and Latins about the filique which was promulgated by the Council of Toledo in 589. He then mentions recent German Lutheran theologians including those who hold that the three person only denote three basic attributes of the Godhead such as power, wisdom and love, or three activities such as creating, preserving and controlling.

On the basis of Rida’s survey, Qutub concludes that it is clear that none of the denominations or schools of thought in the Christian Church follows God’s true religion. Nor does he have any sympathy for the Arian heresy, because the Arians still spoke of God as “Father” and Christ as “Son” despite holding that the Son was a creature.

The Qur’ān’s assertion that the Christians were merely imitating what unbelievers had said before them leads Qutub to mention various pagan parallels. He asserts that earlier commentators were correct in pointing to the Arabs, belief that the angels were God daughters, but in his view the Qur’ān also envisages other pagan beliefs held further afield. He refers to the divine triad Osiris, Isis and Horus in Paranoiac Egypt; Alexandrine Jewish speculations about the word as a “second God”; Assyrian references to Marcus as God’s word; Hindu belief in Brahma, Vishnu and
Shiva; and the Greek’s practice of censing and aspersing their sacrifices three times. It is mentioned at another place in the Qur’ān:

“They have taken their rabbis and monks as well as Christ, the Son of Mary as lords beside God. Yet they were commanded to worship but One God. There is no God but He! Glory be to him above those whom they associate with him”

Qutub observes that, whereas the previous verses mentioned the erroneous utterances and beliefs of the people of the scripture, this verse directs our attention to one of their practices which was based on corrupt belief: It is further evident that they are not followers of the religion of truth. He cites hadith in which the prophet explains that the Jews and Christians did not literally worship their rabbis and monks, but they took them as lords in the sense of accepting their rulings concerning what is forbidden and what is permitted.

On the basis of these Aḥādīth and the opinions of ancient and recent Qur’ānic commentators, Qutub concludes that merely ascribing the right of legislation to some one other than God, even if this is not accompanied in that person’s divinity, or acts of worship directed towards him, constitutes shirk; and that the Qur’ān text regards the Jews, who accepted legislation from the rabbis and obeyed it, and the Christians, who worshipped Christians as divine, as equally guilty of shirk, and therefore deems both groups to be unbelievers. Qutub concedes that the sequence’s original purpose was to confront the Muslims, reluctance to wage war against the Byzantines, and to be people of the scripture. Nevertheless it sets forth absolute truths concerning religion. The only true religion in God’s eye is Islam. It entails believing that he is the sole deity, and worships him alone. In addition, it entails following only his law. If human beings obey man made laws, without contesting them and making

clear that they do so only under compulsion, they are associates like the Jews and Christians, and like them they are unbelievers regardless of their alleged beliefs. Qutub laments that the word religion (din) has lost its significance for human beings and that they have reached the point where they consider it merely to mean inner belief and outward rites, rather than subjection, submission and obedience. Hence, many so called Muslims willingly obey laws other than those instituted by God. He considers that this dilution of the meaning of religion is the greatest danger facing Islam and the most deadly weapon with which its enemies wage war against it. These enemies of the true religion attempt to attach the label “Islam” to man-made statues and human institutions. It is therefore the duty of its defenders to remove this misleading label, and to disclose what lies beneath it, namely: shirk, kufr and the taking of lord beside God.
4.7

SAYYID ABUL ‘A’LĀ MAUDŪDĪ: HIS VIEWS ON JESUS
Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi’s image of Jesus may be studied in his Tafhīm al-Qur’ān, ‘Towards Understanding of the Qur’ān’.\(^{283}\) In accordance with a theological approach that is a rational re-affirmation of tradition rather than traditionalist reinterpretations, he affirms the literal meaning of the virginal birth and the miracles:

Jesus was merely a human being whom God had created in an extraordinary manner for reasons best known to Him. God had also invested Jesus with the power to perform miracles by which he could categorically establish his claim to prophethood.\(^{285}\) As to end of Jesus’ life, he states that:

> It seems perfectly reasonable that God should not have allowed such an extraordinary person to be crucified by unbelievers and should have raised him up to Himself.\(^{286}\) Accordingly, he holds the view that the expression mutawaffika in Sura 3.55 ‘to say the least, contains the possibility of being interpreted as meaning that he had raised into heaven alive’. But Maududi is not categorical in his interpretation at this point.\(^ {287}\)

After a summary of Islamic fundamentals, and notwithstanding his general conviction that the biblical scripture are corrupted, he asserts that ‘we find scattered information throughout the Gospels.\(^ {288}\) and the quotes extensively from the Gospels support his views.

The interpretation laid out in Maududi’s commentary are probably representative for mainstream neo-traditionalist theology in contemporary Islam – re-

---

\(^{283}\) Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi was born on 25th of September 1903 and died on 22 September 1979. He was a prolific writer and well known scholar of his time. He was the founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami as well.


\(^{285}\) Ibid., Note 54/Sura 3.60.

\(^{286}\) Ibid.,

\(^{287}\) Ibid., Note 51/Sura 3.55.

\(^{288}\) Ibid., Note 48/Sura 3.51.
affirming basic orthodox teachings in a non-reductionist way, and emphasizing piety, as in his commentary on the notion hawari, ‘helper/desciple’, in Sura 3.52:

When a man performs prayers, keeps his fast and worships God in other way, he is merely on the level of service and subjection to God. But when a man strive to spread God’s true religion and to enthrone it in actual life, he is honoured with the status of God’s ally and helper, which is the zenith of man’s spiritual growth.\textsuperscript{289}

With his disciples, Jesus fulfils this mission in the context of a Jewish revival, whereas the universal fulfillment is left to Muhammad (peace be upon him) ‘the greatest revolutionary’.

\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., Note 50/Sura 3.52
4.8

Jesus Christ in the Perception of Ahmed Deedat
JESUS CHRIST IN THE PERCEPTION OF AHMED DEEDAT

Born in India, and having spent most of his life in South Africa, Ahmed Deedat was never formally trained in any official Western education model. Rather, he was trained by a more traditional method of mentoring under other Muslim leaders. He was the founder of the Islamic Propagation Center International in south Africa, focusing on training Muslims to defend their faith and challenging the Religious convictions of other faith communities. His popularity as a speaker and debater reached across the English speaking world, and came to a peak in the 1980s. Muslims everywhere continue to purchase copies of his debates, lectures, and books.

In order to understand Ahmed Deedat’s representation of the Islamic Jesus one must examine both his public debates and lectures.

It seems quite relevant to mention here an attribute to Ahmad Deedat by Sairah bint Hamid bin Muhammad al-‘Abbadi in the following words:

We will begin here with his debates. Since Deedat’s popularity reached an apex in the 1980s, most of the material referred to here, obtained from his Propagation Centre, are from that time period.

In order to present a different representation of Jesus, a comparison with the more popular western or “Christian” understanding of Jesus would need to be made. This would be different if they were attempting to present a representation of Muhammad (peace be upon him) or ‘Imran, where such figures would need to be

defined rather than deconstructed. Deedat also presents positive affirmation about Jesus, citing reason and other traditional forms of support for his representation of Jesus. In providing reasons to deny Christian interpretations of certain biblical texts on Jesus and briefly affirming his Islamic representation, Deedat presents the Islamic Jesus to his audience.

Muslims believe that Jesus is not divine; Deedat comments that the only difference between Christians and Muslims is the “divinity of Jesus.” He further notes that “the only way we differ is saying that he is not God in humanly form, that he is not God incarnate, he is not the begotten Son of God.” According to Deedat, the only place in the New Testament where there is a record of Jesus saying anything of the sort is in Revelation, a book he considers to be dream of a man who had too much to eat.” Thus Deedat affirms that “there is not a in any of the sixty-six books of the Bible where Jesus says ‘I am God’ or says, worship me.”

Nor in his view is the doctrine of the Trinity a radical doctrine, one that a Muslim can upload. The idea of three persons, in one Almighty being, runs contrary to common language and sense. If one member of triplets committed murder, it would not make to “hang the other.” Therefore, Deedat’s affirms that both scripture and reason inhabit the belief that Jesus was divine.

Deedat’s points can be grouped in four areas: the submission of Jesus, the title of Jesus, the message of Jesus and the humanity of Jesus. Concerning the first point, the submission of Jesus to God, Deedat’s notes that Jesus told people to worship Allah “who is my Lord and your Lord,” and that associating anything with him will be

---

293 Ahmed Deedat, Moulana A.R. Soofie, Fr. Bonaventure Hinwood, and John Gilchrist, "Islam and Christianity,” videocassette (South Africa: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1983), 16:00. This dialogue took place on the television show known as "Cross Questions." on South Africa Broadcast Company hosted by Bill Chalmers.
294 Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:17:00.
295 Ibid., 1:15:00.
296 Ibid., 1:18:00.
damnation. Deedat’s refers then to the Gospel of Matthew, and speaks of how Jesus refers to God as “your Father” thirteen times before ever saying my father. Deedat sees this as Jesus “telling you that God is the Father of everyone, metaphysically, [the] Creator, sustainer, involver, cherisher of everyone. But physically he does not beget, because begetting is an animal act.

Second, as for the titles of Jesus, the title “Son of God” is an “idiom of the Jew” saying that Jesus was a “righteous person.” For how then, Deedat’s adds, should one understand the references to the other Sons of God, like Adam, in the Christian Bible? Deedat’s then jokes, “how many Sons does God have? The Christian says “ONE”! I say that you are not reading the Bible properly. You know God has sons by the tones.... Every Tom, Dick or Harry, if you follow the will and plan of God, you are a Godly person.” Deedat challenges the Christian to come up with a definition for the idea that Jesus was “begotten,” and he says no one has done so in the forty years during which he has lectured.

Concerning the third point, Jesus’ own teachings about himself, Deedat states that it is heresy, according to the Catholic Church Councils, to say that Jesus is the Father. However, Jesus claims that there is only one Father (Matt 23:9) and Peter notes that Jesus did great works through the power of God (Acts 2:32). Jesus’ message, then, was that God was one, and that he himself was not God.

Deedat’s most cannon area of debate, the fourth point here, concerns the humanity of Jesus. Deedat’s often focuses solely on this in debates and lectures. He strives to prove that the statements about Jesus in the New Testament really show that Jesus is solely human not divine. Deedat first notes that “God is not like anything you can imagine.” Humans cannot conceive of what God is like; they can know

297 Ibid., 1:20:00.
298 Ibid., 1:21:00.
299 Ibid., 1:23:00.
300 Ibid., 1:22:00.
301 Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:27:00. Here Deedat charges that Shorrosh, in one of his writings, actually adheres to the heresy known as “modalism”.
302 Ibid., 1:29:00
certain things about him, but not what comprises his essence. Deetat remarks, however, that human are told what God is not: he is not human. Basing his defense on Job 25:6, Deedat’s states that Jesus was born of a women, and that every person born of a women is a “maggot” in the eyes of God. Moreover the “son of man” cannot be an exception; even though he was born of a virgin, this does not make him God. Adam has no father or mother nor did the priest Melchizedek, and they are not seen as gods. Deedat charges that Melchizedek, referring to the epistle of Hebrews, “had no beginning, no end. Who is greater? Melchizedek... [and] he deserves to be worshipped as God by [Christians].”

Furthermore, the New Testament states the Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), to which Deedat voices: “God getting circumcised?”

Deedat then asks his authence to imagine that they were the “nurse” who helped deliver Jesus. “Can you think of this child, covered in filth, is your God? No, the human mind repels at the idea that this puny little creature [is God].” In addition, the New Testament and the Qur’ān note that Jesus and Mary ate. So “if they ate”, Deedat comments, “then they had a call of nature. If you eat, you have to sometime find a toilet.” For Deedat, these things seem unclean and therefore are not worthy of deity.

Jesus never claimed that he was God or asked for worship, Deedat states. Rather, he claimed that he could do nothing of himself (John 5:30). The New Testaments says that Jesus did miracles by the power of God (Luke 11:20, Matt 12:28), and that he gave the glory to God for any miracle that he performed. Also, Jesus cried out to God on the cross (Matt 27:46; and Mark 15:34). Deedat comments by saying,

---

303 Ibid.
304 Ibid., 1:57:00
305 Ibid., 1:32:00
306 Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:33:00. Deedat also notice that Mary was made unclean by the birth of Jesus, and asks if God can make one unclean.
307 Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:51:00
“who is he crying to? Himself? Is he putting up an act? If he is God, how can he let himself down?”

What then of John 10:30 were Jesus says that he and the Father are one? Deedat responds that the context of the passage shows that this was oneness of purpose or mission. Additionally, when Jesus says that seeing him is seeing the Father (John 14:13), one must look at it in context of what is said previously.

Beforehand, Deedat comments, the disciples misunderstood the location of the place that Jesus was to prepare for them. One can therefore understand that here Jesus was speaking to the issue of understanding and saying, “if you understand me, you understand the Father.”

The key for Deedat’s proof that Jesus was merely a man, albeit a great messenger of God is the crucifixion account. Deedat’s understanding of the crucifixion parallels that of the Islamic group known as the Ahmadiyya Movement, although Deedat himself does not explicitly make that connection in debate, lecture or dialogue. Deedat’s theory of the crucifixion account is important to his discussion of the humanity of Jesus, and he has spent a great deal of time on promoting it in debate and lecture.

In one such debate with Christian polemicist Josh McDowell, Deedat presents this theory to a mixed audience of Christians and Muslims in South Africa. Claiming to be the defending legal council for Jews, who have been supposedly

---

308 Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:58:00. Deedat also makes a comment that Jesus also says here that the word Hallelujah is really Allah-lu-ya, “he is Allah.” In other lectures. Deedat makes a greater point of how Allah is secretly found through Bible.

309 Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:19:00

310 Many of Deedat’s point about the crucifixion account seem to parallel the statements made by Maulana Muhammad Ali, and muslim intellectual called on by the founder of Ahmadiyya Movement to serve Islam through writing. See Maulana Muhammad Ali, Muhammad and Christ (Ohio:Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Lahore Inc.,1993), 86-89. It should be noted that Deedat has not publicly admitted to any ideological dependence upon Bahaisim or the Ahmadiyya Movement. There are those muslims who, however, point to some of Deedat’s respected mentors who have identified with such ideologies. See the article reprinted from the Muslim Digest on the Christian polemical website www.answering-islam.org/Responses/Deedat/deedat.htm.

charged by the Christians with killing Jesus, Deedat proceeds to examine those testimonies and witnesses of the events surrounding the crucifixion in the New Testament Gospels.

Deedat begins by dismissing the writers to whom the Gospels are attributed, because they did not sign their names to their “respective gospels,” so there is no “signed testimony”. He then mentions that one of these witnesses claims that all the followers of Jesus fled from him when a crucial point came (i.e., the arrest), so there testimony can be tossed out. With these two arguments, Deedat feels that he was able to dismiss the Christian charge within “two minutes.”

Nevertheless Deedat decides that he will examine the testimony of the witnesses found in the Gospels. Deedat turns first to the statement made in Luke 24:36 where, after the supposed resurrection, Jesus appears before a fearful group of disciples. Deedat asks: “why were they afraid?” They thought he was a ghost, he answers, because they assumed from hearsay that he was dead. At the scene, Jesus assures him that he is not a ghost, but flesh and blood. In doing so, Deedat asserts, Jesus here is claiming that he is not a resurrected, nor a spiritualized body, but a real body.

Second, Deedat refers to the narrative account of Mary Magdalene found in John 20:1 and Mark 16:1. From these passages he claims that Mary was coming to the tomb to “anoint Jesus’ body,” meaning that she was coming to “massage” the body of Jesus. Deedat asks whether Jews, Christians or Muslims “massage dead bothes” after three days of decomposition. No, Deedat answers, and says that she must have expected Jesus to be alive. Deedat’s says that “she must have seen signs of life in the limp body as it was taken down from the cross.” Mary was one of the three people to give last rites to Jesus and must have seen that he was alive. As Mary came to the tomb, she saw that the stone had been removed and that the sheets were laid inside. Deedat wonders why this would need to happen to a resurrected body who could walk through stone walls. He concludes that the stone needed to be removed for a
human. Jesus sees Mary weeping in front of the tomb, and asks whom she was seeking. Jesus seemed to be in disguise, Deedat contends, for Mary thought the hewas gardener. The reason for his disguise was that he was hiding from the Jews. So if he was afraid of the Jews then he must have been someone who just escaped from their hands, not that he had risen from the dead. For, “if he thed and conquered death, why would he have been afraid of the Jews?” Mary responds to Jesus’ question by asking the gardener (Jesus) for Jesus’ body, so she could take him away. Deedat states that she did not mean that she could carry the body always herself, but she meant that she could lead him away. After this, Jesus reveals himself to Mary, and in joy she moves to take hold of him. However, he “tells her not to touch him. Why? Because he is a bundle of electricity?” No, because he was in pain and she would hurt him. Deedat also makes note of how Jesus said that he had not “ascended to the Father yet,” which was a “Jewish idiom for meaning that he was not dead yet”.

Deedat then asks: “who moved the stone?” He refers to a tradition that the tomb was in the middle of a vegetable garden, owned by Joseph of Arimathea. When Joseph brought Jesus to the tomb, Joseph himself put the stone in front of the tomb. So if one man put a stone in front of the tomb, it would only take one man to move it.

Deedat emphasizes the “sign of Jonah” in this debate, stating that Jesus himself prophesied that he would be in the earth three days and three nights, like Jonah was in the “belly of the whale.” Deedat emphasizes the point that Jonah did not the in the belly of the great fish, and Jesus was saying the same about his crucifixion. The miracle attributed to both Jonah and Jesus is not the time factor, that is, that they were there for three days; it was rather the expectation that Jesus and Jonah would the. Yet, “if Jesusthed, there is no miracle. There’s no sign. If he didn’t the, its a miracle.” For Deedat the miracle is in the idea that everyone expected Jesus to the, but he did not, just like one would expect a man who was “shot six times” in the heart to the, and he does not.
Deedat states that the Jews, who feared Jesus’ public influence, managed to put Jesus to trial and place him on a cross. However, they did not manage to kill him that it only seemed that they had succeeded, and Jesus’ actions afterward belie that assumption.

In Deedat’s opinion, it is wrong to take all these narratives as proof that Jesus, a man, is divine. To do so is to develop an anthropomorphic conception of God, Deedat concludes. There is no clear statement in the New Testament where Jesus says that he is God, or asks for worship. Deedat then adds: if one has already established that Jesus was not divine, the crucifixion then “would be secondary” and need not be debated. For “any human being giving his life could not save other human.” According to Deedat, Jesus is a mighty messenger of God, and listening correctly to “what he says” will lead you to Islam.

Accordingly, one can develop two ideas about the Islamic Jesus from these Negative pronouncements of the Christian representation of Jesus. The first is that Jesus never claimed divinity. Through Jesus’ statements of submission the Father, his reliance on the power of the Father, and the command to worship to the Father, Jesus moved the focus from himself to the one God. The second idea is that those who attribute divinity to Jesus are in error. In reading the scriptures, if a Christian understands the title attributed to Jesus as implying his divinity, that person is wrong. Not do the crucifixion and resurrection imply divinity, for these events never occurred in the way Christians have traditionally understood them. Rather, Jesus was to escape death, by the power of God. Furthermore, the whole Notion of God being a man, or God being three persons, is contrary to common Logic. Consequently, the Islamic Jesus is a person who is not, and never claimed to be, divine, but saw himself as a messenger of God, who escaped death by appearing to have the death, and led others to worship the one and only God.

312 Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:51:00.
313 Deedat and Gilchrist, “Islam and Christianity,” 16:00:
314 Deedat and Shorosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 2:02:00-2:03:00
In Deedat’s debates, he makes little effort to defend Qur’ānic statements about Jesus. Nor does he refer much to what the Qur’ān has to say about Jesus. Nevertheless, the brief passing references to the Qur’ān and Muslim belief do aid in developing a Deedation representation of the Islamic Jesus.

Often, while beginning his talks with the statement of faith that “Islam is the only non-Christian faith which makes it an article of faith to believe in Jesus,” Deedat will normally include another phrase on Muslim belief about Jesus, following the first:

[Jesus is] one of the mightiest messengers of God. He’s the Messiah. We believe in his miraculous birth. We believe that he gave life to the dead, by God’s permission. We believe that he gave sight to the blind, by God’s permission. We believe that he healed the lepers, by God’s permission.  

What this means, then, is that Judaism, Christian and Islam are not three different religions, but the “same religion on different levels.” God gave his messengers fitting instruction for the needs of the people at that time. Jesus’ mission was to come and solve the problem for the Jews.” Thus, without referring to any particular passage in the Qur’ān or Hadith, Deedat presents these positive polemical affirmations of the Islamic Jesus as based in Islamic doctrine.

Deedat also includes unspecified references to Islamic scripture when dialoguing about the Islamic Jesus. For instance, in his debate with McDowell, Deedat claims that the Muslim is told in no uncertain terms, in the Holy Qur’ān, the lost and final revelation of God, that they didn’t kill him, nor did they crucify him. But it was

---

515 Deedat and Gilchrist, “Islam and Christianity.” 1:00
516 Deedat and Gilchrist, “Islam and Christianity.” 16:00; Deedat and McDowell. “Was Christ Crucified?” and Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:15:00-1:16:00.
517 Ibid., 4:00.
518 Ibid.
519 Ibid.
made to appear to them so.”  

Then in debate with Shorrosh, Deedat adds that the Qur’an condemns anyone who says that Jesus is God as a “kafir” (unbeliever). Finally, in the same debate he again refers to the “Qur’an” saying that “Jesus Son of Mary was no more than an apostle. Many messengers came before him and his mother was righteous woman.”

Therefore it would seem that the Qur’an for Deedat provides the foundation from which he levels his polemic against the Christian representations of Jesus. This foundation, however, is certainly underwater, and one can only see bits and pieces of it above. Moreover, these brief references fell once again into the two main Categories of affirmation about the Islamic Jesus. One is that Jesus led a miraculous life. He was born by a miracle, he did great miracles of healing, and he was not crucified because of a miracle. Second, Jesus was a messenger of God not divine, who was sent to the Jews people to correct problems.

CONCLUSION-COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

In then examining some of Deedat’s popular and most common polemical material, one can perceive several affirmations about his representation of the Islamic Jesus. There seems to be no major difference between the negative and positive polemical affirmations-although in negative polemical affirmations, Deedat does not focus on the miraculous life of Jesus, and in his positive affirmations he does not discuss the claims of others for the divinity of Jesus.

Yet within these points Deedat casts a dramatic picture of Jesus who was a prophet, living and proclaiming the message of God to the people of Israel. He rose to great popularity through great miraculous works and messages that reformed Judaism.

320 Deedata and McDowell, “was Christ Crucified?” 1.
321 Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?” 1:20:00
322 Ibid. 1:49:00.
323 Deedat does briefly mention the miracles of Jesus in reference to Peter’s sermon in Acts 2. And how it was through the power of God that he did miracles.
324 However, he does make one reference to a Qur’anic passage that states that one is an infidel if they say Jesus was God.
When his popularity grew too much, his enemies sought to have him killed. They were finally able to have one of Jesus’ followers betray him. Jesus was aware of this betrayal and formulated a military plan for his defence. When he realized that he was outnumbered, he yielded to his enemies and they went to have him crucified. Yet, on the cross, Jesus fainted and was believed to be dead. Followers of Jesus who were at the crucifixion, none being his disciples, realized that Jesus was alive and went to hide him in a tomb to recover. The disciples heard that Jesus was dead, and when he appeared to them they thought that he was a ghost. Jesus then reassured them of his real humanity, and so ends the story of Jesus.

As such the representation of Jesus that one finds in Ahmed Deedat’s most popular polemical materials include three main affirmations. The first is that Jesus was not divine and never claims to be Second Jesus was a message of God, a prophet who lived a miraculous life, including the apparent crucifixion where Jesus swooned under torture to revive later. Third, those who claim that Jesus was divine in error. If they are contemporary Christian theologians, then they have misunderstood their primary source material. If they were the original witnesses of Jesus, then they were admitting that he was not divine and have been misunderstood. Can these three affirmations be similar to those found in Deedat’s descriptive material?

Ahmed Deedat was also a prolific speaker, lecturer and writer. He aims to train Muslims to understand their faith better and to challenge those of rival religious traditions, primarily Christianity and Hinduism. There is a great amount of consistency between Deedat’s polemical material and his descriptive material, being lecture and booklets. It would be best, therefore, to examine these lectures as a whole, emphasizing again both their positive and negative depictions of Jesus.

A significant percentage of Deedat’s lecture time is given to polemics against the Christian representations of Jesus. Even in a lecture aimed particularly at the person of Jesus in Islam, there is a large portion on deconstructing the Christian position. As with the polemical dialogue material, many people to whom Deedat
speaks or Christians and may be hearing an Islamic representation of Jesus for the first time.

What sort of representation of Jesus would one get from listening to Deedat lecture on Christianity?" Deedat adds: “our Christian countrymen are unaware that Islam is the only religion outside of Christianity that they makes it an article of faith to believe in Jesus.” Deedat affirms that Christians often think that He is pandering to them by praising Jesus, “to curry favor with them.” Deedat also assures Christians that Muslims “don’t have another Christ.”

Speaking to a majority Christian audience at Wichita State University on the subject “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” Deedat starts by mentioning how Christian missionaries, echoing C. S. Lewis, charge Muslims that “you can refer to Jesus Christ as lunatic, liar, or lord.” Deedat affirms that no Muslim would agree with any of these three statements. Rather, Muslims “believe that he is a mighty messenger of God. We believe that he was Messiah. We believe that he was born miraculously. We believe he gave life to the dead and healed the blind and lepers by God’s Permission.”

Confirming that the name “Jesus” is mentioned five times more than the name of Muhammad in the Qur’ān, a book which is “supposedly the book that is made up by Muhammad. Deedat’s mentions that the Qur’ān highly honours Jesus, “Son of Mary,” referring to him as “Messiah,” “messenger of God,” “servant of God,” “word

---

325 Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” videocassette (South Africa: Islamic propagation Center International, 1983), 10:00-11:00.
326 Ibid., 12:00.
327 Ibid., 13:00.
328 Ibid., 16:00.
329 Ahmed Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity: A Comparative Study,” videocassette (South Africa: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1986). The debate was held at Wichita State University on November 07, 1986 and occurred after a debate with American television evangelist, Jimmy Swaggart.
330 Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 14:00.
331 Ibid., 14:00-15:00; and Deedat, Christ in Islam,” 12:00-13:00.
332 Ibid., 16:00; and Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 14:00.
of God,” and as “the sign of God.” As such, Deedat states the there is a great deal of respect for Jesus in Islam, and that there is no opposition between Muhammad and Jesus, for there is a “brotherhood of prophets.”

Continuing from what is for him a typical introduction, Deedat normally discusses the birth of Jesus. Focusing on Mary, the mother of Jesus, Deedat notes that the Quran states that Mary was “chosen above all women”, a notion that is not even “found in the Christian Bible.” Recounting a story that in Christian circle has resonance in the Protevangelium of James, he states that the mother of Mary was barren and prayed for a child. She wanted a son but God gave her a daughter, and she vowed to give the child to Temple service. When Mary was old enough for temple service, many of the priests disputed who should be the guardian of this child. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, managed to obtain the guardianship of Mary. Deedat teasingly asks from where Muhammad could get such information if he himself had written the Quran rather than God revealing it to him-and how could it come to pass that an Arab man speak so highly of a Jewish women? For him the conclusion is evident: it must have been God who commanded him to say so.

Mary according to Deedat’s narrative taken from the Qur’ān, was given “glad tidings” about Jesus and how he would be the Messiah. The message says that he “will be honoured in this world and the hereafter, of the company of those nearest to God.” Mary was confused, admitting that she was a virgin however the text says: “Allah will decree whatever he will. He says, BE, and it is.” Deedat adds a comment saying that if God wanted to make millions of Jesus all not having a Father, he could do so. No doubt, Deedat is downplaying the uniqueness of the virgin birth of Jesus.

---

333 Ibid., 14:00-15:00.
335 Deedat, Christ in Islam,” 23:00-25:00.
336 Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 27:00; and Deedat: “Christ in Islam” 25:00-29:00.
337 Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 28:00.
338 Ibid., 29:00.
Deedat continues the Qur’anic story of Jesus by mentioning the first miracle of Jesus. When the time for Mary’s child birth came, she retired to the east. “In the Qur’an” there no Joseph the carpenter and no stable,” Deedat adds.\(^\text{339}\) After the birth, she returns to her people and they sarcastically note that she is immoral having a child without a husband and being of a priestly family. So in Mary defense Jesus speaks, saying that he is a servant of God, and that Allah and made him “kind and not overbearing.” “So peace be to me on the day I was born, the day I the, and that I shall be raised to life again.”\(^\text{340}\)

Deedat asks: ”but what does this miraculous birth prove? That this person is divine? We say no, the Qur’an says that the view of Jesus is the same as Adam.”\(^\text{341}\) If Jesus became God because he had no Father, then “Adam would be a greater God because he had no Father or mother.” Furthermore, Melchizedek had no Father or mother, no beginning and no end, and thus would be greater than Jesus and Adam.\(^\text{342}\)

Deedat affirms that Christians and Muslims part company on their respective interpretations of Jesus. For, “the Muslim is told to believe that [Jesus] is not God. For the Muslim is told to believe that Jesus is not God incarnate, and that he is not begotten,”\(^\text{343}\) adding that God cannot beget because begetting is an action of the lower animal functions of sex.

Nothing that there is “not a single verse where Jesus says that he is God, or worship me,”\(^\text{344}\) Deedat affirms that Christians are loose in their language when they talk about God (e.g. John 3:16). He also adds other supporting points for his argument. Deedat observes that the Revised Standard Version of the New testament has dropped the word “begotten” from John 3:16 and the idea of Trinity in John 5:7.\(^\text{345}\) Furthermore, Deedat states that out of the 124,000 manuscripts of the New

---

\(^{339}\) Ibid., 33:00.


\(^{341}\) Deedat, “Christ t in Islam and Christianity,” 48:00.

\(^{342}\) Deedat, “Christ t in Islam and Christianity,” 51:00-52:00.

\(^{343}\) Ibid., 37:00 ;55:00

\(^{344}\) Deedat, “Christ t in Islam,” 57:00

\(^{345}\) Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 46:00 and 50:00-52:00
Testament “no two” are identical. In his view, when the Christian notion of God begetting a Son is erroneous. For instance, the title “Son of God” is figurative for showing a close relationship. Also, the statement of Jesus being one with the Father (John 1:1) has been taken out of context; in context it means that they are one in purpose. Furthermore, Jesus’ miracles are also not proof of divinity, because there were other prophets as well who performed miracles. Even Jesus added that there would be false prophets who would do great miracles. “These are not standards for judging who and who is not a messenger of God,” Deedat’s claims. He adds that the ascension narrative has been discredited in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, suggesting that it is a fictitious event. Indeed, for Deedat the idea of the incarnated deity is a Hindu idea. He concludes by saying that Muslims “respect and revere” God’s messengers, but do not worship them.

In another lecture, to a largely Muslim audience in South Africa, Deedat exclaim his notion of crucifixion as a defense for the human nature of Jesus. Titling it “crucifixion or cruci-fiction,” Deedat begins by saying, “on the subject of the crucifixion, the Muslim is told in uncertain terms in (surah 4:157), that they did not crucify him, but it was made to appear so.” He adds that the Muslim needs no other proof than this statement, but that the Christian cannot understand how a man “one

---

346 Ibid., 47:00.
347 Ibid., 40:00. Deedat, “Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 58:00-1:06:00. Here Deedat goes into the Greek, saying that this passage does not say hos theos, but rather it says ton theos meaning “a god,” which is a godly person. Deedat here is referring to the use of theos in the first verse of John. The Greek text reads theos alone (not ton theos, as Deedat claims), rather than ho theos (not hos theos, as Deedat claims). Interpreters of this verse have long debated the significance of the absence of the definite article before theos; many would corroborate Deedat’s reading.
349 Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 1:10:00.
350 Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 56:00.
351 Ibid., 1:08:00.
352 Ahmad Deedat, “Crucifixion or Crucifixion,” videocassette (South Africa: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1983). One can find this same information, slightly expanded in some areas, in a booklet written by Ahmed Deedat. See Ahmed Deedat, was Christ Crucified? (Illinois: Library of Islam, 1992).
353 Ahmad Deedat, “Crucifixion or Crucifixion,” 16:00.
thousand miles from the scene, and six hundred years away in time, knows something that happened in Jerusalem.”

Deedat notes that the Christian’s salvation depends on this idea of crucifixion. He refers to 1 Corinthians 14:15, Paul’s claim to have eyewitness accounts of the events. Deedat’s proof for the legitimacy of his view is in the divinely inspired quality of the Qur’an—and in the practices of modern Muslims. He charges that Christians cannot teach Muslims hygiene or morality. For the Muslim “has the lowest alcoholic rat in the country, the lowest gambling rate in the country, the lowest divorce rate in the country, and has the highest charity rate in the country.” Muslim practices, therefore, in his view support the inspired nature of the Qur’an. And the inspired nature of the Qur’an clearly indicates that Jesus was not crucified.

Adding to the material already seen in his polemical dialogues, Deedat, speaking from the Lukan account, asserts that Jesus came into Jerusalem riding a donkey, with an appreciation to establish of the Kingdom of God. It was the Jewish priests who convinced Jesus to subdue his disciples because of the Romans. Since his march into the city was a failure, Jesus and his disciples retreated to the “Upper room and supposed Last Supper.”

Knowing that Judas was to betray him, he told his disciples to obtain sword, and prepare for war. In the middle of the night, Jesus took his men to Gethsemane. He put eight men “armed to the teeth,” at the gate of the garden and brought three other men as a line of inner defense while he prayed. Jesus prayed in agony for salvation, and God answered his prayer through the assurance of an angel.

As the disciples fell asleep, from overeating and drinking, “the Jews came. Deedat states that the Jews were cunning, for they brought Roman soldiers with

---

354 Ibid., 18:00.
355 Ibid., 19:00-20:00.
356 Ibid., 21:00.
357 Ibid., 32:00-34:00.
358 Ibid., 43:00-45:00. Deedat counters what Luke aid about them falling asleep from sorrow, and wonders whether Luke even knew medicine at all.
them. Jesus underestimated their intelligence. So when Peter attacked one of them, Jesus told his men put their swords away, for he knew he would not win. Deedat continues his dramatization by saying that the Jews put Jesus on trial, knowing that if they sacrificed this one man the “Romans would not come because of insurrection.”

Repeating almost verbatim the ideas expressed in his polemical dialogues, Deedat further illustrates the previous ideas with an account of Jesus on the road to Emmaus, saying that the words “Jesus vanished” simply means that he left. They recognized him and he feared that they would tell the Jews. The reason for Jesus’ fear was that he had escaped death and did not want his enemies to know that he has escaped.

In explaining why Christians read these accounts and do not see, Deedat says: “people can be brainwashed.” Adding that the crucifixion has become joke by God,” Deedat summarizes his position by stating thirty points that give proof that Jesus did not die on the cross, based on the New Testament and other sources, other than the ones mentioned in polemical and descriptive areas. Deedat adds that Jesus did not want to die, that Pilate found him not guilty, that Jesus was only on the cross for three hours, there is medical evidence for people dying coming back to life again, his legs were not broken, water and blood from his side shows life, a storm hid his condition, Jews doubted his death, and the shroud of Turin shows that Jesus was alive.

Deedat concludes again with the discussion of the Sign of Jonah, and how even Jesus knew that he would remain alive. He further notes that the three days and

---

359 Deedat charges that the disciples were like "women" in giving up so easily. He adds that Jesus once said to turn the other cheek, then told them to pick up swords, then reversed his decision and ordered them to put them down. Deedat, “Crucifixion or Crucifixion,” 48:00.
360 Deedat, “Crucifixion or Crucifixion,” 51:00.
361 Ibid., 1:07:00. In Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 1:18:00 he says that Christians have been programmed in regards to the deity of Jesus.
362 Ibid., 1:17:00. In Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 1:18:00 he says that Christians have been programmed in regards to the deity of Jesus.
363 Deedat goes on to show different examples of how people conceive a crucifixion. He noted that Josh McDowell’s version looks like a frog, so it is “frog-i-fiction.” Also, the Jehovah Witnesses have Jesus on a stake, hence it is “stake-i-fiction.” He also notes how people in the Philippines reenact the crucifixion every Good Friday.
three nights during which Jesus was supposedly in the tomb are not consistent dime period from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. Then he claims that Christians will begin affirming that Jesus died on a Good Wednesday, for “when knew things come out, your Christians just lap it up.” In his finale, Deedat assures Muslims that they “don’t have to apologize for [their] religion. The Christian has to apologies for his religion, for his Trinity, for his Jesus.”

Deedat presents a dramatic and thought provoking descriptive account of the person of Jesus in Islam. His descriptive accounts bring out a fuller expression of certain ideas raised in his polemical dialogue. In his lectures, he spends much more time describing the events of Jesus’ birth and the events of supposed death and resurrection of Jesus. His lecture representation of the Islamic Jesus can be grouped under affirmations. The first affirmation is that Jesus is highly respected by Muslim and praised by the Qur’ān. Jesus is given titles of honour and is seen as one of the greatest men to ever have lived. He is one who is very close to God, set apart from before he was born. The second affirmation is that Jesus was the Messiah and led a miraculous life. Nevertheless, even in Deedat’s descriptive accounts, little time is spent on Jesus’ miracles. They are merely noted. What is more important to Deedat is the emphasis on the birth narrative of Jesus. This narrative is brought back to the story of Jesus’ mother, Mary, and how the two were set apart by God for a glorious life of service. Deedat notes the importance of Jesus’ first miracle, speaking as a babe, and compares that to the first miracle of Jesus in the New Testament Gospel. The third affirmation is that Jesus was not divine. Deedat points to the titles attributed to Jesus in New Testament as figurative (e.g. Son of God), and how the statements of Jesus have been taken out of context (e.g., oneness with the Father). Deedat focuses one crucifixion and resurrect accounts to affirm that the Qur’ānic injunction that Jesus was not crucified and to highlight Jesus’ humanity and reliance on God for salvation.

---

564 Deedat refers to an article by the Rev. Armstrong, the leader of Worldwide Church of God, who claimed that evidence from the New Testament shows that Jesus died on a Wednesday.

565 Deedat, “Crucifixion or Crucifiction,” 1: 57:00.

566 Deedat, “Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 47:00.
Ahmed Deedat is one of a kind among religious polemicists. Much of his work has been pioneering amongst Muslim polemicists in the West, as will be seen in our examination of Jamāl Badawī. After examining some of the key polemical dialogues in which Ahmed Deedat’s has been involved and some of his key lectures, one can appreciate that there is great consistency in Deedat’s content and presentation from one venue to another.367

It is fair to conclude that Deedat has three key affirmations in representing the Islamic Jesus. The first affirmation is that Jesus was not divine nor ever claimed to be. Jesus was a human, like every other human born of a woman. He was comprised of flesh and bone, and he made sure that his followers believed the same. He never asked to be called a God, or never claimed that he was to be worshipped. Jesus never claimed divinity, and neither did his earliest followers. Reference to the titles of Jesus, including those that suggest divinity, are really figurative ways of explaining relationship. The second affirmation is that Jesus was a mighty messenger of God, a prophet of God and the Jewish messiah. Jesus had a mission that was to the people of Israel, to Reform Judaism. His messianic message was that of directing people back to the worship of one God, to whom he referred as Father. The third affirmation is that Jesus led of miracles life. The miracles concerning Jesus began with the miracle of his mothers, birth, being born to a woman who was barren. Mary was blessed by to bear Messiah, who was set apart from before conception to be a Messiah, and one who was of the company closest to God. The life that Jesus lived was full of miracles many which are not described. He raised the dead, healed the sick, made the blind to see, and healed the leper, all which were done through him by God. Jesus miraculous life included his near death. God saved Jesus by allowing people to believe that he had died, although he had only fainted and was able to recover in the tomb of Joseph.

367 Deedat, “Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 56:00.
4.9

JESUS IN THE THOUGHT OF JAMĀLBADAWĪ
JESUS IN THE THOUGHT OF JAMĀL BADAWĪ

Dr. Jamāl Badawī is associate Professor of Management at St. Mary’s University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. After studying for his undergraduate degree in Egypt, Badawī later obtained an MBA and a Ph.D from Indiana University. A committed believer and self-educated intellectual of Islam, over the years he has come to teach classes in Islam in his university’s Department of Religion. In the mid 1980s Badawī, the imam for the local Muslim community formed the Islamic Information Foundation. The IIF, based in Halifax, is an organization committed to the propagation of Islam in North America. There is no doubt that Badawī is the most respected and sought after Muslim polemicist in North America. Debating the leading Christian polemicists of the 1990s and today, Badawī has traveled throughout the world in his work and has mentored others in the same endeavors.

We will examine Jamāl Badawī’s representation of Jesus by looking at both the extensive debate and lecture material. Badawī is one of the most prolific speakers on the subject of Jesus, especially in dialogue with Christian representatives. So his representation of the Islamic Jesus covers many topics.

Since Jamāl Badawī is a popular polemicist and defender of faith for the North American Muslim community, he has had many opportunities to debate Christian scholars before religiously mixed audiences. As such, it is not difficult to imagine that in his many public polemical engagements there are a number of non Muslims who are hearing an Islamic representation of Jesus for the first time. One can imagine young North American university student from a largely conservative Christian community and family coming into contact with their first Muslim and not only their first Muslim but their first exposure to the Islamic view of Jesus, what representation or picture of the Islamic Jesus would that young student take away from this experience?
In most of Badawī’s debates a representation of the Islamic Jesus is developed by making negative assertions about the Christian representations of Jesus. Therefore, similar to Ahmed Deedat, Badawī’s representation of the Islamic Jesus seems to come from an attempt to disprove or correct the Christian Conception of God. The realization of this fact can be seen in one debate with Christian polemicist and philosopher, William Lane Craig. After making an opening presentation and one rebuttal, Craig criticizes Badawī for not putting forth positive argument for defending the Islamic conception of God.368

Badawī’s Polemic against Christian representations of God is based on three basic foundations grounded in the Qur’ān and Islamic theology. The first foundation is the belief that the Qur’ān is the ultimate authority for the Muslim. The second foundation is the positive affirmation of the Islamic concept of monotheism. The third foundation is the Qur’ānic statement that the religious texts of Judaism and Christianity have been corrupted. All three give pride of place to an Islamic perspective.

First, Badawī clearly asserts that Muslims put their trust in the Qur’ān, and “that alone” as the first and last source for truth.369 In one debate, when pressed on the issue that the great majority of New Testament scholars claim that the crucifixion of Jesus is the single certain historical claim about Jesus, Badawī replies: “for Muslims [the] Qur’ān is the Word of God”. Even if ninety-nine percent of humanity agrees with one thing and God says something [else] to the Muslim, this is the Word of God.370

Second, Badawī states that the Qur’ānic concept of God is a genuine monotheism. He offers three conditions for a believer to have a genuine monotheism (Tawḥīd): God is the sole creator and sustainer of the universe; God alone is worthy

369 Jamāl Badawī, Dudley Woodberry, and others, “Is Mohammed a Prophet of God?” videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video, 1993), 5:00. Please note that all Badawī’s videos referred to in this chapter are produced by Ghazzali Video, and can be found on the Internet at www.islamicity.org/video, as wellas through Ghazzali Video.
370 Badawī and Craig, “Concept of God,” 71:00.
of worship and none can be worshipped besides him; and God is one numerically in both attributes and person.\(^{371}\)

Third, Badawī follows mainstream Muslim belief in arguing for the corruption of the previous scriptures of the Christians and the Jews. This is a key point for Badawī’s polemic against the Christian conceptions of Jesus. Badawī affirms that the Christian Bible only contains some of the word of God, but is not the word of the God from beginning to end. The Qur’an speaks about the original revelations of the Torah to Moses, the Psalms to David, and the Gospel to Jesus, but these have all been lost.\(^{372}\) What is found in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures today are the thoughts, written by others, claiming to be the original revelation. How does one this cover what parts of the Jewish and Christian scriptures are true? Badawī claimed that the Muslim“does not accept the Bible in total, or reject it in total”:\(^{373}\) the Qur’an is the criterion for what is true in the Bible.\(^{374}\)

Based on these three foundations, Badawī sets out in debate to show two contentions first is that Jesus was and is not divine, and the second is that Jesus was never crucified or resurrected. To be sure these two negative affirmations would likely challenge an audience who may have had no contact with the Islamic Jesus before.

Badawī’s first contention, that Jesus is not divine, is established through two arguments. The first argument is based on the interpretation of some key texts of the Christian New Testament. Badawī separates these statements into statements of misinterpretation and statement of metaphorical language. The second argument is that Jesus affirmed his full and exclusive humanity, which is opposite to Christian thought over the centuries.

---

\(^{371}\) Jamāl Badawī, Dudley Woodberry, and others, “Concept of God in Christianity and Islam: Part One,” videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video, 1993). 29:00-31:00. See also Badawī and Craig, "Concept of God," 29:00.

\(^{372}\) Jamāl Badawī, Dudley Woodberry, and others, "Is the Bible the Word of God?" videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video. 1993), 10:00-11:00.

\(^{373}\) Badawī and Shorrost, "Divinity," 32:00.

\(^{374}\) Badawī and Woodberry, "Bible," 18:00.
Regarding statements that traditional Christianity has misinterpreted in the New Testament, Badawī first makes the assertion that texture criticism of the gospel has cast a lot of doubt on the authority of Jesus’ words. Curiously, however, his criticism assumes that the words are authentic. He seems to assume that the statements are genuine to the historical Jesus, and proceeds to offer alternative understandings. For instance, one text that Badawī speaks of is the verse “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 1:14). Badawī states that Jesus was speaking here in accordance to the revelation given to him. “So he represents God, he speaks for God, and as such he is the way, the truth and the life.” Every prophet is “the way, the truth, and the life,” Badawī affirm. “And if this be true, nobody can come to the Father except by following the prophet.”

Another popular reference that Badawī uses is the quotation of the Apostle Thomas when meeting Jesus saying: “My Lord, and my God Badawī offers three alterative interpretations of this text. One is that Thomas focused more on the “my Lord,” which can be understood as referring to a master, teacher, or rabbi. A second interpretation is that Thomas “was so surprised to see him, he says ‘and my God, the creator of Jesus.” Here, in his view, the expression of “my God” is used in a colloquial way similar to saying “Oh my God!” The third interpretation Badawī gives to this same text is that some commentators understand the passage to really be saying “my godly Lord,” meaning that Jesus was righteous. Other words of Jesus to which Badawī offers an alternative interpretation include: “before Abraham, I am” (John 5:58), which he interprets to mean greatness; “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father” (John 14:19), which he interprets as a colloquial use of “seeing” and “knowing,” and, the of referred to title for God by Jesus, “Father,” which he 375 Badawī will often refer to contentions made by textual criticism; for instance, he will mention the idea that the authors whose names are attributed to certain Gospels are not the true authors.He makes the issue about words attributed to Jesus being inventions in JamālBadawī, Dudley Woodberry, and others, “Was Jesus Divine? Or was he a Prophet of God?,” videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video, 1993).1:41:00/1:42:00. 376 Badawī and Shoroosh,” Divinity,” 35:00 377 Ibid., 27:00. 378 Ibid., 44:00. 379 Ibid., 45:00.
interprets to signify Closeness in relationship, not essence.

Additionally, there are two other important groups of texts, ones where the words are not on the mouth of Jesus. One to which Badawī often refers is the acceptance by Jesus of worship. The second is the narrative accounts of Jesus for giving sins. Badawī often states that the acceptance by Jesus of people of worshiping him is not to be equated with worship of God. Rather, Badawī adds: “worship can also mean intense love.” Furthermore, the apparent power of Jesus to forgive sins is not a sign of divinity. Rather, Badawī mentions that ‘when a prophet says, ‘you are forgiven,’ it means that God has revealed to me that you are forgiven.’

According to Badawī, therefore, the texts that some Christians use as a proof for the divinity of Jesus are really open to reinterpretation and can be understood in other ways. In his view the New Testament is full of metaphorical language. Basing his research on a book edited by John Hick, The Myth of God Incarnate, Badawī echoes Hick as saying that the Gospel writers were not reporters but interpreters of personal experience. As such, the narratives of Incarnation should be seen as “metaphorical language in encountering Jesus.” For instance, Badawī refers to the scene in the Gospel of John where a group of Jews wanted to stone Jesus for claiming that he was one with the Father. Like Deedat, Badawī states in a number of places that this “oneness” is metaphorical, for it is oneness of “purpose”, not “essence.” In line with this, Badawī states that titles like “Son of God” and “Begotten” are also metaphorical. Badawī notes that there were many prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures

---

380 Badawī and Craig, “Concept of God,” 45:00; Badawī and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 39:00; and Badawī, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 36:00.
381 Badawī, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 27:00.
383 JamalBadawī, Dudley Woodberry, and others, “Concept of God in Christianity and Islam: Part Two.” videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video. 1993). 58:00. Badawī also adds that, according to Hick, much of the New Testament genre is poetic statements about how they interpreted their experience with Jesus.
384 John 10:33.
385 Badawī and Craig, "Concept of God," 44:00; Badawī and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 35:00; and Badawī, Woodberry, and others, "Jesus," 24:00. Badawī defends this interpretation by citing v. 34 of that same chapter, which has Jesus (referring to Psalms 82:6) note that their Law says that they are all gods.
who were identified as Sons of God (e.g., David and Solomon).\textsuperscript{386} The term “Son of God” was used of any good person, and the connotation that it came to acquire in Christianity was a later theological development. Furthermore, the titles “Only Begotten Son,” “First Born Son” and “Beloved Son” applied to Jesus are metaphorical as well. These terms were applied to people like Isaac, Abraham, Jacob and David and they are not believed to be divine.\textsuperscript{387}

Besides these textual-type arguments, the second argument that Badawī employs to prove that Jesus should not be considered divine in that Jesus’ words and action show clearly that he did not have a conception of divinity in his self-consciousness. Badawī commonly uses eight points to support this argument.\textsuperscript{388} The first is that Jesus, in a number of different contexts, stated that his Father was greater than he was, and that he relates only that which God gives to him;\textsuperscript{389} so the one giving is greater than the one who is receiving. Second is that recognition that Jesus was tempted. Keeping with the beliefs common to the Abrahamic religions, God cannot be tempted.\textsuperscript{390} Third, Jesus denied knowledge, of at least some future events and the unseen, like the time of the Day of the Lord.\textsuperscript{391} This is the kind of knowledge, future-knowledge which an omniscient God would have. Fourth, Jesus revised to be called God is the only one who is good.\textsuperscript{392} Fifth, the Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom. This indicates change, which is impossible in an immutable God.\textsuperscript{393} Sixth, Jesus referred to himself as a prophet and was called a prophet by others.\textsuperscript{394} Seventh, Jesus was a created being who was circumcised. Anything born of a woman, however,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{386} Badawī, Woodbeny, and others, “Jesus,” 24:00.
\item \textsuperscript{387} Badawī and Craig, “Concept of God,” 31:00-35:00.
\item \textsuperscript{388} Badawī, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 37:00-39:00; Badawī and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 47:00-48:00; Badawī and Craig, “Concept of God,” 80:00-85:00. In this last citation, Badawī refers to assertion one, three, and five.
\item \textsuperscript{389} John 5:30.
\item \textsuperscript{390} Matt 4:1-11; James 1:13.
\item \textsuperscript{391} Mark 13:32; Mm 24:36.
\item \textsuperscript{392} Mark 10:18.
\item \textsuperscript{393} Luke 2:21,52.
\end{itemize}
cannot be perfect. Eight; according to the New Testament it was God who raised Jesus from the dead. This statement of caution leads one to see that there is a subject-object distinction between God and Jesus.

Therefore, with these interpretations and scriptural evidences in mind, Badawī concludes by saying: “there is no definite claim in the Old or New Testament that speaks of the divinity of Jesus. If this were true, the issue would be crystal clear... Jesus should have come out and directly said ‘I am God.’ When it comes to the basics of faith, there should be no ambiguous statements.”

The examination of biblical material has been Badawī’s primary polemic against the Christians representations of Jesus. Badawī’s second contention, that Jesus was never crucified, is an additional apology to his polemic. He considers the issue to be quite secondary. Evidence for his reasoning behind this may be seen in his first debate with William Lane Craig. Craig based his entire polemic on a historical foundation for authenticity of the crucifixion and resurrection accounts in the New Testament. In response, Badawī states: “for Islam it does not make any difference what so ever if Jesus was crucified and resurrected or not. If he is resurrected, God resurrected him and God is superior to him, and he is the servant of God. If he was crucified...it does not make any difference... because the death, crucifixion, murder of any one Prophet does not make him divine.” The notion of the crucifixion and resurrection essentially is a non-issue with Badawī.

Nevertheless, in debating Craig, Badawī does defend the Islamic idea that Jesus was never crucified or resurrected. He notes that there are scholars who look at the New Testament narratives of the crucifixion and resurrection story, and find contradictions. Badawī states that, although some contradictions could be reconciled, the dozen or more of them raise reasonable suspicion about the

---

395 Job 25:4-6.
396 Badawī and Craig, “Concept of God,” 48:00. See also, Badawī, Woodberry and others, Jesus,” 23:00. Badawī and Craig, “Concept of God” 72:00-73:00.
397 Badawī and Craig, “Concept of God,” 71:00-72:00.
398 Ibid.
authenticity of the story. He gives a few examples: When did the first visitors go to the tomb? Who was the first visitor on the morning of the resurrection, Mary Magdalene or another Mary? What did they see? What of the story of Judas? One account has him jumping off a cliff, another has him hanging himself. What did he do with the money? There are too many contradictions in the story, according to Badawī. Even if the story were true, Badawī admits, John the Baptist was martyred not divine. As such, crucifixion and resurrection are of very little consequence in the matter of Jesus’ divinity.

In other debates Badawī does make brief mention of the denial of the crucifixion. He does so by noting two important historical texts that seem to affirm the Islamic position. In a debate on the prophethood of Muhammad, Badawī responds to the statement by DudleyWoodberry who claimed that Muhammad gave misinformation about Jesus and the crucifixion. Badawī responds by saying that the Bible has been shown to be inauthentic in places, the source of much misinformation. The truth of the Qur’ân, he adds, is supported by the Gospel of Thomas, which does not refer to the crucifixion and the Gospel of Barnabas, which states that someone else died on the cross.399

In all of this Badawī concludes that, what once was a “religion Jesus,” had over the years become a “religion about Jesus.” The religion of Jesus, in what he preached and in oral tradition, according to Muslims is the same as all the prophets. However, due to, theological developments in Christianity, the authentic religion of Jesus was transformed to one about Jesus.400

Most of Badawī’s debates center more on negative affirmations to prove the Islamic representation of Jesus. What sort of representation is Badawī showing through this methodology? The following six ideas of Jesus can be recognized from Badawai’s negative polemical affirmations. First, since the Christian scriptures are

399 Badawī, Woodbeery and others, “Muhammad,”30:00.

400 Badawī, Woodberry and others, ”Bible,” 1:03:00.
corrupt, the Qur’ān is the sole trustworthy source for information about Jesus. Second Jesus was a man whomever thought that he was divine, but rather thought that he was a prophet. Third, God is Greater than Jesus, for Jesus was tempted and did not know of things that were unseen. Fourth, Jesus was very close to God, and preached the message that God gave to him. This message is the same one that Muhammad taught. It included forgiving of people’s sin and the unity of God. Fifth, there were many who loved Jesus very much and when they wrote about him they used metaphorical language. He was known as “Son of God” and “beloved by God,” which indicated his close relationship to God. His followers, out of attachment to him, linked him to God. Sixth Jesus never died on the cross, nor did he come back to life again. Even if he had, however, conclusion would still be that only a man and his life lay in the hands of God.

As seen above, Badawī’s representation of Jesus in debate is, like Ahmed Deedat often based on a negative polemic (i.e., Jesus is not like this). Unlike Deedat, however Badawī has offered a more developed positive representation of the Islamic Jesus. He has asserted the scriptural statements on Jesus in the Qur’ān and briefly explained them. This seemed to have occurred more in Badawī’s earlier debates. For instance, in a 1989 debate against Anis Shorrosh, Badawī presented fourteen points “that summarize the Islamic position on who Jesus was.” These same points are written in Badawī’s pamphlet printed for his Islamic Information foundation.

Based on verses dealing with Jesus found in the Qur’ān, Badawī notes fourteen ideas about the Islamic Jesus. First, his mother Mary and her family are “praised” in the Qur’ān. Badawī, neither in debate nor print, expresses the content of this praise. Rather, he focuses on anapologetical issue normally raised by Christian polemicists,

---

401 Jamāl Badawī and Anis Shorrosh, The Divinity of Jesus, videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video, 1993). This debate can also be found on the Internet at <www.islamicity.org/video/ch21_9Bram>.


403 Qur’an 3:36, 37, 42 and 5:78
that the Qur’ān, speaks of Mary, as the “sister of Aaron.” Christian polemicists at times state that Muhamamd (peace be upon him) confused Jesus’ mother with Maryam, the biological sister of Moses and Aaron in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Second, Badawī notes “that the Qur’ān speaks in clear terms about the virgin birth of Prophet Jesus, and it likens him to Adam, as Allah created Adam from neither mother nor Father.” Basing this assertion, Badawī challenges his audience to compare, the virgin birth with the creation of Adam, and with John the Baptist. Badawī does not expand upon this assertion in his positive affirmations, but does expand on it in his use of negative affirmations about Jesus.

Third, Badawī states that the Qur’ān refers to Jesus as “a word from Allah”. In asserting this, Badawī states that there should be an emphasis on the indefinite article before “word.” He seems to want to make a distinction between the Christian notion of Jesus being “the” or “a” logos. Badawī notes that a word according to Qur’ānic terminology means that Jesus was created by the creative order and command of God-kun or be. In fact, the Qur’ān uses the same word sometimes in the plural, ‘words of God,’ which means that every human being is a word of God, a word from him, a promise from him.

Fourth, Badawī affirms that Jesus is called “a spirit from Allah” in the Qur’ān. In clarifying the point, Badawī adds that this does not mean “the spirit” in an incarnational sense, where it could mean that a human could possess divinity. Rather

\[\text{Qur’an 19:28.}\]
\[\text{Num 12; One Christian polemicist who has made this claim is Ravi Zacharias in his lecture “Islam & Christianity: The Points of Tension,” audiocassette (Atlanta: Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 1991).}\]
\[\text{Badawī and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 18:00.}\]
\[\text{Qur’an 3:45-47.}\]
\[\text{Qur’an 3:59.}\]
\[\text{Qur’an 45; 4:170.}\]
\[\text{Logos is a Christian concept based on a statement made in the first chapter of the Gospel According to John. The Logos is “the word from God,” understood as meaning that it is the same essence of God. This sets a foundation for Jesus being the second person of the Trinity.}\]
\[\text{Badawī and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 19:00.}\]
that ‘a spirit’ here means that every human being is created, and Allah endowed him or her with that instinctive spiritual nature.”

Fifth, the Qur’ān states that Jesus is “someone who is honoured in this life, and the hereafter is among those who are nearest to God” Badawai clarifies this by saying that Jesus is one of a number who are closest to God. This number includes other great messengers and prophets of Islam. Also, Badawīn his pamphlet adds that the same words attributed to Jesus are attributed to others in the Qur’ān as well.

Sixth, Badawī notes that the Qur’ān calls Jesus a “pure child,” or “sinless.” He adds, however, that Muslim believes that all children are born sinless and that Muslims consider all prophets to be sinless.

We do not accept stories that attribute horrible moral conduct to the great prophets and messengers of Allah. The Qur’ān is totally free from this kind of material. We believe that all prophets are sinless, just as much as any human being of course can be sinless. It does not mean that they are not human. It simply means that in two matters, the matter of communication of the message of Allah to the rest of mankind, there could be no confusion of belief.

He adds that the Qur’ān does not contain the story of Aaron supporting the making of golden Calf, or Solomon being inclined towards the Gods of his wife. These things would blemish their moral character and make them “unfit to be bearers of the world of the message of Allah.” Furthermore, Badawī adds, John the Baptist is referred to as even purer than Jesus.

---

412 Ibid.
413 Qur’an 3:45.
414 Badawī cites surah 33:69, which labeled Moses as honoured by God. Surah 56:11 states that those who are “foremost in faith” will be “those nearest to God” in the hereafter. Surah 83; 21, 28 speaks of a list of the Righteous, which bears witnesses to those who are closest to God.
415 Qur’an 19:19.
416 Badawī and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 20:00-21:00.
Seventh, the Qur’ān says that Jesus was “supported with the Holy Spirit.” Badawī is quick to mention that the term “holy spirit” in the Qur’ān “actually means the angel of revelation, Gabriel,” and that his spirit supported other humans as well.

Eighth, the Qur’ān states that Jesus performed various miracles. Badawī elaborates by saying that such a statement is supporting the divine nature of the revelation received by Muhammad. Badawī wonders why, if Muhammad wrote the Qur’ān himself, he would include this idea, since it would support his opponents who wanted to reject him. Badawī concludes that it must be “to show that the Qur’ān is the truth revealed from God, and the Prophet simply communicated it as it is.”

Ninth, Badawī states that the Qur’ān affirms that Jesus “taught in essence exactly what all the prophets before him taught, and what the last prophet, Muhammad taught: the pure monotheistic faith of the worship of the one true universal God of all.”

Tenth, according to Badawī, the Qur’ān indicates that the mission of Jesus was culturally and geographically restricted to the people of Israelite descent. Badawī adds that even though mission was restricted to Israel and to reforming Judaism, it does not negate the validity of Jesus’ teaching to others as well.

Eleventh, the Qur’ān rejects all forms of deification of Jesus. Badawī adds that a major mistake of some Christian polemical writings is to say that the Qur’ān only condemns some heresies of Christianity. For Badawī this charge implies that Muhammad was the author of the Qur’ān, and that the only forms of Christianity that he new were these aberrant theologies. This is false because, according to the Badawai, the Qur’ān states that one is to disbelieve someone who says that Allah is a third of three, “or one of three.” The viewpoint of the Qur’ān is universal.

---

419 Badawī and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 22:00.
421 Ibid., see also:2:135-136;5:119-120;43:63-64 in his pamphlet as scriptural support for this affirmation.
Twelfth, Badawi states that, like the Christians, the Qur’ān affirms the idea that Jesus was ultimately rejected by the Israelites and that there was a conspiracy to crucify him. However, as far as the notion of the passion of Jesus, this is how for the Muslims goes with the Christians. For, thirteenth, Badawi notes that the Qur’ān says that they killed him not, nor did they crucify him, but it so appeared to them.\footnote{Badawi and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 26:00.} Badawai admits in public debate that the Qur’ān does not speak about how exactly Jesus was saved; only that Allah saved him. Badawi adds that even the statement in the Qur’ān made by Jesus, “Peace be upon me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day I resurrect from the dead,” does not speak of crucifixion and resurrection. According to Badawi, this statement needs to be interpreted in the light of a Hadith. In one “saying of the Prophet,” Badawi notes that Muhammad explicitly stated that Allah saved Jesus from the crucifixion. As such, something must have taken place Badawi acknowledges, for it “made people believe that it was Jesus whodied on the cross.”\footnote{Ibid., 27:00.} Badawi then speaks about the Islamic notion of the Second coming of Jesus, the general resurrection of all people, and the Qur’ān quotation of the Jesus saying, “Peace be upon me the day that I die and the day I resurrecct again.”According to Badawi, all souls shall taste death and it is during the Second Coming when Jesus will finally taste death.

Fourteenth, Badawi states that the Jesus of the Qur’ān prophesied the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), like many of the other Israelite prophets had done as well. Thus he concludes by saying that every fair minded Christian regardless, of whether they accept the Qur’ān as revelation, would have no question or complaint at all about the very honourific terms, the respect, the love and honor attributed to the Jesus in the Qur’ān.\footnote{Ibid., 30:00.} He adds that if Christians showed one tenth of this same respect towards the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Muslim-Christian dialogue would be much better than it is today.”
From these positive fourteen assertions, then, what representation of the Islamic Jesus emerges from Badawī’s polemical affirmations? The picture is one of a Jesus who was chosen by God before his birth to be a great messenger to the Israelites people. Allah gives him and his family a high position of respect. He lived a miraculous life, from his virgin birth to his performance of divine miracles. Allah had blessed him and given him his spirit in order to reform Judaism and teach the same monotheistic message that was taught by all prophets before him, and ultimately by the greatest prophet who came after him. Despite his miracles and divine blessing, his own people rejected him and plotted to have him crucified, through some unknown miraculous event, Jesus managed to be saved from those who wanted to kill him. Allah, in doing this event, somehow led others to believe that Jesus had really died on the cross. Jesus was taken to be with Allah, and he will return again in someday in order to die and be resurrected like all other human beings.

This extensive representation of Jesus, however, is found in one debate, early in the polemical career of Badawī. Most of Badawī’s debates do not contain such a comprehensive positive assertion of the Islamic Jesus. Rather, the polemical representation of the Islamic Jesus by Badawī is often piecemeal.

In comparison of the two types of polemical affirmations, what points are common and what points contrast? In examining the six negative polemical affirmations and the fourteen positive polemical affirmations a list of five common affirmations arise. The first polemical affirmation is that Jesus was not divine, but a prophet to Israel. In other words Jesus was a great messenger of God, whose mission was geographically and culturally limited. Jesus also had one message: leading other to the worship, one true God. The people of Israel rejected Jesus and his message, and conspired to have him killed. The second affirmation is that Jesus was very closed to and highly honoured by God. Jesus was given great titles, such as “Word of God, and “Spirit of God,” and told that he would be honoured in this life and the next. So great was the honour of Jesus that even Mary and her family received praise from God. The third affirmation is that Jesus led a miraculous life. Jesus was born of a virgin and was
supported by the holy spirit of Allah. He was seen as sinless and performed various miracles in his mission. He was ultimately saved miraculously from his enemies, through some unknown event that led others to believe that he was killed. The fourth affirmation is that Jesus believed that God was greater than he, and prophesied about the greatest prophet to come. Jesus a number of times said that God was greater and only he should be worshipped. Furthermore, he prophesied about the advent of Muhammad (peace be upon him), one who would be greater than all other prophets.

There are two areas of contrast between the two types of affirmations. First, Badawai makes special note in his negative polemical affirmations that the Christian scriptures are corrupt. Therefore, he claims, the Qur’ān is the only reliable source of revelatory information. Second, also in his negative polemical affirmations, Badawī comments that Jesus was greatly loved and that love was express in metaphorical language. The statement of worship or praise of Jesus in both the Qur’ān and the New Testament, he insists, are metaphorical in nature. They symbolize people’s positive and overwhelming experience of Jesus.

Badawī is not only a prolific debater, but he has also developed an extensive Islamic educational program for Muslims and others interested in Islam. Beginning in 1986, Badawī was involved in a series of programs that were developed for television and aired in Halifax. These 13 different series of 320 half-hour programs, where Badawai, explained the beliefs and practices of Islam, became the basis of his Islamic Information Foundation and are available both in audiocassette form and on the internet. The highest percentage of programs deals with the person of Jesus, where Badawī covers topics ranging from the Qur’ānic presentation of Jesus to Jesus’ predictions of the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These programs on Jesus are also highly polemical. Badawī only spends eight of the sixty

---

426 All the references to this series in this thesis will be to the audiocassette copies. One can find the same teaching series on the Internet at <www.islamicity.org/radio/default.htm>.

427 There are more than seventy programs dealing with the person of Jesus. The next closest percentage of programs on one subject matter is the Qur’ān and its interpretation. Following that there is a significant decrease in the amount of programs dealing with any one topic.
four programs in his series. “Jesus, Beloved Messenger of Allah,” on positive descriptive affirmations of Islamic Jesus. These are based on both Qur’ān and hadith materials. The rest of the programs fall back on negative descriptive polemical affirmations to disprove the Christian representation of Jesus. Again, one is able to separate these materials and determine how an outsider, first hearing about the Islamic Jesus, could perhaps conceive of him.

Out of the sixty-four half-hour descriptive lectures on the Islamic Jesus, given by Badawi, thirty-six are given to negative polemical descriptions of Christian representation of Jesus. Beginning with two lectures on methods for a comparative methodology in Christology, Badawi lays out his chosen method for examining the different representations of Jesus in Christianity and Islam.428

This polemical method of examination has two parts to it. The first part is the examination of the Holy Books of each religious community to “find out which of the two is the Word of Allah, or the word of humans.” This calls for an examination of the “authority and authenticity of both scriptures.” It entails examination of the internal and external evidences showing that the Holy Book has right to claim divine origin. Included is also proving whether the Holy Book is completely free of error in regards to inconsistencies or scientific affirmations. This examination also involves examining if the Holy Book was composed in the life of its prophet, in the language of the Prophet, and if it is well preserved, and free from any evidence that would indicate that these may not be the words uttered by the Prophet himself.430

428Badawi gives three different methodological foundations for Muslim-Christian dialogue on Jesus. The first is suppressing any discussion, claiming that “you have that belief and we have that belief. We cannot reconcile each other, so let’s not talk about it.” The second method is merely descriptive, where each faith community just presents what is found in their Holy Book. Badawi finds that each of these two fail for they are not satisfactory in seeking the truth. So the third methodology is polemical, examining each Holy Book and examining how the adherents of that book view its contents. Jamāl Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah-Comparative Christology I. K-9: Methodology,” Islamic Teachings (Halifax, Islamic Information Foundation, 1986).

429 Badawi, “Comparative Christology I,” 15:00.

430 Ibid., 16:00.
The second part of this methodology is to “examine the set of beliefs and dogmas that are on both sides, and say whether those beliefs in themselves are consistent with the scriptures of the adherents and with reason.”\textsuperscript{431} This is done through philosophical examination and through encouraging both sides to re-examine their own Holy Books.\textsuperscript{432} Badawī affirms that Christians say that Jesus is God incarnate, while Muslims uphold that Jesus was a prophet and messenger of God. Is there then a basis for such representations within their scriptures? Or can an outsider show that the scriptures do not show the representation that one religious community asserts?

This seems to be the foundational methodology for Badawī’s debates as well it is certainly the one he uses in the other thirty-five lectures. Badawī proceeds to deconstruct the Christian representations of Jesus by beginning to examine the texts used by Christian polemicists and theologians to support the divinity of Jesus in the gospel New Testament. Then he turns to discussing how the idea of the divinity of Jesus evolved in Christian thought through the disciples, Paul and the early Christian councils. He compares this with the parallel representations of some thinkers, throughout history, who affirmed that Jesus was not divine (e.g. the Unitarians). Finally, he turns to the doctrines of Trinity, atonement and sacrifice to deny their plausibility. In doing so, Badawī again creates a representation of the Islamic Jesus through the denial of certain Christian conceptions.\textsuperscript{433}

For a person who may hear just these negative descriptive presentations, what kind of picture of the Islamic Jesus could be formed? Badawī begins by outlining the five areas of argumentation by Christian theologians for the divinity of Jesus.

One claim that Jesus is divine based on what has been said about him by others. …Two, what Jesus himself claimed for himself to be divine. Three, evidence from his deeds, life, and miracles that show that these miracles only come from some one that is divine.

\textsuperscript{431} Badawī, "Comparative Christology I," 17.00.
\textsuperscript{432} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{433} Badawī refers to passages such as Matthew 27:28,29; John 1:1,7:45,46; 1:15-17,2:9; Philippians 2:6 and 1 Timely 3:16
Fourthly, the message, nature of the message, and mission of Jesus on earth raises the notion of the God Incarnate, who came in the form of his divine Son. The question of Trinity, question of sin, atonement, and how one can reconcile himself to God. Fifth, as some people suggest, is the proof of the personal experience as a matter of mystery.  

It is these five Groups of arguments that Badawī, over the next thirty lectures, tries to deconstruct. Similar to what he did in his polemical dialogues, Badawī looks at the supporting passages in the New Testament and either reinterprets them or disregards them as not authentic to the person of Jesus. For example, cancelling the claims about Jesus, Badawī referred to passages such as Mathew 27:28,29; John 1:1,7:45,46; Colossians 1:15-17,2:9; Philippines 2:6 and 1 Timothy 3:16. To dismiss them, Badawī makes note that most of these texts are from Paul, “who never saw Jesus in his earthly ministry, persecuted Christians, and claimed to have converted later in his life.” Badawī further dismisses the Gospel of John because of biblical textual criticism, which has cast doubt on the authorship of the Gospel of John. Even so, Badawī, as in his debates, takes these same texts and offers different interpretations of them. To cite an instance, Badawī states that “speaking with authority” means that he was unique as a prophet, not just a scribe. Another example is that some call Jesus the “image of God,” yet Adam was created in the image of God also. As such Badawī concludes, it does not matter what others say about a man. Even if a hundred or thousand people come to you and say that a man in another country is God, it does not matter (echoing David Hume), for it is not sufficient proof. Even Buddah, Rama, and Gandhi are deified even though they never claimed it for themselves. The person has to claim such things for themselves.

Another example is in the second and third argument categories, referring to the claims Jesus makes for himself and his miracles. Badawī notes a number of New

---


435 Badawī, “Divinity I,” 16:00-17:00.

436 Matt 27.

437 Badawī, “Divinity I,” 20:00.
Testament texts once again, and as before he offers alternative interpretations to these texts that Christian theologians and polemicists use. For instance, the statement of Jesus that he and the Father were one must be understood in light of the genre, language, translation, reason for writing, theological development, and historical authenticity. Doing this, the Johannine text, according to Badawi, would seem to run contrary to the oneness of God in Hebrew Bible, Old Testament. Thus this text must speak of oneness of purpose and spirit, not essence. Badawi then goes on to discuss other texts where Jesus speaks of oneness with God and his disciples. For each one Badawi offers alternative interpretation to the common Christian interpretation. Badawi expands on the information found in his debates with the questioning of miracles, and the nature and mystery of Jesus’ message. He affirms that Jesus did perform miracles, but these miracles are similar to those found with other prophets, as seen in the stories of the Hebrew prophets.

Badawi continues to offer alternative understandings to the arguments for the divinity of Jesus presented by theologians and polemicists. A history of theological evolution from the Paul to the Church councils, and a discussion of how there has been a trend of Unitarianism throughout Christian history, support Badawi’s assertion that Jesus was not divine but only came to be seen as such as time went on.

Badawi turns to a discussion of Crucifixion, since “the Christian theories of atonement are based on the assumption that Jesus was crucified.” He begins by saying that there are one billion people on earth who believe in Jesus Christ, but deny the crucifixion and especially the deification of Jesus: the Muslims. Badawi claims that there authority comes from surah 4:157-58, which states “that even though there was

438 John 10:30
440 John 14:9; 17:11, 21; 1 John 4:12.
a conspiracy to kill Jesus, that they did not kill, nor crucify him, but it was made to appear to them as such.” Badawī adds that this was not only a Muslim position, but one of “at least seven” early Christian sects, who denied the crucifixion of Jesus and posited a substitution theory. These included the Corinthians Basilidians, Nazarities, and who is connected with the Gospel of Barnabas. Barnabas was an eye witness of Jesus; and his gospel indicates that an angel carried Jesus of the cross and that God changed the face of Judas Iscariot to look like Jesus, therefore, it was Judas who was crucified. Badawī adds the scrolls of Nag Hamadi, one of which states that Jesus was not crucified and was watching the crucifixion from afar. This proves to him that there was not unanimous consensus in the early Christian communities. Some early Christians, moreover, support the Qur’ānview that something had happened to make people believe that it was Jesus who was crucified, although it was not. Badawī then turns to prophecies found in the Hebrew bible/Old Testament, which Christians use for supporting the crucifixion. Badawī focuses particularly on the prophecies found in the Psalms. For example he speaks of psalms 22, ”God why have you forsaken me,” repeated in the New Testament. He notes that in Psalm 22, the subject of the psalm is being “scorned and mocked at by others.” The tense of the passage, however, is in the past, not the future, when David is in conflict with Saul (1 Sam 27, 30; 1 Chron 12). Badawī makes note of how one statement in this particular psalm, the piercing of the hands and feet, may sound like crucifixion but in fact is a metaphorical statement of extreme distress. Furthermore, Badawī notes that in this particular psalm God saves the distressed person from death. This then cannot be about the crucifixion, Badawī claims. The idea of the salvations from death of a suffering person is a common assertion of Badawī’s when referring to Psalm that may deal with

446 Badawī, “Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice IX,” 14:00-15:00. Badawī here refers to Denis Neiham’s article in John Hicks, Myth of God Incarnate.
prophecy of the crucifixion. He makes the same point in regards to psalms 9, 20, 21,109,118.449

Badawī then makes an assertion that Psalms 38 and 69 refer prophetically to Judas, not Jesus. As such, Badawī concludes by saying that there are six basic elements about the prophecies of Jesus concerning his death.450 First, that there was a conspiracy.Second, the conspirators used someone who was trusted by Jesus. Third, the righteous servant prays for salvation when he sees danger. Fourth, God respond and guarantees that the conspiracy will fail. Fifth, God will punish the trusted friend by granting him the same punishment that was going to be given to righteous servant. Sixth, God miraculously saves the righteous person by raising him to heaven. Badawī asserts that the righteous servant is Jesus, and the trusted betrayer is Judas.

After working through prophecies in the books of Jeremiah, Genesis, Zechariah, Hosea, Micah, Malachi, and Isaiah,451 Badawī concludes by saying that these prophecies are better fulfilled by other prophets, like John the Baptist and Muhammad, than they are by Jesus. Even the ones that do speak of Jesus do not speak of divine son or crucifixion.452 All prophets have been mocked and carried the sins of the people. All prophets are sons of God, and they all are the “righteous person” described in the Hebrew Bible. Finally, there are many prophets who have made the deaf hear and the blind see. In short, the story of crucifixion in his view cannot be supported in the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible.453

As for the New Testament, Badawī states that the event does occur in all four canonized gospels. However, “it is not true from the standpoint of fair, impartial,

---

450 Badawī, “Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice X,” 28:00-29:00.
452 Badawī, “Crucifixion-3,” 8:00-9:00.
critical analysis or biblical criticism that the four canonized gospels speak about the crucifixion in a way that is consistent and authentic. As we have seen above, many Qur’ān commentators, according to Badawi, have interpreted surah 4:157-158 to mean that Judas was actually crucified in the place of Jesus, which is an idea found in Christianity as well. Since textual evidence has cast doubt on the authenticity of the writers of the Gospels being eyewitnesses, the crucifixion in the gospel can be considered to be from second-hand information. What he adds to this critique is that these accounts are not consistent; one cannot accept as historical story that is full of contradictions of basic facts. These contradictions include detail of the Last Supper, the arrest of Jesus, the trial of Jesus, and the crucifixion account itself. For Badawi, the details are of such critical value that the inconsistencies cast serious doubt on the crucifixion of Jesus.

If then the crucifixion is in doubt, so too is the resurrection. In the story of the resurrection, there is much inconsistency between the different accounts. As such, as some biblical scholars themselves affirm, the resurrection account was likely added because of theological reasons. Therefore, internal evidence does not lead one to conclude that Jesus had had died and been raised from the dead. At the very least, it casts serious doubt on the historical accuracy of the New Testament accounts.

The external evidence provides additional support for Badawi. Badawi refers to Joseph and his works, war of the Jews and Antiques of the Jews. Each of these seems to contain later Christian insertions about Jesus. Therefore, it seems that they too are not reliable for supporting the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, while re-enforcing the claim that the presentation of Jesus changed over time.

Badawī asserts that this idea of God Incarnate came from “mythological religions” like those found in Central Asia, Syria, Greece, Egypt, Mexico and India. Badawī presents the account of Baal from Babylon and Buddha as astonishing parallels to the Jesus as Incarnated God theory. Badawī furthers his claims by saying that the notion of Jesus being the “word becoming flesh” is a mixture of Samaritan mystical philosophy and Galilean eschatology.

Badawī’s negative discussion all seem to focus on one affirmation: Jesus was not divine. In discussing the authority and authenticity of the New Testament and the irrationality of the Trinity, Badawī has focused on this one main affirmation. Built into this affirmation are smaller points, which include a reinterpretation of classical Christian understandings of certain sayings of Jesus and about Jesus. He has provided extensive discussions concerning the crucifixion and resurrection narratives of the New Testament. Badawī insists that the contradictions found in the crucifixion and resurrection accounts are so important, that they cast doubt on the historic city of the events. Furthermore, he argues that there is no proof from the prophecies the Hebrew Bible that the Messiah or a Righteous servant would be killed. Rather it is the complete opposite. In fact, the more likely scenario is that Jesus was miraculously saved from the cross, and Judas was the one who was crucified in his place.

As noted above, Badawī spends eight episodes of his series on a positive descriptive presentation of the Islamic Jesus. Badawī begins this description by saying that a Muslim must believe in all the messengers of Allah, for they were all “infallible in action and message.” He notes that there could be as many of 125,000 prophets, but there are five Major Prophets, Jesus being one of them. Badawai adds that the study of Jesus for the Muslim is important because there have been a great many of

---


differing opinions on Jesus through history, and because Jesus is the closet major prophet to Muhammad (peace be upon him).\(^{462}\) Muhammad even went on to say that they are “kin”brothers in religion.

Badawī mentions that out of the one hundred and fourteen surahs of the Qur’ān eleven relate to Jesus. The story of Jesus in the Qur’ān begins in the third surah, in the context of the story of Abraham, for Jesus was a descendant of Abraham according to the Qur’ān.\(^{463}\) The mother of Mary, the wife of ‘Imran asks for protection for her child and the child’s descendants from Satan. Mary’s mother was righteous woman, Badawī notes, and was a descendant from Aaron the priestly family of Israel. Mary’s mother became pregnant, and desired a Son, but birth a daughter whom, she named Mary. Badawī adds that in the Hadith collections of Bukhari and Muslim, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is recorded as saying that Satan pokes each child, for except for Mary and Jesus.\(^{464}\) Mary was later given to her uncle and aunt, likely because her mother and Father had died. Badawī continues to say that Mary was divinely provided for, as seen in an instance when her uncle entered the sanctuary and found Mary with food when no one had given her any. As a result, Mary’s uncle Zacharia, prayed for a child despite his old age and John the Baptist was given to him.\(^{465}\)

Badawī thus claims that there is a connection between Jesus and John the Baptist. Each had a miraculous birth, the name of each child was given before birth, each birth had a sign corresponding to it, each led a unique life, neither married or had children, each man’s soul continues to live, each man had a bounty on his head each man prepared the way for the next prophet, each preached the same message of kingdom of God, and each man praised the other for their missions.\(^{466}\)

\(^{462}\) Badawī, “Jesus in Islam I,” 5:00.

\(^{463}\) Badawī, “Jesus in Islam I,” 14:00.

\(^{464}\) Badawī, “Jesus in Islam I,” 17:00-24:00.

\(^{465}\) Badawī, “Jesus in Islam I,” 24:00.

\(^{466}\) This narative begins in Badawī, ”Jesus in Islam I”, 25:00; and ends at Jamāl Badawī, ”Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah - Jesus (P) in Islam II. K-2: Birth of Jesus (P).” Islamic Teachings (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 6:00.
Badawī continues by saying that Marry was told about the birth of Jesus by the archangel Gabriel, and she responds by saying that she does not know how that could be so because she was a virgin.\textsuperscript{467} Badawī notes that in the Qur’ān Mary is stated to be “chosen above women,” speaking of her unique destiny among her people. Also, he adds, in one Hadith, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is quoted as saying that Mary and wife Khadija are the best two women in paradise.

After the announcement by Gabriel about the coming of Jesus, Badawī states that Gabriel “breathed” into Mary to cause conception.\textsuperscript{468} This was not a physical way but in context of the Qur’ān\textsuperscript{469} it was a figurative statement of divine breath being given to Jesus. The child birth went without problem, and when labor set in, Mary was driven to a palm tree and someone spoke to her. There she is provided for and told not to speak to any mortal.\textsuperscript{470} During this ordeal Mary wishes that she was dead and wanted to break her fast. Badawī claims that Mary was told by the angel that her child would be worshipped against Allah’s will, apparently causing stress to her monotheistic disposition.\textsuperscript{471} Badawī adds that the strength with which Mary shook a tree was a miracle because she had just given birth. The dates also fixed the birth in the summer, for they do not grow in Palestine in December.\textsuperscript{472}

After the birth of Jesus, Mary brought to the infant Jesus to her people. The people praise her and Jesus, noting that she is the sister of Aaron. The infant then speaks to the people about his mission, his message, and the blessing that is upon him. Badawī notes that this is not in the canonized gospels of the New Testament. Yet since the Qur’ān is revelation from Allah, and since Allah makes no mistakes,\textsuperscript{t} this episode may have been omitted or forgotten by the biographers of the prophet. Or

\textsuperscript{467} Badawī, “Jesus in Islam II,” 6:00-7:00.
\textsuperscript{468} Badawī, “Jesus in Islam II,” 14:00-18:00.
\textsuperscript{469} Qur’an 32:9; 38:72
\textsuperscript{470} Qur’an 19:23-26
\textsuperscript{471} Badawī, “Jesus in Islam II,” 21:00.
\textsuperscript{472} Badawī, “Jesus in Islam II,” 22:00.
perhaps since Jesus speaks here of being a servant of Allah and prophet, Christian writers would want to suppress that notion.\textsuperscript{473}

Badawī continues his fine tuning of the Christian doctrine, saying that even though Jesus did not have a Father; it does not mean that he was divine. The Qur’ān says that Jesus’ nature is like that of Adam, who is not considered divine. Badawī notes that “one scholar said that Allah created human beings through four miraculous ways.”\textsuperscript{474} These include: conception from a mother and Father, conception from neither mother nor Father, conception from the male side alone, and conception from the female side alone.

This polemic about the nature of Jesus is continued with a discussion on the term “word of God” and “spirit of God,” found in both the Qur’ān and the New testament, as well as discussing about the Trinity.\textsuperscript{475} Badawī notes that the concept of Jesus as logos developed after the scriptures, and that in the Gospel of John, it seems to be a Gnostic statement. The Qur’ān says rather that Jesus was no more than an apostle of Allah, and the word of God was spoken through him.

Furthermore, the expression “word of God” is used in many different ways in the Qur’ān attributed to many different people. Additionally, the word “spirit” does not indicate Trinity. The same word has four different meanings in the Qur’ān and none refers to a Trinity. Rather, when one finds Jesus and “spirit” in the Qur’ān, it refers to Allah breathing his spirit into Jesus.

Moreover, Jesus in the Qur’ān is clearly a human being. Jesus is called a “messenger” “prophet” and “servant” of Allah.\textsuperscript{476} He is appointed to the people Israel, and Jesus told them to worship his God and their God. Here in these terms, Badawī states, he is clearly seen as a human creature.

\textsuperscript{474} Badawī, “Jesus in Islam III,” 9:00-15:00. Also note that when Badawī uses the term “one scholar,” it normally refers to Ahmad Deedat.
\textsuperscript{475} Badawī, “Jesus in Islam III,” 15:00-28:00.
The Qur’ān does mention that Jesus was sinless, but again this is not a support for the divinity of Jesus. According to Badawī, the Qur’ānic Jesus was holy, sinless and close to Allah. Yet all the prophets are sinless in Islamic thought, for they are the best of us, Badawī affirms. Sinlessness is equated with closeness to God, and all people are able to be sinless. John the Baptist and Moses are both sinless in Qur’ān, and Muhammad’s mission was to “purify the people”. 477

The mission of Jesus and all prophets, according to Badawī, referring to Bukhari, was to their own people. The Qur’ān states that Jesus was a messenger to the children of Israel, 478 that he spoke to his people, 479 and that was sent to confirm the Torah. 480 Badawī adds that the New Testament reaffirms that this was the real mission of Jesus. 481 This does not mean that his teachings are useless for others, but that his mission was in preparation for the coming of the last universal prophet. 482

Badawī concludes by saying that the mission of Jesus in the Qur’ān is three fold: to invite people to the worship of Allah; 483 to remove some legal punishments on the people of Israel; 484 and to bear glad tidings about the last prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him). 485 However, Badawī adds, the key part of Jesus’ mission was to submit to the one God. Badawī describes the mission of Jesus based on some New Testament documentation. He adds that Jesus was interested in social action and political changes. He is seen as expecting a confrontation with oppressive forces. 486 He said that he came to bring a sword and not peace, 487 and was violent in his actions in the Temple. He told people to estimate the cost of building: a house before doing so,

---

477 Badawī, “Jesus in Islam IV,” 7:00-9:00.
478 Qur’an 3:49.
480 Qur’an 5:49.
482 Badawī presents examples including Matt 13:24; 10:5-6; 19:28, and adds that the statement “go and baptize all nations” is believed to be a later addition to the text, or “nations” translated as Israel.
483 Badawī, “Jesus in Islam IV,” 12:00-15:00.
484 Qur’an 61:6.
485 Qur’an 3:50.
486 Matt 12:29.
which may explain why he chose not to use physical confirmation.\textsuperscript{488} He also told his disciples to obtain swords on the night of his arrest, only choosing not to use violence when the odds were too much against him.\textsuperscript{489}

According to the Qur’ān Jesus also performed miracles, some which are not even in the New Testament. Jesus healed, including lepers, brought the dead alive and made the likeness of a bird from clay and it became alive, all through the power of Allah.\textsuperscript{490} In a later lecture, Badawī adds that surah 5:111-115 speaks of the miracles of feeding the multitudes.\textsuperscript{491}

Jesus was also given the “Injil,” the Gospel, which is not equal to the gospels of the New Testament, for these, were biographies. Rather the Injil was like the book of other prophets and, like the Qur’ān, was communicated by Jesus not a biography written about Jesus. Badawī says that the Injil is lost, but source criticism of the bible argues that the authors obtained their information from different sources one of which could have been the Injil.\textsuperscript{492}

Badawī then goes on to discuss the end of Jesus’ ministry. According to surah 4:156-162, Jesus was not killed or crucified. However, there are some similarities between the death accounts of Jesus in the Qur’ān and the New Testament, Badawī notes. These include the opposition to Jesus by the Israelites, the conspiracy to kill Jesus, and the belief that someone was crucified and he was believed to be Jesus.\textsuperscript{493} Of course, Badawī notes that the main difference is the identity of the one who was crucified. The Qur’ān notes that it appeared “to them” that Jesus was crucified, meaning that some sort of illusion or something happened to lead these people to believe in Jesus’ crucifixion. This does not necessarily mean that someone replaced

\textsuperscript{488} Luke 15:26-33.
\textsuperscript{489} Badawī, “Jesus in Islam IV,” 20:00-23:00.
\textsuperscript{490} Ibid., 23:00-25:00.
\textsuperscript{492} Badawī, “Jesus in Islam IV,” 25:00.
Jesus, for the Qur‘an does not say “Jesus was replaced.” The Qur‘an could refer to substitution by another man, an angel, or some other unknown miracle.  

After a series of statements to defend the Islamic view of the crucifixion of Jesus, Badawī turns to the Ascension and Second Coming of Jesus. Badawī states that in the Qur‘an description of the crucifixion event, the scripture says that Allah “raised” Jesus up. Again, Badawī affirms that this term “raised” should be understood in the context of the Qur‘an as a whole. Comparing other passages like 24:36; 35 and 58:11, “raising” can mean the action of raising status or awareness or of person or their good deeds. A second possible interpretation is that the Qur‘an speaks about raising of the good soul to heaven, meaning that Jesus’ soul will be raised up to heaven. A third understanding is literal; meaning that Jesus was taken up to Allah physically. Badawī adds that this idea of a physical mortal existence in heaven is not odd, for the Qur‘an speaks about the extension of and, long life, of (many people e.g., Noah). Moreover, he adds, others have ascended into heaven, according to the scriptures, so it is not uniquely happening to Jesus. For example, Muhammad (peace be upon him) on his “night journey” ascended spiritually and physically to heaven. Also, God saved Muhammad (peace be upon him) on the night that “assassins” came to find him. Additionally Enoch and Elijah are both “raised up” to God, one in a metaphorical way and the other physically.

As for the Muslim belief in the Second Coming of Jesus, it is not inconsistent with the belief that Muhammad is the “seal of the prophets,” Badawī maintains. For

---

494 Badawī Jesus in Islam V, * 11:00-12:00.

495 Badawī adds that the Qur'ān is the ultimate authority on these issues, because it comes from God. This truth does not need confirmation by any human person, whether theologian or historian. Nor is the truth of Allah contingent on the unanimous opinion of any group. Nevertheless, there are early Christian sects who believed that Jesus was not crucified, and these groups of course became heretics labeled by later Church theology. Furthermore, the Gospel of Barnabas and some Nag Hammadi scrolls both indicate that Jesus was not crucified. So Badawī concludes that there is no unanimous opinion.

496 Qur‘an 3:55; 5:158.


498 Badawī Jesus in Islam VI,* 15:00-20:00.
this means that no one will come after Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the same capacity, "giving a new law or book." Jesus rather will come again as a Muslim, a follower of the religion completely revealed through Muhammad (peace be upon him). Additionally, one has to acknowledge that there is "no conclusive passages to say that Jesus is coming again." Rather there are two Qur’ān passages that allude to this, surahs 43:61 and 4:259, but their interpretation is disputed. The strength of this doctrine seems to come from the hadith collections, for Badawī notes that there are seventy Aḥādīths that speak of this issue. But Badawī adds that some of these Aḥādīths seem authentic, others are disputed.

Within these Aḥādīths, there is an indication that Jesus’ return will occur close to the “Day of judgment.” This will be time of great ungodliness, say some Aḥādīths, “led by the false Messiah. And Muslims will be the main force in standing up to the evil of the Antichrist. According to the Hadith, Jesus will “descend [at this time] in the most Eastern part of Damascus,” near the white towers, wearing a yellow garment, and they venture to even give a physical description of Jesus at this time.” This descending is believed to occur at daybreak during “the time when Muslim perform the first prayer.”

In conclusion, one finds that there is remarkable similarity between the affirmations made by Badawī in polemical and descriptive venues. Badawī’s positive polemical affirmations, however, fall into one single debate early in his career. As such, there is one single grand affirmation that Badawī makes in both his polemical and descriptive materials. The key point is that Jesus was not divine, but a prophet. This is the capstone of all of Badawī’s materials, and in all venues. This is the single point upon which he focuses, and the other common affirmations become secondary.

499 Badawī, Jesus in Islam VI," 27:00.
501 Badawī, "Jesus in Islam VII," 15:00-16:00.
503 Ibid., 22:00-23:00.
CHAPTER 05

SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE PROMOTION OF DIALOGUE & PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN THE CHRISTIAN MUSLIM WORLD
5.1

CHRISTOLOGICAL ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DIALOGUE
CHRISTOLOGICAL ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DIALOGUE

Looking for issues of dialogue, one would first of all have to consider whether Christology can really be the kind of common ground that a genuine dialogue requires. Like many others, Monâ Siddiqui raises the question of:

“... Whether the use of a particular Christian concept such as Christology, and all the issues associated with it, can be applied in the Islamic context. But in using this term even in an Islamic vision, all that is being discussed is nature and person of Jesus; it does not imply an affirmation of any particular Christian perception.¹

As for the status of Christology in a Christian-Muslim dialogue, Smail Balic claims, more skeptically, that it is primarily Christian missionaries, or certain Orientalists who are either themselves theologians, or who are well disposed to Christian theology, who overestimate the role of Jesus in the Qur’ân. They are misled by the way of understanding which they retain from their Christian tradition.²

Even more pessimistically, he foresees that ‘no practical results are likely from Muslim-Christian dialogue in regard to Christ’.³ Interestingly, an important reason for his rejection of Christology seems to be the ‘miraculous’ bias of the Islamic image of Jesus:

“In a time when biblical miracles prove less and less convincing, the Qur’anic Image of Jesus, laden with legendary chimeras, threatens to fade even more.”⁴

So, instead of meditating on the legends and miracles of the past, he suggests that Muslims and Christians come together in a theological and ethical endeavor:

² Balic, S. The Image of Jesus in Contemporary Islamic Theology’, in A. M. Schimmel and Abdoldjavad Faiaturi (eds.). We Believe in one God, 3.
³ Ibid., 7.
⁴ Ibid.
Only a return to the common source, belief in God, and common ethic social and religious objectives can guarantee meaningful dialogues productive cooperation.⁵

‘The ethical connection’ will be dealt with below. In spite of Balic’s reluctance, we will first examine some aspects of the Christological issues at stake; these can hardly be avoided in a Christian-Muslim dialogue, for at least three reasons:

1. Christology is the heart of Christian theology, and must be taken seriously as a central point of reference in the self-understanding of the Church. For the Church, there is a need continually to rethink the question of Christology in an Islamic context - as part of the general task of a contextualized theology.
2. Christology is in fact dealt with as an issue from the Muslim side- both in Muslim polemics, medieval and modern, and in more dialogical contributions from Muslims.
3. Christology is not an isolated subject, but touches upon fundamental issues in anthropology and theology as well as in ethics. This is too both for Christians and, in a different sense, for Muslims.

**JESUS AND MUHAMMAD (PEACE BE UPON THEM)**

Kenneth Cragg combines his interest in *Jesus and the Muslim*⁶ with attempts at a Christian appraisal of Prophet Muhammad, under the heading *Muhammad and the Christian: A Question of Response.*⁷ By the latter, he intends to give a reply to the legitimate demand from Muslims committed to dialogue with Christians, to know what they say of Muhammad:

A Christian ‘recognition’ of the Prophet of Islam has long been a concern, indeed a demand, of Muslims in their exchanges with Christians. ‘Why do you not acknowledge our Prophet?’ is a familiar question, and an insistent one on occasions of what is currently called ‘dialogue’, or between disciples of the two monotheisms in

---

⁵ Ibid., 7f.
⁷ Cragg, K. *Muhammad and the Christian.*
their day-to-day relationships. An adequate response from the Christian side is certainly owed.⁸

David Kerr notes that in the otherwise positive evaluations of Islam in the documents from Second Vatican council of the Roman Catholic Church, the question of Muhammad as a prophet was not addressed. This is true both for the declaration *Lumen Gentium* (1964) and the subsequent *Nostra Aetate* (1965) declarations. In *Lumen Gentium*, the place of Muslims in God’s ‘plan of salvation’ is acknowledged. However:

“... the council preferred to acknowledge Muslims’ ‘profession to hold the faith of Abraham’ than to mention their more characteristic adherence to the faith of Muhammad. Muhammad’s ministry and message were again passed over in silence when the council elaborated its esteem for Muslims in the 1965 *Nostra Aetate* declaration”.⁹

Historically, Christian apologetics, aimed at defending the confession that Christ is the Son of God, have often been paralleled by overt or implied accusations that Muhammad is a false prophet. There are good reasons for saying that unless the question of Muhammad’s prophethood is addressed in a more nuanced manner, Islam is not really taken seriously as a partner in dialogue. Many would contend that unless Christians in one sense or other recognize Muhammad as a prophet, they can hardly expect more respect for the biblical witness about Christ from their Muslim partners in dialogue. Monà Siddiqui warns that without a dual commitment to rethinking of stereotyped image notions of Christ and Muhammad among ordinary believers will probably be left in the following stalemate, with a rather uneven balance of esteem: we are ... left with a Christian prophet who is revered as God incarnate and a Muslim messenger that is reduced to the status of a false prophet.¹⁰

---

⁸ Ibid., 1.
In the following, the question of Jesus and Muhammad will be approached along two lines: one historical, on faith-oriented.

HISTORICAL JESUS, HISTORICAL MUHAMMAD

Since the introduction of critical historical research as an independent Discipline in the West, Western Christianity has lived with a distinction between “the historical Jesus”. And ‘the Christ of faith’. The Christ of faith relies both on the interpretative accounts of the Christ-event as recorded and preached in the Gospels, and the Pauline kerygma of a crucified and resurrected savior ‘The historical Jesus’ refers to the historical events behind the interpretative efforts of the New Testament, and can only be the object of hypothetical reconstructions.

THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Beginning in the eighteenth, but especially since the nineteenth century, there has been a more or less continuous quest for the historical Jesus, in critical distance from the image of Christ as portrayed by the churches. The quest has been countered by many with the claim that the historical Jesus is inaccessible, since the Gospels only reflect the Christ that was proclaimed by the first Christians. Those who search for a ‘historical Jesus’ have often been accused of finding little more than a reflection of their own ideas of how Jesus Christ ought to be portrayed, in order to fit with liberal or subversive ideals.

But the quest has not been silenced, and from the 1980s, there has been a so called ‘third quest’ for the historical Jesus.\(^\text{11}\) Characteristic of the third quest with its historical optimism and call for contemporary relevance-is a book title of Marcus Borg, \textit{Meeting Christ Again for the First Time: The historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith}.\(^\text{12}\)

---

\(^\text{11}\) For the concept of a first/second/third quest, see Bernhard Brandon Scott, ‘From Reimarus to Crossan: Stages in a Quest’. \textit{Currents in Research}, 2 (1994: 253-280).

On the one hand, Borg joins the centuries-long chain of those claiming to have discovered who Jesus truly was—according to Borg, ‘a charismatic, who was a healer, sage, prophet and revitalisation movement founder’.13

On the other hand, he claims a contemporary relevance for his historical hypothesis: ‘to follow Jesus means in some sense to be “like him”, to take seriously what he took seriously’, thus providing us: ‘an alternative vision of life’.14

Many representatives of the third quest portray Jesus in a sapiential mode as a wisdom teacher possibly in the likeness of Hellenistic sylick itinerant preachers. Others focus on his practice of healing, and still others on his roots in the egalitarian values of Mediterranean peasants. All these foci may be combined, as in John Dominic Crossan’s portrayal of Jesus as a teacher of subversive wisdom, confronting social and religious brokers, and practicing free healing and open ‘commensality’ (open sharing of meals).15 Whereas those who focus on the subversive wisdom teacher mainly portray Jesus in his Galilean activity, others focus on Jesus’ confrontation of the temple in Jerusalem, and contend that a record of the historical Jesus should first of all be able to ‘offer a connection between his activity and his death’.16

Behind the third quest lies new historical material that is now available and perceived advances in social and historical sciences (such as social anthropology applied to the ancient world, and fresh studies of Judaism). For New Testament scholarship, the background knowledge of both Judaism and the ancient world has been increasing, as has the foreground knowledge of early Christianity. The 1945 Nag Hammadi discoveries of the Gospel of Thomas, other apocryphal Gospel fragments and other Christian Gnostic documents, as well as the 1947 Qumran discoveries (the Dead Sea Scrolls), have provided researchers with wellsprings of fresh information both about early Christianity and about contemporary Judaism. Jewish scholars (like

---

13 Ibid., 15.
14 Ibid., 17.
Joseph Klausner and Geza Vermes) have played an important part in the new quest for the historical Jesus, portraying ‘The Religion of Jesus the Jew’. 17

In a comparison of ‘Jesus in the Bible vs. Jesus in the Qur’an’ (with the subtitle ‘which is the more historical?’), Andy Bannister attempts to apply the latest New Testament research in order to evaluate the historicity of the Qur’anic accounts about Jesus. Not surprisingly, he finds that the Jewish details of Jesus’ life are poorly reflected in the Qur’an and concludes: ‘... the Qur’anic Jesus does not fit the first century. Rather he is the Jesus of polemic, and the target of this polemic looks like seventh-century Syriac Christianity. 18

Bannister’s approach is marked by an apologetic interest in proving the historicity of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels. Among other Christian scholars, there has been a resumed historical critique of the Gospels, leaving little that may be considered as genuine words or even genuine teachings of Jesus (cf. the controversial judgments of the American ‘Jesus Seminar’. 19 The Jesus Seminar significantly speaks of ‘the five Gospels’, including the Gospel of Thomas in their research, with a dating of Thomas possibly before that of the biblical Gospels. 20 In contrast to the biblical Gospels, the Gospel of Thomas is a sayings Gospel, containing no narrative strings, and no passion story. Parallel to the discovery of a complete and genuine sayings Gospel in Nag Hammadi - the Gospel of Thomas - there has been a renewed interest in the hypothetical sayings Gospel ‘Q’, that can be detected as a source for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. 21

The genre of a sayings Gospel is of course of special interest for a Christian-Muslim dialogue, since the Muslim assumption has always been that the injil was indeed a sayings Gospel, containing the Words of God given to Christ. And interest increases when considering the fact that in the Gospel of Thomas and the

hypothesized ‘Q’, crucifixion is not a crucial theme, neither is divine sonship. The new focus on sayings Gospels and Christ the Wisdom teacher, has been paralleled by renewed efforts to reclaim Christ for a New Age-oriented spirituality, or for Buddhism.\textsuperscript{22} Others reclaim Christ as healer and magician.\textsuperscript{23}

It remains to be seen whether the focus on the genre of sayings Gospels on Christ as (merely) a wisdom teacher, healer and spiritual guide will influence Christian-Muslim dialogue. The noted tendencies within the third quest however, highly controversial, both among New Testament scholars and in the churches. Some scholars vehemently criticize The Jesus Seminar and the sayings Gospel advocates for their ideological biases, claiming that their research brings little new of substantial historical information.\textsuperscript{24}

Also on purely historical grounds, scholars accuse the sayings Gospel advocates of falling short of explaining why Christ actually was crucified, or rather of putting this crucial question in brackets. E. P. Sanders, one of the representatives of the third quest, is critical of over-focusing the sayings material:

“... the teaching material in the Gospels has not yielded a convincing historical depiction of Jesus - one which sets him firmly in Jewish history, explains his execution, and which explains why his followers for persecuted messianic sect.”\textsuperscript{25}

**THE HISTORICAL MUHAMMAD**

In traditional Muslim scholarship, the text of revelation is most often regarded as a given fact, and the task of interpretation is conceived of as an effort to establish the ‘genuine’ meaning of revelation. We have seen that some Muslims have utilized critical biblical scholarship in the West for polemic-apologetic purposes, even claiming

\textsuperscript{22} See Elmar S. Gruben and Holger Kersten, *The Original Jesus: The Buddhist Sources of Christianity.* (Shaftesbury: Element Books Ltd.,1995).
\textsuperscript{23} For a controversial example, see Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1985, first published 1978). Also the Jewish scholar Geza Vermes focuses on Jesus as miracle worker, but within the confines of charismatic Judaism.
\textsuperscript{25} Sanders, o cit., 5.
a ‘genuine Muslim’ Gospel (the ‘Gospel of Barnabas’) alternative to the deconstructed Gospels of the Bible.

If there is to be a genuine dialogue on faith and history, the scope of the conversation must be widened, and Muslim sources included in the discussion. Part of William E. Phipps’ study of Muhammad and Jesus is conducted with a view to comparing the historical Muhammad with the historical Jesus. In an article about ‘Jesus and Muhammad: A Historian’s Reflections’, F. E. Peters calls for a joint reflection on faith and history in Islam and Christianity. The question of ‘the historical Muhammad’ is no more settled than that of ‘the historical Jesus’. As Peters puts it:

Between the historical Muhammad ... and the Muhammad of history who grew up in his wake stands the dynamics of Muslim piety.... The Muhammad of history [i.e. of piety and faith] has in fact become. Far more than a mere mortal in a variety of ways ... a veneration of Muhammad grew into the dogma of the impeccability of the Prophet.

CHRIST OF FAITH, MUHAMMAD OF FAITH

In her essay about ‘The Image of Christ in Islam: Scripture and Sentiment, Monâ Siddiqui points to the fact that the historical questions between Jesus and Muhammad include that of whether Jesus did in fact prophecy the coming of Muhammad. She notes that verses from the Bible used by Muslims to demonstrate this claim are generally dismissed as ‘naive and ignorant and not worthy of serious consideration’ by most Christian scholars. Without addressing the purely historical questions at stake, Siddiqui approaches the issue from a more general, interpretative angle:

---

“Perhaps this is the real problem within interfaith dialogue that any scriptural cross-referencing is regarded as inventive nonsense. Since most religious traditions look for the sacred in the written word, interpretation of religious texts from outside the faith is regarded with caution or dismissed. This particular problem for Islam because, though the third of the monotheistic Semitic faiths, it is not regarded as a unique confirmation of the Judaeo Christian tradition. Thus, neither its Scripture nor its prophet is seen as confirmation of what preceded or a prophecy that was foretold.”

RETHINKING CHRISTOLOGY IN DIALOGUE WITH ISLAM

Many Christian theologians working and serving in an Islamic context see a Christian-Muslim dialogue focused on the image of Christ as part of the contextualization of theology. Islam has to be taken seriously in the Christological reflection of the Church itself - both historically, as a post-Christian religion with its distinctive Christologies, and in a contemporary perspective, as part of doing theology in context. More pluralist theologians would be ready to see Jesus as standing somehow ‘between’ Christianity and Islam, being the possession of neither.

RETHINKING INCARNATION: GENERATION AND PROCESSION

Michael Nazir ‘Ali, an English-Pakistani bishop of the Church of England, has emphasized the need for a Christology which is critically aware of its Islamic context. Nazir ‘Ali notes that many of the traditional Islamic Christologies would seem to come close to views of Christ held by many ‘professional theologians in the West’:

The more ‘radical’ have so overstressed his humanity that they have either neglected or, in some cases, denied his divinity and, as a necessary consequence, any notion of his incarnation.... Muslims rightly claim affinity between their own view

and that of these ‘radical’ theologians. Instead of advocating a reiteration of ‘orthodox’ positions, Nazīr ‘Ālī proposes a more ‘dynamic approach’. Nazīr ‘Āli discusses some aspects of classical Christologies in the modern context, and dismisses both Modalism (in Trinitarian theology) and Nestorianism (in Christology) as cheap escapes from Islamic challenges. As regards the notion of sonship, he points to the fact that whenever the early Fathers refer to the generation of the Son, they mean his “eternal Birth”. The earthly birth is nearly always referred to as the Incarnation.

Consequently, Nazīr ‘Āli opts for a ‘Christology of Procession’ instead of a ‘Christology of Generation’ - the latter being offensive to Muslims, an necessary part of Christian teachings about Christ. As for a ‘Christology of procession’, Nazīr ‘Āli holds the view that much of Qur’ānic Christology is susceptible of a processional interpretation, like the title rasūl (messenger) which is applied to both Christ and Muhammad. Nazīr ‘Āli cites approval a study by Kenneth Cragg, where he has tried to show:

“... that the Muslim idea of rasulīyyah or ‘sentness’ can be developed in such a way as to narrow the gap between Muslim and Christian ideas of revelation. Both Muslims and Christians believe that God has sent prophets and the one who sends is somehow ‘associated’ with those he sends, or in other words, the one who is sent is somehow full of the one who sends. The Qur’ān repeatedly speaks of the Prophets and other believers, as aided by the Holy Spirit (Rūḥ al-Qudus, 2:87, 253, where the reference is to Jesus, 58:22).”

Nazīr ‘Āli raises the question to what extent is God’s presence, for the Muslim, only a presence with and not a presence in? This question would seem to be quite important for a Christology in the Pakistani context, where the veneration of

---

30 Ibid., 25.
31 Ibid., 28.
34 Ibid., 31.
the Prophet in popular and Sufi piety seems to slide markedly from divine presence with towards presence in the (eternal) person of Muhammad.\textsuperscript{35}

As for Christian theology, Nazir ‘Ali maintains that the difference between revelation through the prophets and revelation in the Son is not only one of degree, but rather of kind. The revelation through the prophets is fragmentary precisely because divine distance is maintained. In the Incarnation it is definitive precisely because this distance has been overcome. The divine is not only present with but present in. Divine involvement is complete.\textsuperscript{36}

The aim of Nazir ‘Ali is to seek a language (e.g. of procession) that is less offensive to Muslim than other Christological discourses (like that of generation). For the same purpose, he also emphasizes the christological notion of Christ’s obedience.

**RETHINKING SONSHIP: SON OF GOD, SERVANT OF GOD**

It is a well-known fact for all involved in dialogue that meeting the other is also meeting oneself. Challenges from Islamic Christologies, received by open-minded Christians, might lead to a reconsideration of some aspects of Christian Christology. Although the main challenge in dialogue would be to search for some common ground, dialogue brings back to Christology challenges that have to be dealt with on Christian premises - a process that in turn possibly might produce new kinds of responses to Muslims.

As indicated above (the title ras\textsuperscript{i}l and a Christology of procession), there might be something to gain from a further reflection on the Christological titles. Although most Muslims tend to object to the notion ‘Son of God’, Sufi Islam has been ready to accept it in a metaphorical or generalized sense. Again, the question is about the meaning of the title\textsuperscript{37} and the reference of the sign.

\textsuperscript{35} Nazir ‘Ali. ‘Christology in an Islamic context’ and ‘A Christian Assessment of the cult of Prophet-Veneration’. In Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter, 45.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{37} Ritchie, J. ‘What do Christians mean when they say that Jesus is ‘the Robinson, N. ‘Fakhr al-din al-Razi and the Virginal Conception’. Islamochristiana, 19, 1-16.
Obviously, the meaning of ‘Son of God’ also varies on the Christian side. Some Christians involved in dialogue with Muslims (and mission towards Muslims) seem to have suspended the notion ‘Son of God’, because of its dubious connotations for Muslims, and its lack of lucidity on the Christian side. Instead, the focus is set on ‘Servant of God’ - a title applied to Jesus both in the New Testament and in the Qur’an: ‘Christ will never scorn to be servant of God’.\(^38\)

In the postscript to his book *Der Christus der Muslime*, Olaf Schumann (1988) advocates a Servant Christology which is sensitive to Muslim awareness and still true to basic Christian teachings. He admits that notions like ‘Son of God’ and ‘Lord’ long before the Islamic era might have become part of a power language: ‘There was ... arrogance and passion for power, justified with reference to the elevation and lordship of Christ, in a demand to partake in it.’\(^39\)

The Qur’an might thus have been ‘contextually right’ in rejecting the notion ‘Son of God’. Instead, the Qur’an venerates Jesus as Servant of God.

In his Christian response, Schumann recalls the fact that according to the (synoptic) Gospels, Jesus himself was reluctant to accept the title ‘Son of God’. Instead, he refers to himself as ‘Son of Man’, and acts as a Servant, not as a Lord. In the early Christian hymn preserved in the Letter to the Philippians 2.5-11, Jesus is portrayed as the obedient Servant/Slave of God, who despite his origins in God, chose to be in human likeness, assuming the nature of a servant/slave, humbling himself to the point of death on the cross. The culminating confession of the hymn, ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’, is not a reflection of any excessive ambition of Jesus. On the contrary, it confirms his humility. The implication of the hymn is that God acknowledges that the obedience and humility of his Servant has been ‘to the glory of God the Father’, disclosing God’s own passion and love for humanity, so that God ‘bestowed on him the name above all names’. Schumann raises the question of whether the cross can be acceptable to Muslims as the deepest expression of Jesus’

---

38 Al-Qur’an, 4:172
39 Schumann, O. Der Christus der Muslime. Christologische Aspekte in der arabisch-islamischen Literature, 173.
Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

humanity and his obedience to God, i.e. not as a failure, but as faithfulness: ‘Christ’s humility in his service and his obedience to the will of his Father did not stop before the cross, but included it.’ And maybe even more important for a Muslim awareness: ‘Only on the cross, through the final submission of will and its ambition “to be like God” may the always present temptation of “shirk” be defeated.’

Schumann reminds the reader that the context of this hymn in Philippians is an admonition to imitate the humility of Christ, in concord with the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels that anyone who would be Lord shall be the Servant of all (cf. Luke 22.24-27). An underlying presumption of this servant Christology is the conviction that love is a power that surpasses all:

“By the first Christians, the service and never ending obedience of this simple human being Jesus was seen as an expression of power. Only that this power did not have its source in itself, but in love.”

Referring to the more ‘political’ conceptions of God’s power in Islam, Schumann concludes by asking the Muslims whether such an understanding of God’s rule is really defendable in theological terms. From the Christian side Jesus’ refusal to identify the Kingdom of God with a political understanding of society or state ... is not seen as a deficiency. On the contrary, the confusion of God’s kingdom with society and state is seen as an unholy temptation. Would it be thinkable, although by now mostly un-thought, that Jews, Christians and Muslims together might overcome the temptations of absolute power, in a shared confession that ultimate meaning and power rests only with God? As can be seen with Schumann, rethinking Christian Christology might be good for something else than preaching Christ in

\[40\] Ibid., 178, in translation. (‘Denn nur am Kreuz, durch die endliche Überwindung des Eigenwillens und seines Zieles, “zu sein wie Gott”, kann die immer wieder neue menschliche Versuchung zum “Sirk” überwunden werden.’)

\[41\] Ibid., in translation. (‘Für die ersten Christen waren das Dienen und der Gehorsam dieses einfachen Menschen Jesus bis zum Ende der Ausdruck einer Kraft. Aber diese Kraft hat ihre Quelle nicht in sich selbst, sondern in der Liebe.’)

\[42\] Ibid., 179, in my translation. (‘Jesu Abwehr einer Identifizierung des Gottesherrschaft mit einem politischen Gesellschafts- oder Staatsverstandnis wird von Christen nicht als Mangel verstanden, sondern ihre Vermischung gerade als unhöllige Versuchung.’)
more sensitive ways in an Islamic context. It touches upon questions of general relevance in interreligious dialogue.

RETHINKING THE CROSS

As we have seen, Olaf Schumann’s reflections on Servant Christology are linked with an understanding of the Cross which emphasizes Christ’s humility and he raises the question of whether the Cross can be acceptable to Muslims as the ultimate expression of Christ’s obedience to God. Many scholars have raised the question of whether traditional Muslim positions regarding cross and crucifixion rely on ‘rejection or incomprehension’. Christian theologians of an apologetic inclination have often tended to interpret the Qur’an as in fact not denying the crucifixion. Many efforts have also been made to elicit the reasons for the standard Muslim rejection of the Cross. Different explanations have been given - exegetical and theological as well as historical and political.

Exegetically, the question of what the Qur’an actually says about cross and crucifixion remains unsolved, and the Qur’an has been interpreted differently at this point by its exegesis. Theologically, the question of the crucifixion is inseparable from what Muslims have perceived as non-acceptable implications of the cross as a religious symbol, like the idea of vicarious suffering and redemption. Historically, the question may be raised of whether the rejection of the Cross should primarily be read in the context of political confrontation -the Cross being first the symbol of the rivaling Byzantine Empire in the formative period, and later that of the invading crusaders - rather than as an expression of theological strictures.

As for the linkage between cross, sacrifice and redemption, Clinton Bennett in his essay ‘A Christian Response to the Absence of the Cross in Islam’ discusses ‘the possibility of a Christian faith for which Jesus’ sacrificial death is not central’. Bennett notes that the Muslim reservation against the idea of Christ’s sacrificial death

---

43 Borrmans, M. ‘Muslims and the Mystery of the Cross: Rejection or Incomprehension?’ Encounter (Rome), 25.
44 Author of In Search of Muhammad, 2008 and In search of Jesus, 2001.
is actually quite widespread in Christian circles as well. For his own part, Bennett confesses that ‘the blood language of the New Testament... does not fit comfortably with my own conviction that God’s love is strong enough to save without a price being paid’. In theological terms, he believes that:

“... the Qur’an’s apparent denial of Jesus’ crucifixion may challenge a Christian over-emphasis on the need for a sacrificial, substitutary, atoning death that so many Christians for so long regard as essential to or the bed-rock of Christian belief.”

Bennett’s essay appears in the volume Jesus and the Cross: Reflections of Christians from Islamic contexts, which is in the main geared towards explaining Christian beliefs about cross and crucifixion. In the introduction, the book’s editor David Emmanuel Singh notes that Bennett’s view is ‘not consistent with the historic Christian witness of the Cross and, therefore, will be controversial’. For his own part, Singh proposes an interpretation of the Muslim conception of ‘Perfect Man’ (al-insān al-kāmil) which allows for a relational understanding of God’s unity which expresses itself as ‘God-for-us’. In this framework, Singh suggests, the Cross ‘can remain as the ultimate evidence of divine compassion and mercy’.

Jesus and the Cross includes also two contributions by Kenneth Cragg which seek to explore and explain the mystery of the cross in dialogue with Islam. In tune with Bennett’s concerns, he warns against ‘crude’ interpretations of Christ’s salvific death which make the crucified Christ seem like a ‘helpless scapegoat’ sacrificed to appease God’s wrath. On the other hand, Cragg also takes exception to the Islamic idea that ‘forgiveness is effortless’ on God’s part. In Cragg’s interpretation, the Cross stands for an active ‘receptiveness on divine part’ - expressed through Christ’s suffering love. In his second essay about ‘The Cross and Power: The Parting of the Ways, 51
Cragg reiterates a recurrent theme in many of his writings when interpreting the Cross as God’s renunciation of violent power in overcoming evil. In both essays, he likens Christ’s fate to the potential outcome of Muhammad’s early career in Mecca and contrasts it with his assumption of political power in Medina:

Muhammad’s Meccan trauma led to Hijrah and Medina and all that ensued. Jesus’ travail moved on towards the Cross. There had been in both ‘not being overcome of evil’ through insistent fidelity. Whether there be any ‘overcoming of evil with good’ would be what either, in their total contrast, would have to show.\(^{52}\)

Ida Glaser picks up central elements in Cragg’s theology of the Cross and (tune with Olaf Schumann) develops them in a self-critical direction. The Cross says Cragg, ‘is what happens when a love like Christ’s encounters a world like Jerusalem’. How is it that this love of Christ could have become the motivation and the banner for attacking and killing Muslims (and, of course, many Jews, heretics and Eastern Christians) in a battle over that same Jerusalem? In particular, what theology of the Cross could have allowed this to happen?\(^{53}\)

In this way, Glaser suggests, ‘thinking about the Cross in the context of Islam leads us [Christians] to seeing ourselves anew’ - being called to self-critically embody a theology of the Cross rather than imposing it on others.

**RETHINKING EXCLUSIVISM: JESUS BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM**

The Finnish scholar Heikki Raisanen, who wrote about Christ in the Qur’ān in the 1970s, has later elaborated his views on a pluralist Christology\(^{54}\), with reference to Christian-Muslim dialogue about Christ, he contends that there was a time when Christian ideas about Jesus were much closer to the Qur’ānic portrait of him than to

---

\(^{52}\) Cragg, K. The Cross and Power: Parting of Ways, in Singh, 42.


\(^{54}\) Raisanen , H. ‘Jesus between Christianity and Islam: Muhammad’s Portrait of the Jewish Prophet’, 189-203.
the definitions of the fourth century Church councils. There are layers in the New Testament itself where complete subordination of Jesus to God is made very clear, e.g. in the speeches of the apostles as retold in *Acts of the Apostles*. This kind of Christology was preserved among Jewish Christian circles which did not go along with the development of the Hellenistic church.

Historically speaking, these Jewish Christians seem to have influenced Islam; if so, Islam can be literally seen as a reminder of the Christians’ own past.\(^{55}\) In this strain of early Christian theology, the notion ‘son of God’ should (according to Raisanen) probably be taken in an ‘adoptionist’ sense: because of his faithful service to God, God made Jesus his ‘son’. Following convention, Raisanen contrasts the subordinationist and adoptionist Christology reflected by Luke (in the Gospel of Luke and in *Acts*) with John’s theology of divine sonship in the metaphysical sense.

As for the contemporary relevance of such insights, stemming from the ‘historical conscience’ of New Testament scholars (as Raisanen puts it), Raisanen points to the view of John Hick and other pluralist theologians that:

> “If Christians seized on the ‘adoptionist’ component of their Christological heritage, quite new possibilities might arise for a dialogue between Christians and people of other faiths.”\(^{56}\)

As for Christian-Muslim dialogue, Raisanen suggests that both the Gospel of John (with its ‘high Christology’ of divine visitation ‘from above’) and the Qur’ānic ‘low Christology’-portrait of the human prophet might be read as reinterpretations of Jesus’ message in the light of later experiences and reflections. In a wider perspective, Raisanen contends that ‘the whole history of the Bible could be set forth as an account of the development of traditions and their actualizations and reinterpretations in new situations’.\(^{57}\) With his ‘redactionist’ view of biblical formation, linked to the perception of Islam as a late development of Abrahamic theology, Raisanen raises the

---

55 Raisanen, H. What could Christianity and Islam learn from each other? 196-197.
question of a closed or open canon of the Bible: Should the Bible - as a source of faith and practice - be read only within its intra-biblical perspective, or in the light of Jewish-Christian apocrypha and Muslim scripture as well? The challenge is directed to Muslims likewise: ‘Christians ought to see their Christology and Muslims the Qur’an in a rather more relative light.’

Raisanen clearly opts for a more open canon, and a pluralist reading of the Jesus history. In an Abrahamic perspective, he concludes that:

“Jesus has of old stood ‘between Christianity and Islam’ in the sense that his different position in the two religions has been a hindrance to an encounter. Yet today it is also possible to think that he stands between the two (actually between three religions, for Judaism should be included in a ‘trialogue’) in the opposite sense: in the no man’s land or on the common ground which does not belong to any single party. Jesus was not a Christian, and his vision overlaps only partially with Christianity. Nor was he a Muslim, though Muslims are right in esteeming him and finding points of contact with Islam in his message. He stands in-between.”

As pointed out, Raisanen links his visions to those of John Hick and other pluralist theologians who for long have been challenging ‘Christian unique-ness’. His pluralist inclinations might be countered with the argument that for a vision of Christ in-between Christians and Muslims to become meaningful, both parties should be allowed to retain what they regard as specific for their belief in Christ. There is probably no such thing as a ‘no man’s land’ in dialogue. One might argue that only between partners that fully recognize their horizons of faith, and are ready to live with differences, can there be a real dialogue. But historical-critical and pluralist approaches to Christology like those of Raisanen might help foster the necessary humility in dialogue.

59 Raisanen, H. For the view of Christ standing Christians and Muslims, 96-97.
MIRACLES IN FOLK ISLAM: CHRIST, HEALER OF BODIES

We have seen that in early Muslim legend, the miraculous works of healing performed by Jesus and more specifically his raising the dead are elaborated in a way far beyond both Qur’anic and Biblical measures.

In Muslim apologetics (classical and modern), Jesus is characterized by his healing abilities, as distinct from the magic of Moses and the eloquence of Muhammad. The image of Jesus, the healer of bodies, seems to persist in folk Islam from the stories of the Prophets to present-day popular religiosity, especially in the Persian and Indo-Pakistani contexts. Again, there is an ambiguity between uniqueness and generalization.

The image of Jesus the healer seems to be most widespread in Muslim cultures that focus on saintly blessings in general. Within this context, the healer Jesus may also be held in high esteem. Expectations of bodily healing, and visible miracles in general, are integral parts of popular religiosity in most faith communities. Many modern missionary efforts towards Muslims focus on miracles and immediate healing. For many modern Muslims, however, and Christians likewise, the harvest of the miracle fields would seem to be meagre, and a shallow ground for sharing human experience of a deeper kind.

THE SYMBOL OF THE CROSS: FROM THEOLOGICAL REJECTION TO HUMAN AFFIRMATION

In twentieth-century poetry in a Muslim context, we have seen a significant shift when dealing with Christ - from the spiritual miracle worker and the healer of bodies, towards an apprehension of the symbol of the cross. In the context of sometimes shared experiences of oppression between Christians and Muslims, and more generally in existential pondering over individual fates, the suffering Jesus of the crucified mind has proved to be a meaningful symbol for many. For those Muslims who believe that crucifixion and cross do not necessarily have to be rejected as religious and poetical symbols, there seem to be different paths towards
recognition of the notion of passion, the fact of crucifixion and the symbol of the cross.

1 In classical Shi’ite Islam, theology was not done in the context of a manifest victory, but - on the contrary - in the wake of a historical defeat that culminated in the martyrdom of Ḥusain at Karbalā. This fact has infused Shi’ite Islam with sensitivity towards the religious significance of passion, martyrdom and redemptive suffering. We have seen that in recent times, Mahmoud Ayoüb and Ḥasan ‘Askari, with their Shi’ite backgrounds, have both touched upon the significance of suffering in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

2 Also some Sunni Muslim thinkers (cf. ‘Uthmān, see the section about Christ biographies in Chapter 7) would point to the fact that according to the Qur’ān, prophets would have to be prepared for a violent fate. Cf. Qur’ān 5.70 and 2.87: ‘... some of them [the Messengers] you slay.’

3 We have noted that in Sufism, there is sensitivity towards the world rejection of spiritual knowledge, and the resulting suffering for who are faithful to the Spirit of God. The martyrdom of al-Hallaj offers a model of mystical suffering that for some mystics parallels the fate of Jesus.

4 In the modern context of the Egyptian novel, the focus on Jesus as a guardian of individual conscience, confronting traditionalism and legalism, has led some Muslim authors to a more open approach to the symbol of the cross. Most notably, this is true for M. Kamil Husain’s metaphorical use of the symbol of the cross, when writing about the crucifixion of human conscience.

5 In modern Arabic, Pakistani and Persian poetry, the symbol of the cross seems to emerge as a means of interpreting the suffering that follows resistance to political oppression, or more generally, as an interpretation of human desolation and despair. Especially noteworthy is the move from a folk Islam or Sufi image of Jesus as healer and miracle worker towards the image of a suffering Messiah - ‘in the miracle fields of this uncrucified Jesus’.60 It should be remembered,

60 cf. the Iranian poet Shaffi.
however, that this inclusion of the cross as a symbol either of selfless love and human desolation (the crucified), or of human folly and crime (the crucifier), does not allow for attaching any uniqueness to Jesus, passion. The cross is dealt with as a general symbol.

Neither does acceptance of a religious meaning for human suffering in itself imply any notion of a suffering God. However, the Egyptian thinker al-Nowaihi’s notion of the passionate God of the Qur’ân might break some new ground in dialogue: ‘The Qur’ân itself is nothing if it is not a suffering identity with creation and humanity’.

**THE ETHICAL CONNECTION**

In an essay about ‘Christology in dialogue with other faiths’, David Kerr (1993) makes the general observation that inter-religious dialogue is best advanced where, as a ‘dialogue’ of life’ or dialogue of deeds’, priority is given to ethics. This is repeatedly the stance of Muslims themselves.... This suggests that an ethical approach to Christology should be the first priority in Christian-Muslim dialogue to understand the core of Jesus’ prophetic teaching as contained in, for example, the Sermon on the Mount, and to apply his ethical standards to issues of human life and society with which Qur’ânic ethics are also deeply concerned.

This could offer an alternative approach in Christian-Muslim dialogue to the issue that has caused so much misunderstanding and controversy in the past, namely, the personhood of Jesus himself. ‘Whom do you say that I am?’ is a question that can only be addressed in the context of the character of Jesus’ life and teaching, and their impact upon those who lived with him.61

Kerr suggests that with this as a starting point, other questions - like the mystery of suffering - may also be addressed in a more meaningful way. As an Islamic example of linking the meaning of suffering to the question of ethics, Kerr cites the Palestinian writer Ismā’il al-Fārūqī:

---

“The holy of holies of Christianity, namely, the ethical teaching of Jesus, his world view, his realization of the tragic nature of human existence, that is to say, of the conflict between values which is innate in the very nature of reality, and his attempt at solving that conflict in an exemplary manner in his own life, which is what constitutes his receptiveness - all this is substantially there, already given in the few genuine statements, anecdotes, and deeds of his life, in the purified Christianity we have described.”

For al-Fārūqī, any true ethical dialogue between Christians and Muslims presupposes a ‘purification’ of Christianity, divesting it of Graeco-Roman mysticism and bringing it back to what al-Fārūqī sees as its true Arab spirit. In his article the ethical connection: Christian-Muslim relations in the postmodern age’,

Ziauddın Sardın (in a way similar to Balic) points to monotheism as the basis of an ethical connection between Muslims and Christians. Like al-Fārūqī, he sees a common ethical project, based on revitalized monotheistic belief, as the sole viable way towards future dialogue.

In both Christianity and Islam the nature and activity of God have been held to determine not only the contents of ethics and spirituality, but also the actualization of ethical ideas in society.

The common challenge for Muslims and Christians would thus be to demonstrate ‘the ability of the believers to use the revelations to come up with convincing and humanly satisfactory responses to the problems we face’.64

A joint Christian-Muslim ethical enterprise, designed to generate adoptive and pragmatic intellectual responses to the problems of our age, would be the most appropriate response of the believers to the demands of the postmodernist age.65

---

63 In Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 1, 56.
64 Ibid., 71.
65 Ibid., 75.
Pragmatic as this project may sound, Sardār nevertheless presupposes some basic theological rethinking. For the sake of genuine, mutual recognition and a common ethical project, Sardār suggests purification of Christianity as well as of Islam: ‘Christianity must end its marriage with secularism; and Islam needs to recover its lost humanity.’

Furthermore, Muslims must acknowledge the historicity of their classical jurisprudence (fiqh), and let each new generation reinterpret the textual sources (Qur’ān and Sunna) in the light of its own experience. Just as Muslims should abandon the perennity of classical fiqh, Sardār advocates that Christians should suspend their classical belief in the uniqueness of Jesus.

For Sardār, this does not imply any reduction in the importance of Jesus as the central object of identification in Christianity. Agreeing with Shabbir Akhtar, Sardār states that Muslims should accept that Christians view ‘the life of Jesus as a disclosure and human exemplification of the moral excellence of deity such that the imitation of Jesus’ behaviour is already a moral action in the believer’s life.’

Shabbir Akhtar deliberately leaves room for controversy over whether Jesus ministry is ‘an exclusive expression of God’s manifold wisdom and righteousness or merely a pivotal and distinctive one’.

But, according to Sardār if Christianity is to ‘reciprocate the ecumenical courtesy that Islam has always extended to it’, and recognize the legitimacy of other monotheistic beliefs, the assertion of the uniqueness of Jesus must be suspended.

The practical outcome of such a mutual revision and recognition would seem to be foreseen as a synthesis of the ‘theological virtues’ of Christianity and Islam: virtues like ‘faith, love, justice, courage, temperance and prudence on Christianity’s part, and on the part of Islam, virtues like unity of God, trusteeship of man, worship,'


67 Ibid., 67.


69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.
knowledge, justice, consensus and public interest. An underlying premise seems to be that both religions - with their fundaments in prophetic, monotheistic revelation - basically teach the same, although Christianity and Islam have some ‘distinctive virtues’ that should be interconnected in a common search for creative responses to present-day ethical challenges.

The horizon of Sardar is the post-modern chaos of the 1990s, as a challenge to both Christians and Muslims. In his search for an ‘ethical connection, between the two communities, both facing post-modernity, his image of Jesus (not surprisingly) turns out to be a predominantly moral one. The ‘theological virtues called for by Sardar are moral virtues, although (as Sardar sees it) fostered by monotheism.

**FAITH, POWER, NON-VIOLENCE**

Questions of faith, power and violence have always been of crucial importance in dialogues and controversies between Christians and Muslims - as within both communities. As we have seen with Kamil Husayn and Khalid Muhammad Khalid, the question of faith and violence is closely intertwined with the issue of human conscience. Kamil Husayn advocates ‘the passive virtues of resistance’, coming close to a sort of religiously based pacifism. Khalid, although not advocating pacifism in a general sense, highlights Mahatma Gandhi and his non-violent resistance as ‘the conscience of our age’.

In the Christian tradition, the issue of pacifism and more specifically, refusal of military service is typically spoken of as a question of conscience.

The issue of religion and power also relates to the personal examples of Jesus and Muhammad. Out of their different life-stories arise serious and deep-going issues of dialogue: has God bestowed on man a trusteeship that allows for decisions on life and death, or does belief in God radically limit the use of absolute power? The reported ways of Jesus and Muhammad differ in this point, although their respective

---

71 Ibid., 73.
religions have not differed substantially in their practice. As we have seen above, John Hick notes that Jesus himself was a pure pacifist, whilst his church, from Constantine onwards, has always been a patron of wars. Mohammad on the other hand was never a pacifist, although he did seek to moderate the savagery of war. The Qur’ānic teaching included almost from the first both the call to personal surrender to God and the divine demand for a stable society, to be permeated by Islamic ideals.\(^74\)

Today, many Christians would like to emulate pre-Constantine Christianity and draw a sharp demarcation line between church and political power. Most Christians would still allow for a ‘legitimate use of force’ by the state - as already advocated by Paul, in Romans 13. Others would take exception to the death penalty and warfare, and maintain that the programmatic non-violence of Jesus should be absolutely binding for Christians in their approach to the evils of the world.

On the Muslim side, many Muslims would stress the restrictions on warfare found in Islamic sources. Many Islamists would also reserve the ‘legitimate use of force’ allowed for by Shari’a for an Islamic Utopia, and in practice abstain from the most severe enforcement of Islamic law. Some would point to the mild practices of the Prophet in these matters as a paradigm of how the use of the sword can be minimized, although not forsaken.

Many Christians and Muslims - also those not advocating pacifism - would be ready to reconsider the old notions of just war in the light of modern weapons of mass destruction. Still others, Christians and Muslims alike, fuel their ideological and nationalist struggle with a belligerent religious language that can hardly be justified by either of the religious ethos’s.

The ‘founders’ of the religions obviously differ on questions of faith, power and violence - the one rejecting worldly power and any use of violence, the other being the model of divinely guided statesmanship through word and sword. But Christianity and Islam share a centuries-long history of religion being intermingled

Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

with the world of politics, and face many of the same challenges when drawing the demarcation lines between religious authority and political use of force.

The point to be made here is that the differing responses on both sides presumably have some theological corollaries, and imply different readings of the life stories of the founders. As many Muslims would say: Jesus is a special case, to be admired for his commitment to non-violence in his personal mission, the aim of which was not to establish a new political order. Muhammad shows how the matter should be settled in the context of polity. Is this an acceptable way of settling the accounts? Or should more deep-going dialogue be sought, rethinking stereotyped images both of Christ and Muhammad?

DISCIPLINING THE SOUL

Above, we have pursued the question of human conscience into the realm of social ethics, with a view to the universal principles of reciprocity (the golden rule) and the question of faith, conscience and non-violence.

In the first place, however, human conscience has to do with individual integrity and the ethical constitution of the person. At the level of individual ethics, Islam has a rich tradition directed towards personal formation, ‘disciplining of the soul’ (riyāḍat al-nafs) and ‘refinement of character’ (taḥdīb al-akhlāq).

This is true both of Sufi ethics and Muslim philosophical ethics, as well as of more traditional, narrative ethics in Islam that focus upon the Prophet and Other holy men and women as role models to be emulated in personal character formation. In many of these traditions, the example of Jesus may be cited side by side with that of Muhammad, in a chain of prophets and wise men that deserve to be imitated. In al-Ghazālī’s exposition of a narrative, Sufi flavour ethics aimed at ‘breaking the desires’, disciplining the soul and becoming marked by the character traits of God, we have seen that Jesus figures rather prominently (although subordinated to Muhammad).

---

Another obvious example is Rumi’s portrayal of Jesus as a supreme example of asceticism as well as of love, and his references to the ‘Jesus within’, waiting to be born; every one of us.

It is striking how closely interrelated Islam and Christianity have often when it comes to the ideals and techniques of personal formation. The view is commonly held that Sufi ethics in Islam, especially in its more ascetic versions, have partly been initiated by the contact with Christian Monasticism in East. At a different level, Ibn Miskawayh’s (d. 1030) masterpiece in philosophical ethics, Tabdīl al-akhlāq (‘The Refinement of Character’)76

Was partly inspired by a work with the same title by the Syrian Jacobite Christian Yahyā ibn ‘Adir (d. 974).77 On the other hand, Muslim philosophical ethics, as well as Sufi ethics, inspired the ethical thinking of Christian theologians, philosophers and mystics.78 Both Christians and Muslims were, of course, in the first place influenced by Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ethics. They learnt from Greek teachings about how the forces of the soul should be balanced, vices avoiding and virtues achieved, all with a view to eternity. Some of the pivotal works of Greek authors were translated into Arabic in the ninth century, by Christians Arabs such as Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq who was employed by the Muslim Caliph al-Mutawakkil in Bagdad.79

In these traditions, Plato, Aristotle, Jesus and Muhammad have de facto been companions on the road, in the creative work of their followers aimed at formulating an ethos of personal formation that nourished itself from more than one tradition. The works of al-‘Aqqād, Ḥusayn and Khālid, much cited above, clearly belong to this tradition of mystical and philosophical, Christian and Muslim cross-fertilization.

---

76 In English translation: The Refinement of Character. A translation from Arabic of Ahmad ibn Muhammad Miskawayh’s Tabdīl al-akhlāq, by Constantine K. Zurayk. Beirut: The American University of Beirut (1968). The expression Tabdīl al-Akhlāq is also part of the title of al-Ghazālī’s chapter on ‘disciplining the soul’ in Iḥyā, together with the ‘therapeutic’ concept of ‘curing the sicknesses of the heart’ (Mu’āljat Amr al-Qalb).


DIVINE PEDAGOGY

A theological question of ethical relevance, related to the foundation of morality, is what kind of ‘divine pedagogy’ might be presupposed by a religious ethics in the shaping of the moral self. Many would be prone to simplifications in this field, implying that Christian morality is based on a loving God, whereas Muslim morality is based on fear of God. Another simplification would be that Christianity operates within the paradigm of guilt/forgiveness, whereas the Islamic ethos is predominantly within the paradigm of honour/shame. Obviously the matter cannot be settled that easily. Islam knows much of God’s mercy and forgiveness, and fear of God has always been part of the Christian ethos. Many Muslims, and Christians alike, would criticize a notion of love that implies permissiveness. Conversely, reflective Christians and Muslims would be equally critical towards a pedagogy (be it human or divine) that is mainly fear-based. The paradigms of honour/shame and guilt/forgiveness are present in both religions and may reflect the tension between predominant paradigms of religion in traditional and modern societies respectively. There has never been such a thing as one single Christian or one particular Muslim ethos.

What are the lessons to be drawn from the Sunna of Jesus and Muhammad—assuming that we really have any access to their personal examples, embodied as they are in the ethos of their followers? Jesus confuses people by demanding more radically than anyone else in the field of ethics, far beyond what can be fulfilled by any disciple\(^80\), and at the same time forgiving more unconditionally than anyone, to the point of being accused of blasphemy. Muhammad delivers a revealed ethics that is clearly intended to be practicable\(^81\) (‘God wishes to lighten things for you’), but without overlooking the need of forgiveness, and claiming not only certain deeds, but all of the human soul for God.

So, how do we read our traditions? How do we see the relation between warnings and unconditional love? How is morality fostered, divinely and humanly?

---

\(^80\) See: the Sermon on the Mount

\(^81\) Qur’ān 2:28.
The overlap between the religions - and the importance of a shared reflection - should be obvious.

Clearly interrelated with the ‘pedagogical’ question is that of freedom and limits. Both on the family level and in communal coexistence, not to mention the questions of global survival, a rethinking of human freedom and the limits of ‘self-fulfillment’ is called for. An intriguing aspect of Christian-Muslim dialogue in this field might be the overlap between Christianity and Islam as to their ‘permissiveness’ or ‘restrictions’ in different compartments of life. The respective perceptions of men’s and women’s rights, of sexuality and monogamy, of food and fasting, of religion and power, of legitimate violence, clearly show that neither of the religions possesses the permissive or the restrictive tradition. Again, the crossing lines call for a shared reflection. As can be learnt from reflections on the ethical connection, ethical questions in Christianity and Islam cannot be separated from theology.

**IMPLICATIONS OF MONOTHEISM**

In an essay about ‘Islam and Christian Monotheism’, John Hick (unfolds the implications of his pluralist theology of religions for the doctrines of Trinity and incarnation, two major stumbling blocks in the theological dialogues between Christians and Muslims. Hick suggests that the doctrine of Trinity should not be seen as part of the Christian Gospel itself, but as a human theory devised to protect another doctrine, namely that of incarnation. In positive terms, he sees the Trinitarian idea as:

“... witnessing to the plurality of God’s activities in relation to his creation [if] pursued far enough it can open out into an acceptance of the great world, faiths as responses to different moments of divine revelation.”82

What about the other stumbling block, then - that of incarnation? In tune with his other writings. Hick claims that the doctrine of incarnation can be generalized in a sense that implies seeing:

“... in the life of Christ a supreme instance of that fusion of divine grace and creaturely freedom that occur in all authentic human responses and obedience to God ..”

At least two types of problems related to John Hick’s reinterpretation of classical dogmas may be identified: First, his universalizing approach can easily be seen as imposing upon the faiths it is meant to unite, a theological structure that is foreign to both of them. Secondly, even if one might sympathize on personal grounds with Hick’s search for a global theology, it does not bring together the majority of believers, who would often hold far more traditional and particularistic views. It could be argued, then, that only theological approaches that accommodate real differences can have the function of creating some kind of bond between believers of different faiths.

As for the monotheistic foundation of ethics highlighted by Sardar and others, what would be the specific significance of monotheism in ethics? Many modern Muslim interpreters of tawhid (divine unity) take monotheism as a call to transform the social order, since the opposite attitude of shirk (associating with God, interpreted as illegitimate lordship) implies the unequal distribution of knowledge, wealth and power. The ethical implications of a radical monotheistic belief would thus be obvious. But for all the ethical relevance of monotheism, many would feel uncomfortable if Christians and Muslims; to confront ‘atheism’ on the underlying presumption that a theistic belief necessarily fosters a more moral society. That is obviously not the case. An honest dialogue on monotheism and ethics has to cater for the fact that ‘God on our side’ is maybe the most dangerous notion that men can hold, and that Christians and Muslims obviously have more sins to confess in this respect than secular humanists. Nevertheless, positive elaboration of the importance of a sincere belief in the sovereignty of God remains a challenging task in the field of ethics.

83 Ibid., 9-10.
READING THE SIGNS OF GOD

We have seen that some Muslims demand that Christians at least suspend (if not abandon) their assertion of the uniqueness of Jesus, for the sake of a dialogue on common monotheistic ground. Whatever Christians might respond to this claim, there remains the question of the contents of the divine revelation through Jesus and Muhammad respectively. Uniqueness has to be judged by the contents of their messages.

Christianity and Islam both invite the human being to careful reading of the signs of God. Reading signs has to do with semiotics. For a future dialogue between the ‘Societies of the Book’, Mohammed Arkoun sees some hope in semiotics when it comes to the possibility of reading religious texts in a new way, overcoming dogmatism, but taking theology seriously.”

Semiotics deals with the significance of signs, not only their semantic, intra-textual meaning, but also the question of their reference, historically and metaphysically. Semiotics has to do with the relations between the signifier (‘the sign itself), the signified (the reference of the sign, e.g. God) and the sign-interpreter (who receives the signs in faith, or rejects them).

By its triadic structure, semiotics integrates textual analysis and the aesthetics of reception. Semiotics takes for granted that any ‘significant’ textual corpus implies a multiplicity of receptions, and thus a multi-layered meaning. For Christianity’s part, multi-layered meaning is part of the very concept of a Gospel, reflected in the fact that the New Testament contains four different Gospels with differing emphases and different implicit receptions. For Islam’s part, multi-layered meaning has often been accepted by Sufis and Shi’ites as part of the divine revelation itself.

Approaching the signs of God is plunging into the depths of theology, although respecting that God himself is the ultimate meaning, inaccessible in its fullness. How do we read the signs of divine revelation? Who is the God they refer to?

How is God revealed to us through his signs, in the miracles of life, through his Word, in his passion for humanity?\(^{85}\)

A common approach to the signs of God must elaborate the notions of ‘sign’ in the New Testament and in the Qur’ān. Christ himself is regarded as a sign both in the New Testament and in the Qur’ān.\(^{86}\) In the Qur’ān, he might be seen as one of God’s many signs in history and nature. The Arabic word for sign, āyāh, is a key word in the Qur’ān, with a multiplicity of references. It refers to God’s wonders in nature and God’s action in history (āyāt ullaḥ), the miracles of the Prophets and more specifically to the wonder of the Qur’ān, reflected in the naming of Qur’ānic verses as āyat. In the New Testament Gospels, semeion (Greek for ‘sign’) is a key word when referring to the actions of Jesus, especially his miracles as received in faith. In both religions, there is thus an obvious perception of the miraculous as a ‘sign’. But in the Gospels—in contrast to the Qur’ān—not only Jesus’ birth and his healing of the sick, but also the mystery of cross and resurrection is conceived of as a miracle and a sign.\(^{87}\)

In an essay about ‘The Miracle of Jesus’, Mahmoud Ayoub equates the Qur’ānic notion āya with ‘miracle’. In its most inclusive sense, it refers to the Word of God itself:

> “It is either the Word revealed to humankind with a challenge that it be accepted and lived by, or the creative word of command [amr]. This is the great miracle of creation and revelation.”\(^{88}\)

In Jesus, the Word of God takes the shape of a ‘miracle of life’; the miracle of life that is Jesus unfolds ... as a life giving and sanctifying divine force.\(^{89}\) [...] Who then is Jesus, the miracle of life, of love and of healing? He is the Word of God and the servant of God and the Messenger of God. He is the Savior of us all, for what is salvation but healing? A savior is not simply one who dies for the sins of others, but

---


87 Cf. the notion ‘sign of Jonah’ in the Gospels, Matthew 12.39ff. with parallels.


89 Ibid., 224.
also one who heals the sickness of the human soul; one who infuses life into dead spirits by his own life and spirit.\textsuperscript{90}

In the view of Ayoûb, however, Jesus is not the Word of God or a life-giving miracle in any exclusive sense. Like the Qur’ân, the miracle of Jesus is an inclusive, ever-lasting sign of God: ‘The miracle of Jesus, like the miracle of the Qur’ân, is not a once-only event, but an everlasting source of blessing, guidance, and salvation.’\textsuperscript{91}

Like Ayoûb, Ḥasan ‘Askari regards Christ as a common Sign for Christians and Muslims. He even speaks of Christ as ‘unlike any other sign the Qur’ân speaks about’: ‘He is the Word of God.’\textsuperscript{92}

Exploring ‘the dialogical relationship between Christianity and Islam, he warns against the monological tendencies in both religions as well as in the technological society. ‘Askari sees Christianity and Islam as constituting a dialogical whole’:

“The truth is that Christianity and Islam constitute one complex of faith, one starting with the Person, and another with the Word. Their separateness does not denote two areas of conflicting truths, but a dialogical necessity.”\textsuperscript{93}

In this perspective, ‘Askari explores the reality of Christ as a common sign for Christians and Muslims. He regards Christ as ‘symbol par excellence of the dialogical relationship between God and man...’.\textsuperscript{94} For ‘Askari, reading the signs of God is different from objectifying the Word of God in a book or in a Person.

At this place an important statement of Hasting about Jesus can be quoted as mentioned by Sajid Mir in his famous book:

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 226.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 227.
\textsuperscript{92} Askari, H. ‘The Dialogical Relationship between Christianity and Islam’. Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 8, 482.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 485.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 484.
“He could hunger and thirst. He could feed joy, sorrow love, pity and even anger. He prayed to God like any other man, especially in the crises of his life. He was tempted. He shrank from the prospect of death. .... He confessed ignorance...... it is the picture of a man.”

Monological religion objectifies everything - the Book, the Person and thereby the other. Dialogical religion - oriented towards the Sign - must be differently apprehended. In dialogue, existence means inter-existence: ‘Each man becomes a neighbor.’

In this inter-existence, neither truth can be objectified. The fact of conflicting interpretations should not be regarded as a threat, but rather as a reflection of what a sign implies:

“It is the very ambiguity, richness, of the religious sign that gives rise to different and even opposed interpretations and understandings. Plunging deep into the mystery of dialogue, ‘Askari states that ‘Unity is had when a religious sign is shared’. Since Christ is a common sign for Christians and Muslims, ‘Askari concludes that ‘Once having known Christ is to belong together’.”

For ‘Askari, this is not a friendship without pain, either on the human level or in the relationship to God. The sign of Christ itself reveals:

“... how ambiguous and how difficult is the sphere of this relationship [between God and man], how deeply man can deceive himself in the name of God, how truth could be used to destroy truth, how the most elaborate and confident theologies

95 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p.103; See also: J. Hastings: Dictionary of the Bible (Edinburgh, 1963), p.140
96 Ibid., 481.
99 Ibid.
could become a wall between God and man. It is here, in this realm, that Christ lives on in history as a sure reminder, as an unmistakable warning. Christ appears then as a Sign outside and against all creed-based testimonies of truth, love, and suffering.”

On the human level, pain is related to the discovery of the other. ‘To drop monologue is to immediately discover the other.’ But:

The discovery of the other, of our own being, is both soothing and painful, more the latter. The other is pain, a sting, a bite, but a pain in our very being, of it. It is right in the middle of this pain and anxiety that a Divine Sign is known. If Christians and Muslims venture a joint reading of the signs of God, in a friendship that is potentially painful, they might experience even a deeper, but shared suffering:

Thrown in front of God, facing this deep, vast Absolute, Christians and Muslims will undergo the second pain, far acuter, wider and sharper than the first. This is Second Suffering. It is here that God meets man, and man meets Christ. It was in this state that Mohammed heard the Word of God.

**MODES OF DOING THEOLOGY**

Any question of theological relevance raises the question of how theology is done by Christians and Muslims. Many recent contributors to the question of Christ in Islam state that it is due time to overcome the controversy about dogmatic statements. Instead, one should encourage a dialogue about existential questions that are equally important to both sides.

Can we foresee a common reflection on the fundamentals of human existence as well as the fundamental paradigms of theology - or are we destined to live separately in our different theological enclaves, at the best studying and respecting each other?

---

100 Ibid., 482-483.
101 Ibid., 486.
102 Ibid.
103 Schumann, O. Der Christus der Muslime. Christologische Aspekte in der arabisch-islamischen Literature, 171.
Kenneth Cragg suggests that a Christology of the heart, and a poetic theology might be a fertile soil for a future dialogue. The Sufi awareness of Jesus, if we can do it justice, will best help us to find a tributary into a Christology of the heart from the springs of Islam . . . perhaps is the lesson of the long centuries of doctrinal encounter between faiths, and in particular between Islam and Christianity, that we should let the poetry of faith take over its commendation...  

Referring to the fact that many in the contemporary world, outside a practicing commitment to Christianity, nevertheless involve themselves with the mystery of Jesus ‘as the clue to their art and their existence’, he asks for a Christology of the heart’.  

How would ‘a theology of the heart’ fit with the ethical connection put forward both by Muslims and Christians as the most pressing focus of logical dialogue? Ethical commitment, and sharing of ideals, is but one dimension of human existence. Life experiences are also about not succeeding, and about suffering. A theology of the heart will have to relate not only to human ideals, but also to the harsh realities of life that can only be shared in openness when deep confidence is reached.

It could be argued that only when the encounter with the other is recognized as a painful experience that shatters one’s own identity, can otherness make a real difference in the (re)formation of the religious Self. As we have seen with Hasan ‘Askari (1972), pain can clearly be thought of as an integral part of the dialogical relationship between Christianity and Islam’. If differences are taken seriously, true dialogue will always be painful.

It remains an open question what might come out of a dialogue that has sharing of pain, and not just shared ideals, as its starting point. Christians and Muslims have seldom had shared suffering - and shared hopes - as a common ground for theological reflection. The Palestinian experience might be a notable exception, as

---

104 Cragg, K. Jesus and the Muslim. An Exploration, 45.
105 Ibid., 44.
well as joint experiences between Christians and Muslims suffering from and combating apartheid in South Africa.

The latter experience is movingly reflected upon by Farid Esack in his book *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression*. Farid Esack reflects theologically on the shared experience between Christians and Muslims in confronting apartheid. The struggle against apartheid did not only unite Muslims and Christians. Muslims and Christians were also divided within their own camps - between those who benefited from apartheid or silently complied with it (like the majority of white Christians, and many ‘Asian’ Muslims), and those who decided to fight it.

For Esack, as a Muslim theologian, the experience that the dividing lines did not coincide with those of the religious communities, but rather cut painfully across them, necessitated a critical reassessment of the Qur’ānic notion of ‘the other’. In Esack’s interpretation, it was the struggle for justice that prompted some of the harsh words against Jews and Christians in the Qur’ān. But what was true of some Jewish and Christian groups then (on the Arabian peninsula of the seventh century), in a historical conflict with specific social and political characteristics, is not necessarily true in a different context. Instead, one should look for the deeper content of the Qur’ānic message, which calls for faithful confrontation of injustice and oppression in all places and circumstances. According to Esack, faith [imān] and Islam in the Qur’ānic sense can never be entrenched within the confines of a specific religious community carrying its name. It cuts deeper. Sometimes, true faith will bring Christians and Muslims together in a struggle for justice which may be controversial in both camps.

---

107 See the chapters ‘Redefining Self and Other’ and ‘The Qur’ān and the Other’ in Esack, o cit.
5.2

THE POSITION OF JESUS CHRIST IN MODERN CHRISTIAN LITERATURE WITH REFERENCE TO INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
THE POSITION OF JESUS CHRIST IN MODERN CHRISTIAN LITERATURE WITH REFERENCE TO INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The person of Jesus Christ not only plays a key role in Christian dialogue with non-Christians, but is also the central issue in the current debate within the Christian theology of religions. As has been observed in previous chapters, both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC in their official pronouncements, and individual scholars in their views on the status of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur’an have implied that this question should be reconsidered within the context of Christianity’s relationship with other faiths. This is necessary in order to answer the following questions: How is the status of Jesus to be understood by Christians in their relationship with people of other faiths? Can Christians continue to affirm that Jesus is normative not only for themselves but also for those who belong to other faiths? Can Christians acknowledge that there are other saviours besides Jesus Christ?108

Both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC authorities have moved their Churches from Church-centred or Christianity-centred views to Christ-centred approaches to people of other faiths, they have stressed that the value of other faiths must be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Contrary to this official position, some individual theologians and thinkers have attempted to study the status of Jesus by questioning seriously the traditional Christian beliefs and doctrines. A number of works have been published which discuss the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the possibility of reinterpreting traditional doctrines in the light of new developments and the practical implications of dialogue with people of other faiths.

---

In 1977 John Hick, whose views will be elaborated below, edited *The Myth of God Incarnate*[^109] in order to illustrate that “Jesus was (as he is presented in Acts 2.2 1) ‘a man approved by God’ for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, was a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us. This recognition is called for in the interests of truth; but it also has increasingly practical implications for our relationship to other great world religions”[^110]. In 1986, a number of Catholic and Protestant theologians gathered at Claremont University in the United States to discuss the issue of understanding Jesus Christ within the context of world religions. The major papers of this gathering were edited by Paul Knitter and John Hick under the title; *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*.[^111] The contributors to this work agreed that the myth of Christian uniqueness must be reconsidered, since it implies “the uniqueness, definitiveness, absoluteness, normativeness, superiority of Christianity in comparison with other religions of the world”.[^112] They all rejected this dogmatism and argued for crossing over the shores of exclusivism and inclusivism to pluralism.

In 1991, the first director of the WCC’s Sub-unit for Dialogue with People of Other Faiths, Stanley J. Samartha, published his *One Christ-Many Religions* in order to urge Christians to develop a revised Christology within the context of their relationship with people of other faiths. For according to him, such a Christology “is biblically sound, spiritually satisfying, theologically credible, and pastorally helpful and both necessary and possible- without making exclusive claims for Christianity or passing negative judgements on the faiths of our neighbours”.[^113] In 1993, Hick published another work *The Metaphor of God Incarnate*[^114] in order to show that

---


- Jesus himself did not teach what was to become the orthodox Christian understanding of him;

- the dogma of Jesus’s two natures, one human and the other divine, has proved to be incapable of being explicated in any satisfactory way;

- historically the traditional dogma has been used to justify great human evils;

- the idea of divine incarnation is better understood as metaphorical than as literal;

- we can rightly take Jesus ... as our Lord, the one who has made God real to us and whose life and teachings challenge us to live in God’s presence;

- A non-traditional Christianity based upon this understanding of Jesus can see itself as one among a number of different human responses to the ultimate Reality that we call God.\(^{115}\)

In addition to these works, Paul Knitter, whose views will also be considered below, developed five theses concerning the uniqueness of Jesus in order to argue that the Christian affirmation of the uniqueness of Jesus need not be abandoned, but can be reinterpreted in such a way that it has greater relevance to the contemporary world while deepening Christian devotion to Christ and strengthening the followers of Jesus in discipleship. In doing so, he concentrates mainly on the uniqueness and the significance of Christ without underestimating the uniqueness and significance of other religious figures in the process of interreligious dialogue.\(^{116}\) Recently too, J.S. O’Leary in his Religious Pluralism and Christian Truth Claims\(^ {117}\) [1996] stresses that the more Christians listen to people of other faiths on their own terms, “the more the


\(^{116}\) These are published together with the responses of nineteen theologians in L. Swidler & P. Mojzes, eds., The Uniqueness of Jesus: A Dialogue with Paul Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997).

claim that God is fully and definitively revealed only in Christ seems in need of revision”.

As a critical response to these bold attempts, other theologians have produced works, which argue for the universality of Jesus, contending that Jesus Christ is the unique, normative and definitive revelation of God for all people. In this respect, the Catholic theologian, J. Dupuis, insists on the necessity of defending Christ in the process of interreligious dialogue by stressing that the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ in the order of salvation represents the cardinal, key question of every Christian theology of religions. As old as Christology itself and reappearing in recent times, it is becoming more urgent and more radical in the current context of religious pluralism and the blending of the various traditions. The current literature testifies to the renewed importance of this question.

Within the context of these developments, three eminent Christian thinkers’ views will be examined here in order to observe how those who are interested in interreligious dialogue actively consider the position of Jesus with regard to the religious figures of other religions. We will also want to discuss to what extent their views can contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. In order to achieve these objectives, we have chosen three theologians whose views are developed in parallel to their dialogue with people of other faiths. These are the Protestant, John Hick, and the Catholics, Paul Knitter and Hans Kung.

JOHN HICK

We turn now to explore Hick’s understanding of the status of Jesus with special reference to Christianity’s relationship with other religions. While doing this,

120 Dupuis, Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions, p. 191.
we will not reflect all his views on Christology, since others have already done so.\textsuperscript{121} Nor do we need to follow his writings according to their chronological order, since, as Chester Gillis has shown in his \textit{A Question of Final Belief}\textsuperscript{122} [1989], there has been no essential change in Hick’s views on the question of the status of Jesus after his move to Birmingham and the beginning of his interest in dialogue with people of other faiths.

In his \textit{God and the Universe of Faiths} [1973], Hick stressed that it is time to take a shift from a “Ptolemaic [i.e. one’s own religion-centred] to a Copernican [i.e. a God-centred] view of the religious life of mankind”.\textsuperscript{123} He maintains that just as the Copernican revolution represented a shift from the ancient, long standing Ptolemaic dogma that the earth is the centre of the revolving universe to the realisation that the sun is the centre, with all the planets, including the earth, revolving around it, modern Christian theology of religions needs a Copernican revolution which “involves a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realisation that it is God who is at the centre, and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him”.\textsuperscript{124} He states that the Christian version of Ptolemaic theology puts Christianity at the centre of the universe of faiths, and regards all other religions as epicycles, revolving, to one degree or another, around it.

Hick argues that this kind of centrality of Christianity is due to the claimed uniqueness of Jesus which depends on the doctrine of divine incarnation. He says If God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus; all other revelations are thereby marginalised as inferior and secondary. Indeed, their effect can only be to draw people

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{122} See Gillis, A Question of Final Belief pp. 71-96. The only significant change in Hick’s views is his shift from using the phrase “God” to the terms “Real” or “the Transcendent Reality” in his later writings. He did this because as some of his critics pointed out to use the term “God” means to employ a judgement about the truth of other religions which do not use this term. (See. Schubert M. Ogden. Is There One True Religion or Are There Many’.’ (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press. 1992). pp.72-74.).
\item \textsuperscript{123} Hick, God and Universe of Faiths, pp. viii-ix.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Hick, God and Universe of Faiths, p. 131.
\end{itemize}
in a different direction, away from God’s direct self-disclosure in Christ. For if the Creator has personally come down to earth and founded his own religion, embodied in the Christian Church, he must surely want all human beings to become part of that Church. Indeed it would seem to follow that sooner or later they must become part of it if they are to participate in the eternal life of the redeemed. Thus the doctrine that Jesus was none other than God himself- or, more precisely, that he was the Second Person of the divine Trinity living a human life - leads, by an inevitable logic, to Christian absolutism, a logic that was manifested historically in the development of the dogma Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus.125

As can be seen from this passage, Hick asserts that the results of a “Ptolemaic theology of religions” are unacceptable for our present day circumstances, since it entails that Christianity was founded by God in person. Also, he says that the belief that the second Person of the Trinity has revealed himself as a human inevitably leads to Christian exclusivism and absolutism.126 For that reason, Hick argues for the necessity of a reconsideration and reinterpretation of the traditional Christian doctrine of Incarnation to determine the status of Jesus anew.

At this point, we will quote Adolf Harnack as discussed by Sajid Mir:

ما سُميّ يسوع نفسه ابن الله فقط كما أنه لم يخاطب بهذا اللقب في حياته. وبدأ استخدام هذا اللقب للمسيح تحت التأثير الإغريقي في الدينية المسيحية.127

126 As we have already seen in part one, after the second half of the twentieth century, both the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC began to move from exclusivism to an inclusivism by acknowledging the spiritual values of non-Christian religion, and the fact that salvation is taking place within those religions, while still insisting on the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus as universal savior of humankind. In so doing, a number of theories were developed such as “the invisible ignorance”, “implicit faith”, “baptism of desire”, “anonymous Christianity” and “extra ordinary and extra-ordinary ways of salvation”. However, Hick argues that all these developments fail to rescue Christian Ptolemaic theology from the inherent inadequacy of its theory. It is true, says Hick, that these theories have served the useful purpose of both acknowledging the traditional axiom Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus, while simultaneously accepting the fact that outside the Church there is salvation. Because of this reason, according to Hick, these theories like those in Ptolemaic astronomy, can only operate as an interim measure (Hick, God Has Many Names, pp. 49-51).
“Jesus never called himself the “Son of God” and the title when bestowed upon Him by others involves no more than the acknowledgement that He was Messiah.”

As has been observed so far, Hick’s call for a “Copernican Revolution” in the Christian theology of religions challenges the uniqueness and normativeness of Jesus, since it requires a readjustment in the Christian’s appropriation of his own tradition, forcing him to reconsider the Christological doctrine regarding the identity of Jesus. This is, Hick states, “the most difficult of all issues for a Christian theology of religions”. He adds, “but before adopting the new picture [God centred model] a Christian must be satisfied that his devotion to Jesus as his personal Lord and Saviour is not thereby brought into question or its validity denied”.\(^{128}\)

After all these points, Hick concludes that Jesus was “a Spirit-filled prophet and healer” who considered “his own role as that of the final prophet, proclaiming the imminent coming of the kingdom on earth”.\(^{129}\) In short, the foundation of Hick’s Christology totally depends on the consciousness of the historical Jesus. What made Jesus significant, what constituted him as mediator, and what accounted for his impact was his heightened consciousness of God’s presence.

In the light of these explanations, it can be concluded that the incarnation of Jesus should be understood not as a theological hypothesis, but as a myth.\(^{130}\) For it represents the “application to Jesus of a mythical concept whose function is analogous to that of the notion of divine sonship ascribed in the ancient world to a king”.\(^{131}\) It is also myth, because it has no literal meaning; it is a mystery with no explanatory power. Hick also adds that the mythological character of the doctrine of incarnation can also be found in non-theological language. He explains that the very concept of a

\(^{128}\) Hick, God and Universe of Faiths, p. 148.
\(^{129}\) Hick, “A Pluralist View”, p. 35.
\(^{130}\) Hick defines myth as “a story which is told but which is not literally true, or an idea or image which is applied to something or someone but which does not literally apply, but which invites a particular attitude in its hearers. Thus the truth of a myth is a kind of practical truth consisting in the appropriateness of the attitude which it evokes the appropriateness of the attitude to its object, which may be an event, a person, a situation, or a set of ideas.” (Hick, God and Universe of Faiths, pp. 166-167).
\(^{131}\) Hick, “Jesus and the World Religions”, p. 178.
“divine incarnation” is itself “metaphorical”. Even in secular usage, he writes, the notion of “incarnation” functions as a “basic metaphor”. In this secular sense, “incarnation” is understood to be “the embodiment of ideas, values, insights in human living”. Briefly, he concludes that the Christian doctrine of Incarnation should not be regarded as a divinely formulated and guaranteed proposition, but rather as human attempts to grasp the religious meaning of the Christ event.

Sajid Mir has mentioned the same idea with little difference in these words:

إن الله ثلاثة أقانيم حقية، وهذه الأقانيم متساوية فيما بينها ومشاركة في الأبدية، وهي جوهر واحد، وتستحق العادة والنسبي والفتيس.  

“God is three really distinct persons ....... (and they) are co-equal, co-eternal, and co-substantial, and deserve co-equal glory and adoration.”

In the light of this pluralistic understanding, Hick concludes that the Christian doctrine of Jesus being God incarnate has no literal meaning, but is metaphorical in the sense that He “was so open to divine inspiration, so responsive to the divine spirit, so obedient to God’s will, that God was able to act on earth in and through Him”. Within this context, he suggests that Christians consider Jesus as a man who has made God real to them, who has shown them how to live as citizens of God’s kingdom, who is their revered spiritual leader, inspiration and model without denying that the spiritual and religious figures of other religious traditions act in the same way and to the same extent for their followers.

To substantiate the above discussion, an appropriate sentence can be said as:

في موعود لا يسمي نفسه ابن الله، وأما ما نجده في الأناجيل من إطلاق الناس هذا اللقب عليه، فهو لا يعني أكثر من أنهم يعتبرونه مخلصًا (مسيحًا).

“In the Gospels, though the evidence is confused, signs are not wanting that occasionally the phrase was employed as a honorific title for the anointed one.”

132 Hick, God Has Many Names, p. 58.
133 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p.118.
**Evaluation:** As has been observed, Hick is a philosopher of religion whose critical standpoint takes into account the plurality of religions. He has seen the traditional Christian perception of the status of Jesus as problematic for a fruitful dialogue between Christians and people of other faiths and has attempted to redetermine the status of Jesus by reinterpreting the doctrine of Incarnation in the light of modern scholarship and current interreligious dialogue. The majority of Christians today have not shared his views on this issue. On the contrary, they have been criticised and objected to by a number of Christian theologians. He has been accused of underestimating the New Testament accounts and the Christian tradition, since, according to those theologians. Hick urges Christians to abandon the uniqueness of Christ for the sake of dialogue. We will not go into detail about this intra-Christian debate here because of our specific purpose. We will rather discuss Hick’s interpretations from the perspective of Christian-Muslim dialogue in order to see whether they contribute to its development.

Firstly, coming to know people of other faiths in the process of dialogue can lead one to rethink one’s own beliefs where these imply that one’s own faith is superior. Hick realised during his meeting with people of other faiths that just like Christians, they also try to open their hearts and minds to God, and there are good and ethical people among them. Then, he questioned the traditional Christian understanding that Jesus Christ is in the centre, and all other faiths revolve around him by calling for his “Copernican Revolution”, in which he put God in the centre instead of Jesus and argued that all religions including Christianity revolve around God. Although this theory challenges all religious traditions, in our opinion, its employment in the process of dialogue can lead one to accept one’s dialogue partner

---

Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

on an equal status. It indicates that the ultimate objective of dialogue is not to manipulate others to a particular religious tradition but to God, or in Hick’s case to the Transcendent Reality. For example, if Muslims put the meaning of Islam namely, submission to God at the centre instead of the institutionalised religion of the Prophet Muhammad, they could rescue themselves from absolutising their own religion by excluding others.

Secondly, Hick reinterpreted the traditional Christian belief about Jesus as God the Son incarnate, the Second Person of the Trinity, living a human life. He concluded that Jesus was a human being who made God real to those who follow Him through His God consciousness, His openness to God’s presence and divine inspiration. With this interpretation of the incarnation, it seems that Hick puts Christian claims on the status of Jesus on the same level with claims of people of other faiths about their own religious figures such as Buddha and the Prophet Muhammad. He emphasises that it is possible to see “God’s activity in Jesus as being of the same kind as God’s activity in other great human mediators of the divine”. It would seem that Hick wants to replace Christocentric Christian understanding of other religions with God-centred or reality-centred understanding without giving up the central significance of Christ for Christians. He emphasises that what he has in his mind is a clarification of Christian language about the status of Jesus, rather than a change of actual Christian belief in Jesus.

From the Muslim point of view this conclusion seems to remove one of the greatest obstacles of Christian-Muslim dialogue, since the Qur’an rejects the divinity of Jesus which is upheld by the central Christian doctrines of Incarnation, Trinity and Atonement, not Christians and their faith. So, this conclusion implies that there is an affinity between Hick’s metaphorical understanding of the doctrine of Incarnation and the Qur’anic understanding of Jesus, since both of them consider Jesus to be no more than a human prophet. However, there is also a difference between them. For

while Hick rejects the virgin birth of Jesus by claiming that it is contradictory to the
natural way of birth, the Qur’an strongly defends it. The logic of the Qur’an here is
that Jesus was the Word of God, a divine message like the Qur’an, and for that reason
the human vehicle of this divine message must be pure and untainted.\footnote{See Nasr, Ideals and Realities of Islam, pp. 43-44; If we adopt Hick’s understanding, then we need to understand the Qur’anic acknowledgement of Jesus not literally but metaphorically. This means that in reality Jesus had a human father but we do not know him.}

Although this affinity seems to contribute to the development of Christian-
Muslim dialogue, it raises some problems. For, when we consider how Hick arrived at
some of his conclusions, it becomes obvious that he expects followers of other faiths
to do the same thing for their own ontological claims. We may suggest that he wants
Muslims to understand metaphorically the uncreatedness of the Qur’an and the
finality of the Prophet Muhammad. In this sense, as D’Costa rightly observes, by
mythologising the traditional Christian perception of the status of Jesus. Hick
“equally mythologizes all other ontological claims about the nature of ultimate
reality, rendering them disfigured and often portraying them in a fashion contrary to
theologians’ views have been considered by some other theologians as a “new kind of
Western imperialism”\footnote{Paul J. Griffiths, “The Uniqueness of Christian Doctrine Defended”, in D’Costa, ed.. Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered, p. 158.}.

Further, this demand of Hick could increase the anxieties of the dialogue
partners. Committed and sincere Christians and Muslims may think that if they enter
into dialogue with each other, they may lose their own beliefs. By taking this point
into account, we may conclude that we need not abandon or even question our own
traditional beliefs for the sake of better relations with people of other faiths. Or as
D’Costa correctly states, we cannot abandon our own traditional beliefs to please
those who disagree with them.\footnote{D’Costa, Theology and Religious Pluralism, p. 90.} Because of this danger of Hick’s views for dialogue,
it would be better to consider him not a practising dialogue partner, but an academic
theologian.
Thirdly, it is obvious that by considering the idea of Divine incarnation as a metaphor Hick went beyond the official views of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC which acknowledged Jesus as unique, definitive, absolute, and the normative revelation not only for Christians but also all humankind. Because of this point, Pope John Paul II implicitly condemned Hick’s understanding of the status of Jesus in his encyclical Redemptoris Missio, as has been observed in chapter two.

However, Hick’s understanding of the status of Jesus seems to go a long way in contributing to the development of interreligious dialogue in general and dialogue with Muslims in particular. With a very good intention, he has boldly tried to solve some significant theological problems which Christians face both because of modern scientific developments and interreligious dialogue.¹⁴³

**PAUL KNITTER**

Within the context of a pluralist theology of religions there are three significant stages, namely the theocentric, soteriocentric and the correlational globally responsible model. We will examine Knitter’s views on the status of Jesus by following these three stages, since in all of them he explained the status of Jesus in slightly different ways. In doing so, we will focus on his understanding of the traditional Christian doctrines which announce Jesus as the Son of God and the universally normative and constitutive revelation of God.

Theocentric Model: Knitter’s starting point in his theology of religions is that the new consciousness of religious pluralism is an ongoing fact of life, since there never has been, and probably never will be a time when there will be just one religion in the world. There will always be many religions because reality itself is pluriform.

---

¹⁴³ He himself explains his good intention in this issue as follows: “In order to continue to be Christians in a religiously plural world, we do not have to reject any of the great traditional themes of Christian thought; but we do need to use them in ways that are appropriate to our own situation in a world which has become consciously one. We do not need to reject the ‘son of God’ language in its application to Jesus, but rather need to understand it in its original Hebraic sense as designating a special servant of God. We do not need to reject the idea of the Trinity, but to understand it in its modalistic rather than in its ontological sense. We do not need to reject the identification of Jesus as our savior, but need to see him as saving us by making real to us God’s gracious presence and love and claim and acceptance (Hick, “Rethinking Christian Doctrine”, p. 101).
Knitter maintains that followers of different religions must come together “not in order to obliterate or absorb each other but to learn from and help each other”\(^\text{144}\), and then suggested a new concept called “unitive pluralism”\(^\text{145}\) to facilitate this coming together and to encompass the ongoing situation of religious pluralism. However, he stresses that many Christians still have a serious hesitation and an unwillingness to enter into dialogue with others because of “the central Christian belief in the uniqueness of Christ” which holds Jesus as a normative and constitutive of any true encounter with God, not only for Christians but also for all people.\(^\text{146}\)

Knitter considers this sort of understanding of Jesus as an obstacle and unnecessary barrier that stands in the way of authentic dialogue. Thus he proposes to abandon traditional conceptions about the uniqueness of Christ and develops a theology of religions which puts not Christ or the Church, but God at the centre, as Hick did in his “Copernican Revolution”.\(^\text{147}\) Then, he proposes a relational uniqueness for Jesus which affirms that Jesus is unique, but with a uniqueness defined by its ability to relate - that is, to include and be included by - other unique religious figures. Such an understanding of Jesus views him not as exclusive or even as normative, but as theocentric. as a universally relevant manifestation (sacrament, incarnation) of divine revelation and salvation.\(^\text{148}\)

Knitter concludes that Jesus most likely experienced himself as the eschalologiciil prophet who was anointed specially by God’s Spirit, who was to complete the mission of the earlier prophets by announcing and enacting the good news of God’s final rule. Knitter stresses that whenever Christians forget this role of Jesus and open their consciousness to a “myopic christocentrism”, to a “jesusology”, to a reductionism that absorbs God into Jesus, their understanding of Jesus easily becomes an idolatry that

\(^{144}\text{Knitter, No Other Name’’, p. 6.}\)
\(^{145}\text{This concept defined by Knitter as follows” unitive pluralism is a unity in which each religion, although losing some of its individualism (its separate age), will intensify its personality (its self-awareness through relationship). Each religion will retain its own uniqueness, but this uniqueness will develop and take on new depths by relating to other religions in mutual dependence, (Knitter, No Other Name’’, p. 9).}\)
\(^{146}\text{Knitter, No Other Name’’, p. 17.}\)
\(^{147}\text{For the Copernican Revolution see section 6.2.}\)
\(^{148}\text{Knitter, No Other Name’’, pp. 171 -172.}\)
violates not only Christian but the revelation found in other faiths. By arguing this, it seems that Knitter puts Jesus on an equal level with other prophets and religious figures.

Finally, in the light of this conclusion Knitter proposes the following guidelines to understand the status of Jesus anew within the context of interreligious dialogue: (1) The titles of Jesus are not absolute expressions, but only interpretations of who he was for his early followers. For that reason they should be understood by taking into account their “historical context and concerns. Each makes use of mythic or symbolic images drawn from the Jewish and Hellenistic environment”. (2) All the different New Testament descriptions of Jesus should be preserved without absolutising one or rejecting the other, since there would be a time for every description in the course of time. (3) The plurality of the New Testament depiction of Jesus does not allow today’s Christians to argue that everything about the person of Jesus - who he was and what he means for Christians and for the world - was said and set up by the first community. For that reason, Christians continue to develop new images “in continuity with what went before, preserving the past without embalming it, faithful to the past without being limited by it”. (4) This continuous and evolutionary character of the description of Jesus in the Christian tradition can lead today’s theologians to develop “new images of Jesus that will make him more meaningful to them, as well as to persons of other faiths” in the process of dialogue.

Similar ideas can be seen in the book Al-Maseehiyyah:

149 Knitter, No Other Name? pp. 1 74-1 75.
151 Knitter, No Other Name? p. 181.
152 On the contrary, Knitter maintains that “the evolutionary process of interpretation that makes up the New Testament must continue today in the same manner in which it took place then: in continuity with what went before, preserving the past without embalming it, faithful to the past without being limited by it. Christians will be faithful to the New Testament images of Jesus, they will truly believe in these images, by allowing them to give birth to new symbols and models of who this Jesus is and how he saves.(Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 181).
153 Knitter, No Other Name?, p. 181.
"The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught in the O.T. in the N.T. the oldest evidence is in the Pauline epistles."

As has been seen so far, in his theocentric model, unlike the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus as an absolute and normative revelation of God for all people, Knitter considers him as a God-conscious figure through whom men and women have encountered God and as an eschatological prophet who came to fulfill the mission of earlier prophets.

**Soteriocentric Model:** After shifting to this model, Knitter addressed the issue of the status of Jesus in a new way by indicating:

The primary concern of a soteriocentric liberation theology of religions is not “right belief about the uniqueness of Christ, but the “right practice”, with other religions, of furthering the Kingdom and its Soteria. Clarity about whether and how Christ is one lord and savior, as well as clarity about any other doctrine, may be important, but it is subordinate to carrying out the preferential option for the poor and nonpersons.\(^{155}\)

Within this context, firstly Knitter calls Christians to evaluate the status of Jesus in the light not of their *a priori* knowledge, but of the centrality of praxis. He states:

The Christian conviction and proclamation that Jesus is God’s final and normative word for all religions cannot rest only on traditional doctrine or on personal, individual experience. We cannot know that Jesus is God’s last or normative statement only on the basis of being told so or on the basis of having experienced him to be such in our own lives. Rather, the uniqueness of Jesus can be known and then affirmed only “in its concrete embodiment”, only in the praxis of historical, social involvement.\(^{156}\)

\(^{154}\) Sajid Mir, Al-Maseehiyyah, 118.

\(^{155}\) Knitter, “Towards a Liberation Theology of Religions”, 192.

Theologically, means that while Christians can and must continue to announce Jesus of Nazareth as one in whom the reality and saving power of God is incarnate and available, they will also be open to the possibility that there are others whom Christians can recognize as sons and daughters of God. Personally, such a pluralistic Christology allows and requires Christians to be committed fully to Christ, but at the same time genuinely open to others who may be carrying out similar and equally important roles. Ecclesially, this means that the churches will go forth into the whole world with a message that is universally relevant and urgent, but at the same time will be ready to hear other messages from very different sources that may be also be universally meaningful and important.

Evaluation: As has been observed, as a result of his dialogue with people of other faiths. Knitter, like Hick, saw the traditional Christian beliefs which hold Jesus as uniquely divine, the absolute and final Word of God in history as roadblocks to genuine dialogue. For that reason, he attempted to remove these roadblocks by reconstructing the status of Jesus in the light of current developments in Christian theology and his own interreligious dialogue. In the end, he concluded that in our religiously pluralistic age Christians cannot consider the status of Jesus as the “full, definitive and unsurpassable” revelation of God but as a universal, decisive and indispensable message of God. We will discuss whether Knitter’s reconstruction of the status of Jesus can contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. While doing this, we need to take into account the fact that although Knitter as a theologian who seems to observe the New Testament accounts concerning the status of Jesus even more closely than Flick, his views too are not accepted by the majority of Christians today. A number of theologians have objected to Knitter’s views by saying they are not Christian and have criticised him for selling out the Christian faith.

Knitter, One Earth Many Religions, p. 35.

As has been pointed out above, Knitter’s starting point is that coming to know the religious other and observing his religious life can affect one’s own beliefs. This point led him to rethink his own beliefs and doctrines which put Jesus in a superior position to other religious figures by announcing him as the absolute and final revelation of God. According to him, this sort of understanding prevents Christians from establishing a genuine and fruitful dialogue with people of other faiths. For that reason, by reinterpreting these beliefs and doctrines, Knitter, like Hick, develops a theology of religions which puts not Jesus, but God at the centre. Through this understanding of Jesus, the Christian partner in dialogue can rescue himself/herself from exclusivism by putting himself/herself on an equal position with others. In other words, to put God, not one’s own religion or religious figure, at the centre in the dialogue process can create an equal opportunity for all dialogue partners.

Secondly, Knitter urges Christian participants of dialogue not to enter into dialogue by holding Jesus as “the final word”, “definitive revelation”, “absolute truth” and “absolute savior”, arguing that there is no place at the dialogue table for these sort of beliefs. He further generalises this demand by saying that “It would seem . . . that the revision of traditional understandings of ‘the uniqueness of Christ and Christianity’ (together with similar understandings of the uniqueness of the Qur’an or of Krishna or of Buddha) is a condition for the possibility of fruitful dialogue”.\footnote{Knitter, “Interreligious Dialogue”, p. 32.} Although this demand would contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue, it seems that it is rather problematic, since Knitter considers it as a necessary condition, not a possible outcome of a genuine dialogue. When we take this demand as a necessary
condition of dialogue, we mean that we do not want to enter into dialogue with those who believe the uniqueness of the Qur’an or the uniqueness of Jesus. In today’s world in which the majority of Muslims and Christians are holding the Qur’an and Jesus as the unique revelation of God this means that dialogue is confined to those who have already abandoned these beliefs. For that reason, it would seem to be better to consider this demand not as a necessary condition but a possible outcome of dialogue.\textsuperscript{162} Because of this demand, Knitter can not escape being accused of being, in D’Costa’s word, ‘imperialistic’.\textsuperscript{161}

Thirdly, Knitter like Hick also emphasises that the significant point of the Christ event is not his finality or uniqueness, but his consciousness of God. For, according to him, those who follow his message encounter God through not his finality or uniqueness, but his consciousness of God. It seems that the application of this point to religious figures can contribute to the understanding of those religious figures by others much more positively than before. For example in this case, if Christians witness to their dialogue partners how they encountered God through Jesus, rather than emphasising his finality and uniqueness, their partners will understand the significance of Jesus more readily, since they may have had the same encounter with God through the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad.\textsuperscript{162}

Fourthly, Knitter emphasises that whether Jesus is unique and absolute, the normative revelation of God cannot be known without living his message while engaging in dialogue with other believers. By following this argument, Knitter concluded that the uniqueness of Jesus depends on how much or how little his message contributes to promoting global justice. This argument could seem to contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim understanding. This conclusion of Knitter has correctly been criticised by Kung who states that “practice should not be made the norm of theory undialectically and social questions be expounded as the

\textsuperscript{160} See Cobb, “ResponseI” in Swidler, et al., eds., Death or Dialogue, pp. 79-84.

\textsuperscript{161} D’Costa, “Christian Theology and Other Religions”, p. 168-178.

\textsuperscript{162} As has been see in chapter four and five by taking this point into account some leading Christian thinkers evaluated the status of the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad more positively than before.
basis and centre of the theology of religions". However, positively it means that both Christians and Muslims need to put aside the claim that Jesus or the Qur’an is the unique revelation of God as an a priori principle. Instead, according to Knitter, they need to show the uniqueness of Jesus and the Qur’an by applying their message to their lives and then sharing them with people of other faiths in the dialogue process. This further means that what is important is not Jesus as a person or the Qur’an as a text, but their message. Briefly, what this argument of Knitter stresses is that in the dialogue process we need to practice what our religious figures have brought us, rather than to absolutise that religious figure.

Fifthly, Knitter, unlike Mick, reconstructed the status of Jesus without underestimating the New Testament accounts. As has been seen above, he considered those accounts seriously without sharing their tight or literal interpretation. Instead, by using a hermeneutic of discipleship, he considered those accounts as religious confessions of the disciples of Jesus. Although this soil of understanding seems to reduce the value of the Bible in the eyes not only of non-Christians but also of Christians, in reality it may encourage them to reread the Bible in order to understand the significance of Jesus. Also the non-absolutist interpretation of sacred scriptures can urge people of other faiths to evaluate those scriptures more positively.

In short, although Knitter’s views do not represent the mainstream Christian perception of the person of Jesus, and for that reason seem less beneficial for Christian-Muslim dialogue at this stage, they deserve to be taken into account seriously by the Christian dialogue partner. For in developing those views, Knitter, both as a committed Christian and dialogue activist tries to seek a way through which Christians can establish a genuine dialogue with people of other faiths.

HANS KUNG

Kung dealt with the issue of the status of Jesus with regard to the world religions for the first time in his On Being Christian [1977], under the title of "The Challenge of World Religions". Here, he emphasized the uniqueness of Jesus of

---

Nazareth as the "distinctive" component of the Christian faith. He maintained that the question of the distinctiveness of Christianity, when viewed in the horizon of the world religions, can be answered only by reference to Jesus Christ, since he is the specific element of the Christian faith. He further stated that "the special feature, the most fundamental characteristic of Christianity is that it considers this Jesus as ultimately decisive, definitive, archetypal, for man’s relations with God, with his fellow man, with society . . ."  

Kung stressed that Jesus is unique in the sense that his uniqueness surpasses all other religious figures by being absolutely and universally normative for others as well.

In his essay "Belief in the Son of God" [1981], Kung continued to defend the absoluteness and normativeness of Jesus against the religious figures of other faiths. He examined the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth as the "Son of God" in the light of the biblical infancy narratives and argued that the virgin birth, angelic visitations, and temptations from the devil were not exclusive to Jesus. What Kung found unique and distinctively Christian with regard to Jesus was the cross. Hence, Kung highlighted the crucifixion event as the decisive aspect differentiating Jesus from Buddha, Confucius, Zarathustra, and Muhammad, and claimed that the cross event was required in order to understand the infancy narratives and how Jesus came to be designated with the title "the Son of God". He stressed the fact that this and other similar titles only served to express the unique relationship that Jesus had with God and God with Jesus and not his divinity. He claimed that no other religious figure or teacher had this unique relationship, before or after Jesus.

In almost his every work, Kung ventured to compare Jesus with the other religious figures such as Moses, Buddha, Confucius, and Muhammad in order to show his uniqueness. In this comparison, he argued that Jesus was unique with regard to his

---

165 Knitter stressed that this sort of understanding of the status of Jesus is not helpful for a genuine dialogue with people of other faiths (Knitter, "World Religions and the Finality of Christ: A Critique of Hans Kling’s ‘On Being a Christian’", pp.202-221.
Jewish social context, his message, his personality, his relationship to God, and his death.\textsuperscript{168}

In short, in these earlier writings Kung held Jesus as the unique and normative revelation of God, not only for Christians but also for all humanity. He further declared that with regard to the relationship with God, Jesus had a position superior to other religious figures. In this sense, Kung implied that in one way or another all people should acknowledge Jesus as the unique and archetypal revelation of God. This would mean that there is no salvation apart from him.

Kung was of the view that the title, "Son," was given to Jesus not in a sense of "a physical divine sonship, as Islam always assumed and rightly rejected (because it awakened associations of intercourse between a god and a mortal woman), but God’s choosing Jesus and granting him full authority"\textsuperscript{169} To support this conclusion, he points out that from the perspective of Jewish monotheism there would not be a problem in this kind of belief concerning the status of Jesus, and "the primitive Christian community, made up entirely of Jews, would have no difficulty holding this view. Nor would Islam".\textsuperscript{170}

Kung suggests three ways of understanding the doctrine of the Trinity from the perspective of Christian-Muslim dialogue. Firstly, he notes that believing in God the Father in the New Testament means believing in the one God whom Judaism, Christianity and Islam all share. Kung indicates that the "Father" in this expression should be understood not literally, but symbolically. Secondly, the term, "Son of God." should be understood in the revelation of the one God in the man Jesus of Nazareth. And, also, Jesus Christ should be recognised not as an eternal and intrusive hypostasis, but as a human and historical person concretely related to God. Thirdly, believing in the Holy Spirit should be understood as God’s power and might which is working among human beings in this world. Further, Kung points out that the doctrine of the Trinity is not the criterion for being a Christian, but belief in One

\textsuperscript{169} Kung, Christianity and World Religions, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{170} Kung, Christianity and World Religions, p. 118.
God, the practical imitation of Christ and trust in the power of God’s Spirit all work together in the life of a Christian. This can be read in these words as elaborated by a Pakistani origin scholar in the following words:

"كانت عقيدة التثلث تبدو لهم ضد التوحيد الألهي الذي تعلمه الكتب المقدسة؛ فلذلك أكروها ولم يعتروا

Kung maintains that this redefining of the doctrine of the Trinity will really help in promoting dialogue between Muslims and Christians. He believes that if Christians try to understand the doctrine of the Trinity by going back to the New Testament, they may understand Muslims better. He advises both Muslims and Christians if they want to understand each other better to go back to their Holy Books and try to understand their doctrines in the light of these holy books. For instance, according to Kung, if Christians go back to the New Testament, they will discover what great differences there are between original expressions concerning the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the subsequent dogmatic teachings of the Church on the doctrine of the Trinity.

In one of his recent essays, "Christian Self-Criticism in the Light of Judaism" [1993], Kung criticizes the title "Son of God", and the doctrine of the Incarnation in order to make them intelligible for better dialogue with people of other faiths. He states that in the dialogue process Christians do not any longer underestimate the objection of Jews and Muslims to the doctrine of the Trinity which is unintelligible to them because, according to them, that doctrine destroys the belief in one God. Also, Kung notes that after the Enlightenment period more and more Christian intellectuals

---

171 Kung, Christianity and World Religions, p. 121; Kung, Christianity, pp. 28ff.
172 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p.123.
173 In this point, Kung refers to the Finnish New Testament scholar H. Raisanen’s view concerning the significance of going back to the New Testament to re-express the doctrine of Trinity to promote Christian-Muslim understanding. Raisanen, argues, “Today, it is clear for the New Testament scholarship that there is hardly anything in the New Testament that resembles even remotely the doctrine of the Trinity. This insight might in itself provide a fresh starting point for dialogue. But perhaps even more interesting is the fact that some layers of the New Testament bear a striking resemblance to the Qur’anic portrait of Jesus” Raisanen, “The Portrait of Jesus in the Qur’an: Reflection of a Biblical Scholar”. MW, 70 (1980). pp. 122-133.
have raised similar objections to the doctrine as a consequence of historical-critical exegesis and the subsequent development of critical analysis of Christian dogma. In the light of these objections, Kung tries to make "central Christian dogmas" intelligible to avoid false confrontations in the process of interreligious dialogue. To fulfill this objective he scrutinizes the meaning of being a "Son of God" for Jesus.

After pointing out the fact that before Jesus, the term "Son of God" had been used in the Old Testament for human beings in general and for the people of Israel specifically, Kung underlines that Jesus himself did not use the term "Son of God" for himself since his message was not to present his own person, his role, or status, but was to proclaim God and His Kingdom to people in a simple way by using short stories and parables from daily life. Then, he moves on to explain the relation of Jesus to God within the context of the New Testament as follows; Firstly, according to Kung, it is a well known fact that "Jesus himself spoke, prayed, and struggled out of an ultimately inexplicable experience of God, a sense of God's presence, yes, even a sense of unity with God as his father". Secondly, he maintains that the historical-critical scholarship has proved/shown that Jesus himself did not describe himself as "Son of God". Thirdly, he draws a conclusion from Jesus' authority against the teaching and practice of the religious establishment of his time that he was "more than Moses", and "more than the prophets".

Thus, it is obvious that only after the event of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, was the title of "Son of God" used to describe him. Kung argues that this attempt to designate Jesus as "Son of God" did not cause any problem among Jews until the Council of Nicea and Chalcedon in which Jesus was described as "the same nature as the father." and the classical Trinitarian doctrine was developed as "one God in three persons". Up to that time this title was not formulated or understood as a dogmatic doctrine but as an exaltation of his status. In his *Credo* [1993], Kung maintains that if the sonship of Jesus is not understood as a physical divine Sonship

---

176 See, Exod. 4:22f; Hos. 11:1; Jer. 3 1:9;Deut. 14:1; Hos. 1:10.
but as an expression of election and empowerment of Jesus, "there would be few objections to it . . . from Jewish and Islamic monotheism".  

**Evaluation:** As has been considered so far, Kung, as one of the distinguished theologians of the twentieth century and a pioneer of interreligious dialogue, has developed his theology of religions as a parallel to his dialogue with world religions. In so doing, unlike Hick and Knitter, he has avoided making such claims which would alienate him from his faith community and diminish his personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Now, we will turn to discuss Kung’s views on the status of Jesus from the perspective of Christian-Muslim dialogue.  

Kung reconsiders the traditional doctrines such as the Trinity and Incarnation in the light of current Christian-Muslim dialogue and new scientific developments in order to make those doctrines acceptable to Muslims and comprehensible for Christians in our present day. This attempt of Kung seems to be helpful for the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue, since it urges dialogue partners to consider critically their own beliefs and doctrines which imply the superiority of one religious figure to another. As has been observed above, by following this approach Kung himself moved from holding Jesus as the normative and final Word of God not only for Christians but also others, to recognising him as God’s normative and final revelation only for Christians. By this shift, Kung seems to do justice to his own faith while recognising the normativeness of other religious figures for their followers. This approach of Kung certainly contributes more to promoting Christian-Muslim dialogue than either Hick’s or Knitter’s approach.

---


**179** This shift occurred in three stages. Firstly, he moves away from his consideration of Jesus as the norma normans for not only Christians but also for those who belong to other religions to the assertion that although he is directly the norma normans for Christians, he is only indirectly so for non-Christians. Secondly, in a later essay, too, Kung seems to give up the indirect normativity of Christ for non-Christians by arguing that Christians must regard Jesus as God’s normative and final revelation for themselves without “making any arrogant claims of superiority over other religions” (See Scott Cowdell, “Hans Kung and World Religions: Emergence of a Pluralist Theology”. Theology 92 (1989), pp. 85-92; Kenneth W. Brewer, “The Uniqueness of Christ and the Challenge of the Pluralist Theology of Religions”, in Kuschel & Haring, eds.. Hans Kung: New Horizons for Faith and Thought, pp, 198-215).
Firstly, this approach allows the Christian dialogue partner to keep the particular element of his/her faith which separates it from others without rejecting the particularities of others. As is well known, one becomes a Christian by one’s belief in Jesus Christ through whom Christians know God. So, from the perspective of a committed Christian, this approach is more beneficial than other approaches.

Secondly, through this approach dialogue will be rescued from being restricted to those who seem ready to abandon the particularity of their faith, and open to everyone. In terms of Christian-Muslim dialogue, this means that a genuine dialogue does not occur only between liberal-minded Christians and Muslims but between those Christians who hold Jesus as the normative and final element for their beliefs and those Muslims who consider the Qur’an as the Word of God and the Prophet Muhammad as the seal of prophets.

Thirdly, to adopt an approach which, while retaining one’s own particularity, is also open to the particularities of other faiths rescues one from being accused of being imperialistic. This approach "sees various traditions, their origins and their bearers of salvation in their context and according to the standing they enjoin". With regard to Christian-Muslim dialogue, while this approach provides Christians the opportunity to evaluate the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad in the light of Islamic context, it provides Muslims with the opportunity to understand the person of Jesus in the light of the Christian faith.

As has been shown so far, although Kung’s understanding of the status of Jesus seems to contribute to the development of Christian-Muslim dialogue by doing justice to both the Christian and the Islamic faith, he could not rescue himself from the criticism of some theologians. For example, while some of them are charging him not to cross the theological Rubicon¹⁸⁰, others criticise him for not taking the traditional

¹⁸⁰ Knitter asserts that although there are significant changes in Kung’s thoughts concerning the normativity and uniqueness of Jesus Christ, he has not crossed the theological Rubicon yet. For according to Knitter, “To cross it means to recognize clearly, unambiguously, the possibility that other religions exercise a role in salvation history that is not only valuable and salvific but perhaps equal to that of Christianity”; it is to affirm that there may be other saviors and revealers besides Jesus Christ and equal to Jesus Christ. It is to admit that if other religions must be fulfilled in Christianity, Christianity
Christian perception of Jesus seriously enough.\textsuperscript{181} It seems that Kung does not deserve these criticisms. As a committed Christian who wants to create a suitable environment for better dialogue between people of different faiths in general and Christians and Muslims in particular, he has tried very sincerely to be faithful to his own faith and open to the faiths of others.

We may conclude that Kung cannot be put in the same category as Hick and Knitter, since he does not ask Christians to give up the normativeness and uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Also, he cannot be regarded on the same level as those who acknowledge Jesus as the normative and unique revelation of God not only for Christians but for those who belong to other religions. But he can be considered "mid-way between the full pluralist theology and the inclusivism of the post-Vatican II Catholic approach exemplified by Rahner," as Alan Race correctly located him.\textsuperscript{182}

**CONCLUSION**

Our examination of the views of three renowned Christian scholars on the status of Jesus has shown that the influence of current interreligious dialogue is encouraging Christians to develop a new Christian theology of religions by reconsidering the status of Jesus. Generally speaking we may say that all our thinkers agreed on abandoning the exclusivistic understanding of the status of Jesus which holds him as the absolute saviour apart from whom there is simply no salvation. But they disagreed on how his new status should be understood. Concerning this point, while Kung prefers to do self-criticism of the traditional Christian beliefs about the person of Jesus by holding him unique and normative for Christians, Hick and Knitter argue for the reconsideration and revision of the traditional Christian perception of Jesus for the sake of better relations with people of other faiths.

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Brewer}, "\textsc{The Uniqueness of Christ and the Challenge of the Pluralist Theology of Religions}", p. 198.

\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Race}, Christians and Religious Pluralism, p. 67; Brewer, "The Uniqueness of Christ and the Challenge of \textsc{Pluralistic Theology of Religions}", p. 206.
As we pointed out, Hick and Knitter encourage Christians to revise and reinterpret their traditional beliefs and doctrines concerning the status of Jesus. In doing so, they attempted to understand Jesus as an eschatological and spirit-filled prophet with a unique God-consciousness through whom Christians could experience God. They felt that this idea of Jesus might facilitate dialogue between Christians and non-Christians. It seems that by doing this they underestimate the faith of those who observe their prayers and worship of God through the uniqueness and normativity of the Christ-event for them. In the same way, they also influence Muslims to underestimate their own distinctive beliefs, such as the finality of the Prophet Muhammad and the uniqueness of the Qur’an for a genuine dialogue with non-Muslims. As D’Costa rightly remarks, Hick and Knitter’s position logically is a form of exclusivism in the sense that for the sake of better dialogue both Christian and Muslim partner should put aside the particularities of their faiths. This sort of demand can rule out one of the most important rules of interreligious dialogue, that no one partner can or should step outside of his or her religion and suspend his or her own religious experience and beliefs.

Kung’s self-criticism of the Christian faith in the light of other faiths by holding Jesus as the unique and normative revelation of God seems to represent the mediating position. It neither absolutises nor abandons the uniqueness of the Christ event, but it relativises it by restricting it to Christians. It seems that this position would help dialogue more than others, since it urges Christians to consider Jesus as God’s normative revelation and saviour for them, and also to be open to acknowledge other religions and their religious figures as real mediations of God’s grace. By doing this, it stimulates Christians to approach non-Christian religions with "openness and eagerness to learn more of God’s ways in the world".

As has been seen so far, Kung’s views on the status of Jesus seem to contribute to promoting Christians’ relations with people of other faiths in general and Muslims

185 HAIGHT, “JESUS and World Religions”, p. 337.
in particular. This approach certainly retains the balance which is necessary between a positive Christian appreciation of non-Christian religions and the Christian commitment which comes to a focus in Jesus.

From the Christian-Muslim dialogue point of view, this approach can be regarded as a very significant development, since it provides a great opportunity for a theological dialogue. A more positive Christian theological evaluation of the status of the Qur’an and the prophethood of Muhammad is closely related to the status of Jesus and the question of salvation. In this respect, in the process of dialogue as long as Christians consider Jesus as decisive and normative for those who have chosen to follow him and not in any universal sense for others, Christians can acknowledge that Muslims can obtain salvation by following the Qur’an and their own prophet. It seems that such an understanding does not underestimate the centrality of Jesus for Christians, but it relativises it in relation to religious figures of other religions. This means that Christians can still retain the absoluteness of Christ for themselves, but they do not assert it in relation to people of other faiths.\textsuperscript{186} Or, as A. Race remarks, "Jesus is "decisive’ not because he is the focus for the light everywhere in the world, but for the vision he has brought in one cultural setting . . . Jesus would still remain central for the Christian faith".\textsuperscript{187} Also, as Swidler emphasises if this line of thought continues to develop "then many of the disagreements between Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others in this area will disappear. Jews and Muslims, and others religious persons will not thereby become Christians, of course, for Yeshua [Jesus] for them is not the door to the divine that he is for Christians, but perhaps their charges of blasphemy and idolatry against Christians will thereby be dissipated. But most important, the Christian tradition will thereby much more likely make sense to many contemporary Christians".\textsuperscript{188}

In the light of the findings of this chapter, we may conclude that in the dialogue process what we need is a full commitment to our own faith and its

\textsuperscript{186} MARY A. Stenger, “The Understanding of Christ as Final Revelation”, in Phan. ed., Christianity and die Wider Ecumenism, pp. 191-205
\textsuperscript{187} Race, Christians and Religious Pluralism, pp. 135-136.
\textsuperscript{188} Swidler, After the Absolute, p. 113.
mediator, and yet at the same time an openness toward other faiths and their mediators, in the sense of acknowledging that God has made himself known and has made salvation available through those mediators also.\textsuperscript{189} In this sense, we may conclude that openness to dialogue cannot be used as a reason for abandon normativity of Jesus for Christians, since to demand this is against the nature of dialogue.

5.3

PROVISIONS OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND PRINCIPLES
PROVISIONS OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND PRINCIPLES

Interfaith Dialogue is an indispensible reality of the contemporary world. Global peace, security, religious tolerance, justice, human dignity and prosperity cannot be maintained without interreligious harmony. In this research work, Dialogue has been defined effectively in the light of Muslim & Western scholarship. We have applied comparative method, in a descriptive and analytic way. A code of conduct has been suggested for the Provisions of Interfaith dialogue in Christian Muslim perspective. An attempt has also been made to clarify its scope, methodology and Principles keeping in view the Discourse of Islam and Christianity.

INTRODUCTION TO DIALOGUE/ＨＩＷＡＲ

Dialogue signifies conversation, discussion over a particular topic or question answer related to any subject. It is referred as “Ｈｉｗａर” in Arabic which means moving back and forth at a same point. According to Murtaḍā Zubaidī:

أصل الحوار من الحور، وهو الرجوع عن الشيء إلى الشيء معنى الحوار في اللغة: تراجع الكلام. 190

Thus the meaning of “Ｈｉｗａर” according to Al-Zubaidi is the return or exchange of words.

Similarly, Ibn Manzūr al-Ifriqī explains it as follows:

وهم يتناقون” أي: يتراجعون الكلام، والمحاربة: "مراجعه الفصيحة والكلام في المخاطبة”. 191

“They practice Hiwâr that is exchange words with each other and use proverb and idioms as a vital part of their debate”

Imâm Râghib al-Asfâhâni defines Hiwâr as follows:

المحاورة وال الحوار: المراودة في الكلام ومنه التحالب. 192

---

“Hiwâr basically is the presentation of words before each other that is idiom and phrase is a part of an argument through which one can express their views in an improved way”

The Terminology of Dialogue as presented by the scholars are not far from its lexical meaning, except that these meanings stress or add something more such as ethical meanings and values which are present in the very concept of Dialogue. Dialogue is also defined as “a debate or discussion between two or more sides, with the intention of correcting a false perception, or proving the truth, or merely removing a doubt, or showing the fallacy of a statement or an opinion”\(^\text{193}\)

Another definition is very significant in which it is said that “Dialogue is a conversation between two or more groups on a specific issue, the objective of which is to arrive at the truth in an atmosphere free from animosity, prejudice and intolerance; following scientific and persuasive method without stipulating any prior condition for reaching immediate conclusions.”\(^\text{194}\)

The word is used in similar way in the Holy Qur’an. Allah Almighty in Surah Al-Kahaf says during an argument between two brothers:

\[
\text{فَقَالَ لِصَدِيقِهِ: وَهُوَ يَحَاوَرُونَ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعْزَنَا - وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَفُوَاطَلَ لَنفْسِهِ - فَقَالَ مَا أَطْلَنَّ أَنْ تَبْدِي هَذِهِ أَنْبَأُ الْمُؤَذِّنَ إِلَى رَبِّي لِأَجْدَحَ أَجْدَحًا مَنْ تَبَادَى - فَأَمَّا أَذْكُرُ الْحَقَّ الْكَبِيرَ وَهُوَ يَحَاوَرُونَ أَفْتَرَى بَالَّذِي خَفَقَ مِنْ تَمْرٍ بَيْنَ هَذَيْنِ مَهِيجَانِ رَجُلًا.}
\]

\[*And he possessed much wealth; so he said to his companion, while he disputed with him: I have greater wealth than you, and am mightier in followers. And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said: I do not think that this will ever perish. And I do not think the hour will come, and even if I am returned to my Lord I will most certainly find a returning place better than this. His companion said to him while disputing with him: Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you from dust, then from a small seed, then He made you a perfect man?*"


\(^{194}\) Khâlid al-Muâghamîsî, Al-Ḥiwar: Adâbuhû wa Taḥbîqâtuhû fi al-Tarbyyâh al-Islâmîyâh (Riyadh: King Abdul Azîz Center for National Dialogue,1st Ed.,1425 AH) p. 32

\(^{195}\) Al-Qur’an 18:34-37.
Once the property of a father was divided between his two sons where one gave his rightful inheritance in the name of Allah as Charity on the contrary the second brother bought assets such as gardens and land for him. Such contradicting actions are referred as “Yahwur” (mutual conflict) in the Holy Qur’an.

Allah Almighty says:

ٖإِنَّلاَّ سَمَعَ اللَّهُ فُؤُودَ الَّذِي نَجَامَهُ فِي رَجُلَيْنِ وَنَمَذْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ النَّافَاذَكَما إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعُ بِصِرَتِكَ

“Allah indeed knows the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah, and Allah knows the contentions of both of you; surely Allah is Hearing, Seeing.”

The above mentioned verse was revealed when Ḥazrat Aus bin Sāmit and his wife took their martial issues to Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet’s decision forbade them for staying together as husband and wife any more. Similarly the debate of Syeda Khulalah bint Thalabah and her explanation regarding her implication with Prophet (peace be upon him), is referred as “Taḥāwur” (mutual contradiction) in Holy Qur’an.⁹⁷

Thus Mu’jam al-Wasīṭ quotes the meaning of “Hiwār” as:

حديث يجري بين شخصين أو أكثر في العمل القصصي أو بين ممثلين أو أكثر على المسرح.

“Discussion takes place between two or more people or is executed by the actors on the stage”

The English literature uses the word “dialogue” for the exchange of words between two or more people. K Zebiri explains as under:

“Dialogue is the combination of two Greek words “Dia” and “Logos”. Dia means through and Logos means word having a variety of meaning. So dialog is a process of conversation between the individuals or groups where the views are argued through and then reaching significant and potentially transformative conclusion. There may or may not be a resulting agreement”.⁹⁹
Correspondingly the “Chamber Twentieth Century Dictionary” defines the meaning of dialogue as “Conversation between two or more persons especially of a formal or imaginary nature, an exchange of views in the hope of ultimately reaching agreement”.

The renowned book Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, Vol.15, Issue No1 (January 2004), defines the importance of dialogue as follows:

“A conversation between two persons who recognize each other as equal partners and engaged in conversation concentrating on theological truth that is the highest reality, the truth itself or God.”

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF “ΗΙΨΗΡ”

The experts define the importance of “ΗΙΨΗΡ” in the following words:

“The conversation taking place between individuals or a mass of people without a significant panel of adjudicators is the true depiction of the word “ΗΙΨΗΡ”

Furthermore Dr. Saleh bin Abdullah bin Hamid explains to widen the meaning as:

The exchange of facts or speech between two or more individuals in order to highlight the truth and justify the information whilst discarding the fabrication is the exact representation of “ΗΙΨΗΡ” Explaining the term Dialogue Basam Dawud Ajack states:

“To be precise “ΗΙΨΗΡ” is the discussion between two individual or groups held on a particular topic where each party has their own set of beliefs to express in order to reach to a mutual agreement based entirely upon facts. However both views are said to be based upon facts.”


202 Dr. Salih bin Abdullah bin Hamid, ‘Uṣūl al Hiwār wa Adābuhā fi al-Islām, 9.

203 Dr. Salih bin Abdullah bin Hamid, ‘Uṣūl al Hiwār wa Adābuhā fi al-Islām, 9.

204 Basam Dawud Ajack, Al-Hiwār al Islami al Masihī (Berrar: Dār al-Qutaibah, 1402 A.H.) 2.
their own perception and concepts. Therefore it is necessary that the debate remains free of any racial discrimination where the verdict should base only upon knowledge and enlightened methodologies. The debating parties should acknowledge the favored concept and respect the jury by accepting the verdict.”

It is therefore concluded that a dialogue or debate is basically the exchange of thoughts and phrases between two set of people having different prospects and beliefs. Thus the experts laid out certain rules and ethics in order to extract a positive outcome and maintain a healthy discussion during a debate.

However in the light of the above argument we can conclude the meaning of dialogue as

A dialogue is a conversation held between two individuals or mass of people in a healthy peaceful environment. Both the groups are provided with equal opportunity to explain their belief without any preference or favoritism. Any kind of egotism, quarrel and conflict is highly discouraged during the discussion. Moreover such healthy and positive discussion are encouraged between friends and colleagues.  

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIALOGUE AND ARGUMENT

An argument signifies a certain pitch of voice that determines a state of aggression and disagreement. The word such as (Jidāl) rift, fight and conflict are used to represent the various type of stress in Arabic language that authentically defines enmity and persistence.  

On the contrary “Hiwār” (dialogue) defines a conversation among two individuals. That is the speech moves to and fro from one person to another in a peaceful manner without instigating any kind of offense.

The Holy Qur‘ān sets a clear distinguish between argument and a dialogue. Whereas Allah Almighty expresses utmost detest towards argument through the usage of word “Jidāl”.

---

Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

The people of Nūh and the parties after them rejected (prophets) before them, and every nation purposed against their messenger to destroy him, and they disputed by means of the falsehood that they might thereby render null the truth, therefore I destroyed them; how was then My retribution!

And among men there is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge and without guidance and without an illuminating book

According to the view of Dr. Abdul Hakim regarding jīdāl (conflict) is the word (jīdāl) conflict is mentioned 29 times in the Holy Qur’an revealing utmost loathe towards immature debates. On the other hand the word dialogue is mentioned only three times which clearly defines an exchange of views in an amiable atmosphere.

THE SUBJECT OF DIALOGUE

There are three types of subjects that are mainly considered for conversing.

- Majority of the mankind debate over personalities
- Some discuss events
- Whereas small number of people are inclined towards discussing ideas.

THE VISION OF A DIALOGUE

The vision of a mutual dialogue is not only to enhance knowledge but to enlighten one another with diverse view and perception. A dialogue intends to discourage any sort of disregard or disrespect shown towards beliefs. It neither grants preference to any party nor is it practiced to prove someone wrong.

The vital factor of a dialogue is to discuss all the relevant aspects of the subject in order to increase each other’s knowledge. Moreover it is considered necessary for

---

207 Qur’ān 40:5.
209 Abdul Hakim Hafni, Dr., Uṣlūb al Muḥāwarah fī al-Qur’ān, 12.
the people involved in a dialogue to have detailed information regarding religion, culture, tradition and class of one another. Besides that it should also be judged whether the person has the patient to listen to the various views related to the subject or is he too stubborn to understand. Thus the main focus of the dialogue is to minimize harshness and eliminate all the factors that can cause unrest. In short the purpose of a dialogue is to reduce any kind of rift, hatred or competition among the individuals and to promote a serene and peaceful surrounding for a mutual healthy discussion. \(^{211}\)

A dialogue can also be practiced for the intention of counseling immoral behavior in order to discourage impiety in the society. It can be achieved through series of question answers or simply pointing out the wrong deeds that may affect the people. Therefore the dialogues over serious issues that may represent certain privileges can take the shape of an argument. For example the conversation of Hazrat Ibrāhīm with Namrūd, Hazrat Nūḥ with his nation and Allah Al-Mighty referring to the hell Spawn signify arguments. Similarly the history of Islam is full of discussions with non Muslim and various non believers that are analyzed by scholars from which we can take guidance. One of these books include the famous book “Al-Milal wa al-Nīḥal” by Allama Shahrastānī. Besides that Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymīyyah and Ibn Qayyim are considered as pioneer writers. Recently, Syed Maudūdi emphasized on the issue of the sect Qādyānī through his book “Mas‘la-e- Qādyāniyyat”. \(^{212}\)

**NECESSITY OF INTER RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

According to the experts and scholars of the modern world today, the need of interfaith dialogue has increased enormously due to globalization and rapid increase in technology.. Mutual dialogue and conversation is the only option to inspire an individual towards adopting religion. Through mutual consultation a person can be motivated to consider the facts through direct one to one discussion. The involved parties can either accept the proposed concept or decline it through fact and figures.

\(^{211}\) Dr. Sāliḥ bin Abdullah bin Ḥamīd, ‘Uṣūl al-Ḥiwr wa Adābhūhū fī al-Islām, p.10-14.

\(^{212}\) Yahyā bin Muḥammad Ḥassan bin Ahmad Zamzami, Al-Ḥiwr Adābhūhū wa Dhawābiṭühū fī Dhau il-kitāb wa al-Sunnah. P 35-36.
Thus such a conversation can take place between two or more people, traditions or religion.

With the rapid increase in technology the world has become a global village where cultures and traditions have merged to an enormous extent so much so that a rich culture can easily dominate the weak culture. The use of technology such as internet, telephones, mobiles and fax etc has eradicated any physical barriers or limitations for exchanging views. Discussions can now easily take place without any geographical limitations. The use of technology has opened a new dimension to socialization where it is impossible to outlaw political or social dialogues. Thus this globalization has not only increased socialization but a gateway to spread their culture and inspire people with their beliefs. Therefore the developed nations in terms of technology and trade will not only improve their economy but would easily dominate the rest of the cultures.  

WHICH RELIGION IS IN DEBATE WITH ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD TODAY?

The entire world today is emphasizing on the necessity of inter religious dialogues. The efforts regarding these dialogues are mentioned below:

• The first ever inter religious Conference was held at Norway. The conference was attended by renowned Muslim Scholars namely Molàna Mohammad Ḥāfiẓ Jàlandhari, Mufti Munib-ur-Rahmàn, Rìáz Ḥussain Najì who were invited by the government of Norway and Norwegian Church. The main focus of this International Conference of inter religious dialogues was to promote peace and harmony among different believers.

• On 16th September 2004, Pakistan organized a conference related to the announcement of Owsley called as “World Council of Religions for International Peace and Harmony”. The conference was arranged at National Library Hall Islamabad.

---

Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

The efforts regarding these inter religion conference for the peace is continued till present. Although these efforts are appreciated and acknowledged around the world but there are some elements and factors that should be clearly laid out in order to receive a positive outcome. These factors includes specifying the basic members plus the fundamental agenda of the inter religions conferences. Thus it would assist us to communicate with the educational sectors with a much improved approach.

Besides Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are considered the most vibrant, wide spread and practiced religions in the current era. People believing in God, revelation and divinity belong to one of the mentioned religions. Due to the lack of depth in knowledge, proper education and intellectual capacity in the yester years the religion was abandoned from the social and personal lives. However in today’s contemporary world of rationalism the religion is gradually losing importance in everyday life so much so that secular have increased in number around the world. Thus we can say that western secularism is the most popular belief in the world after Islam. On the other hand religions are turning in to nothing but legends. In short we can conclude that secularism based upon western thoughts and philosophy is the only competitor of Islam in today’s time.

Analyzing the current situation we can clearly deduce that the rift between Muslims and west in the field of education, intellect and culture is basically the disagreement of people belonging to non believing secular class and the Muslims that are the hard core believer of religion. Christianity on the other hand is not in debate with Islam. Due to the reason that the religion represented by the leaders and scholars of Christianity do not have any inspiration by far over the social and practical life of the people of the west. Therefore the need of a debate with Christianity seems inadequate.

Although we do not hesitate to have a debate with Christian scholars however they should be questioned about their efforts in order to revive true Christian laws

---

215 Ibid.,
Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

and Holy Books in their society. The fact that they consider religion as a personal matter and believe it has no importance in daily life of an individual. Thus Muslim is the only entity making effort to revive religion though the question from the western scholars is that how can they assist the Muslims in this noble cause?

Muslims should highlight the fact to the opposing Christians that they both are striving to achieve the same goal that is to eradicate the darkness of pessimism and no belief. The Muslims, Christians and other respective scholars are members of the same team. It is to convince the Christian Scholars that they should discourage secularism and rather support the believers of revelation and Holy Books if and only if they desire to dominate the Holy Books and divinity over mankind. 217

The foremost question is how and when did west adopt secularism and abandoned their religion of Christianity? In the light of the history the ancient Christianity was powerfully ruling the west till 16th century. The complete authority and control belonged to the Pope. Martin Luther, was the first ever individual who challenged the power of the Pope in the year 1546. He was the first to claim knowledge and intellect as the only divinity. The Christianity gradually started to fall in a deprivation after this era. However the concept that entirely overpowered Christianity was the 18th century revolution named as “Enlightenment Movement” and the movement of romance called as “Romanticism”. These are the summary of the factors behind the enlightened modern concepts of the west today which should be examined thoroughly. 218

The second most important factor to consider is Orientalism. The misinterpretations related to Islam cannot be analyzed unless the aim and effects of Orientalism is studied. Unfortunately the history of Orientals is alive and vibrant in current time so much so that they are considered too divine to be questioned. In addition to that the false image of Islam portrayed through the print and electronic media is another scam of Orientals. 219

218 Inter Religions Conference, 24.
219 Ibid.,
Although guidance from the Holy Qur’ān and Hadith is essential for the dialogue however considering the psyche of the west the focus and emphasis should be the intellectual and rational aspect of Islam. Besides negating the social perceptions of the west the Islamic teachings of communal living and socialism would have to be proved through substantial facts. It is regrettable that the book named “Hujatullāh al-Baligha” written by Shah Wali Allāh was the last to narrate Islamic Teachings and Instructions.  

There are two types of apprehension about Islam in the west. The major concern of the west is related to the Islamic history and Communal system. These aspects of Islam directly contradict the current socialism of the west. The second apprehension is the fundamentals of Islam. The dialogue with the west can at no account be productive unless we are open-minded and fully prepared to discuss the apprehensions. The first point to highlight the west is to consider Islam as a complete system of life and socialism.

RULES AND PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGUES:

Dialogue is an essential component in the life of a human being. However as much as a dialogue is important it can prove itself to be hazardous and dangerous in nature. It is very difficult to keep calm during a debate. In fact the severity of language and attitude during dialogue at times overpower the meaning of the subject under discussion. Ego and rigidness also increase the chances of an argument. Thus these factors push the conversation further away from the topic rather may result in a clash, conflict or difference. In order to avoid such drastic outcome the rules and principles of dialogue should be followed that are concluded by the dialogues conducted by Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions. We briefly describe some of the rules as follows:

1. Truth is the basic requirement of a dialogue. It combines several other qualities, virtue and righteousness through which a lot of misconduct can

---

220 Ibid.
be avoided. Thus placing an individual at best of conduct in terms of language and character.

The fundamental of improving a human behavior is to synchronize his emotions with his speech. This is referred as honesty or truthfulness. A dishonest man generates evil while on the other hand a truthful person would earn virtue at every step.\textsuperscript{221}

2. Both individuals practicing a dialogue must defy from any inappropriate speech.

Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) says:

\begin{quote}
من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليقل خيراً أو ليصتم.
\end{quote}

2. Both individuals practicing a dialogue must defy from any inappropriate speech.

3. Before starting a discussion the scenario and surrounding should be analyzed that is weather it is a appropriate for a dialogue. Adequate place, time and surrounding is essential for any dialogue.\textsuperscript{223}

4. A discussion or dialogue should not be practiced without a complete knowledge and command over the subject. Neither should one defend a topic without sufficient information else he may find himself in a total loss.

5. A dialogue should not consist of arrogance or any sort of supremacy. No one should be allowed to disrespect or think low of the other. Such moments are considered to be one of the favorite of the devil where he can easily practice his conspiracies which are too complex for a man to unravel.

Mufti Mohammad Shafii quotes Imam Ghazali in his Tafsir as:

*Drinking wine is a major sin and the root cause of all immoralities. Similarly a dialogue also becomes a sin when the only aim of it is to degrade or to pose knowledge on other. Such attitude can provoke several other spiritual crimes such as jealousy, resentment, arrogance, viciousness, inquisitiveness, being happy over someone’s failure and remorse over success. It also aggravates rigidness where people are more concerned in proving themselves right instead*  

\textsuperscript{221} Yahyā bin Muḥammad Ḥassan bin Ṭalḥah Zamzami, \textit{Al-Ḥiṣār Adāḥūbū wa Dhawāḥīṭūbū fī Dhau il-kitāb wa al-Sunnah} (Dar al Maani,Jordon) P.73.

\textsuperscript{222} Al-Bukhārī, \textit{Al-Jāmi’ al-Sahīh}, Kitāb al-Adab, p.1052.

\textsuperscript{223} Fauzi Fadī al-Zurřāf, \textit{Adab al-Ḥiṣār fī Ahādīth al-Rasūl}, Minbar al-Islām,vol.5 (June,2005).
of listening to others with a fair mind for this purpose they can even utilize the sayings of Qur’ān and Prophet.\textsuperscript{224}

6. Honesty is one of the core principles of a dialogue which is associated to courageousness and bravery. Being honest signifies the courage and nerve to support morality through practical means. The worth of honesty is determined at the crucial moment when the speaker is less significant compared to his opponent. Islam encourages and teaches such honesty.\textsuperscript{225}

7. Misinterpretation during a dialogue is one of the harmful and apprehensive factors that may cause trouble for both the speaker and listener. Therefore the constitution of Islam and human rights has declared a few methods in order to minimize misunderstandings.\textsuperscript{226}

8. A good speaker is a good listener too thus one should strive to be a good listener. The conversations should not be interrupted and should be herd with genuine concentration and behave in a similar manner that is expected from the listener at the time we are speaking.\textsuperscript{227}

9. The language should be clean and within the limits of morality. Imam Ibn Qayim states the danger of foul talk as follows:

\begin{quote}
من العجب أن الإنسان يعون عليه التحفظ والاحتراز من كل الحرام والظلم والزنا والسرقة وشرب الخمر من النظر الحرام وغير ذلك ويصعب عليه التحفظ من حركة لسانه.
\end{quote}

It is astounding that it is easier for a man to keep himself safe from dreadful sins such as forbidden food (Haram), brutality, immorality, theft, drinking wine and desires however it is difficult to keep a control over language.

Therefore a man should select his speech appropriately within the boundaries of respect and vital rules of a dialogue. His conduct should depict etiquette during and after the end of a discussion.

\textsuperscript{224} Mufti Muhammad Shafi, Ma’ārif al-Qur’ān, vol.5, 430.
\textsuperscript{225} Abu al Majd, Ahmad Kamāl, Adab al-Ḥiwār, Al-Muslim alMuāṣir, 3.
\textsuperscript{226} Taqī ud dān, Adab al-Ḥiwār, Al-Manhal, 30.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid.,
10. The individual should not comprehend a dialogue unless he is sure about his sincerity towards religion and God. Due to the fact that signifying superiority of education and knowledge is prohibited during a dialogue. He should also refrain from an egotistical and self-admiring behavior.\(^{228}\)

11. One ought to always support truth in a dialogue. Being a Muslim it is mandatory to utter truth and testify nothing but precision.\(^{229}\)

12. It is compulsory to ensure a decent subject and location to practice a dialogue due to the fact that the teachings of Islam restrict us from some gatherings. Islam forbids us to take part in any discussion that is aimed for mockery and ridicule, or to humiliate the principles of Islam or where truth and honest people are degraded.

13. The ability to express ideas clearly and precisely with a pristine speech and command over language is the basic requirement for a successful debate. It is observed that at times a truthful and righteous statement fails to be delivered properly due to the lack of ability to express whereas a lot of dishonest things overcome due to the influential expression used by the narrator.

14. A dialogue should be fair and just. A Muslim is instructed to be honest and just at every moment. Islam encourages Muslims to eliminate fights between people in order to promote amiable relations. Besides a Muslim is obligated to utter truth and practice justice.

15. We should not overlook the attitude of corrupt and immoral people towards the religion. In fact it is entirely baseless to debate with them due to the reason that such discussions do not lead to a proper conclusion and are a waste of time and effort. Most of the time debates are about worldly subjects.

\(^{228}\) Salîh bin Abdullah, Uşûl al-Ḥiwâr, 19.

\(^{229}\) Ibid.,
16. Sometime the matter is of worldly affairs it may be the matter of rights and duties in these matters receiving less and giving more may solve the dispute to a great extent.  

17. It is prohibited in dialogue to say something without research. Saying something without confirmation may raise the question of someone’s credibility.  

18. During the dialogue process appropriate time may be given to both parties.  

PROVISIONS OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN SHA‘RIAH  
Keeping in view the stand point of Muslim scholarship, few points may always be kept in mind during the process of dialogue:  

- Dialogue may not be initiated in the established matters of Din (Islam) the foundation of this principal is found in holy Qur‘an:  

> And it behoves not a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their matter when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, be surely strays off a manifest straying.”  

- The existence of God may not be the subject of dialogue as Allah almighty says in the Holy Qur‘an:  

> And follow not that of which you have not the knowledge; surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that.”

231 Uṣūl al-Ḥiwr, 19.  
233 Al-Qur‘ān 33:36.  
234 Al-Qur‘ān 17:36.
Dr Ahmad Saifuddin has very finely described the code of conduct of dialogue in the following words:

Islamic Shariah prohibits dialogue about the clear injunctions of Qur’an and Sunnah the established teachings of Qur’an and Sunnah cannot be the subject of review or amendments

It is impossible for a Muslim to indulge in dialogue with a non Muslim about the attributes and faith in God.

The finality of prophet hood of Muhammad (peace be upon him)is out of the subject of dialogue as it is an established matter of Islam.

Authenticity of the Qur’an is undoubted and it is revealed by Allah Almighty. It is not permitted for a common Muslim to indulge in dialogue about the particular issue of interest, drinking wine, adultery, and hijab (veil) of a woman are established matters of Islam therefore these subjects may be excluded from dialogue. Allah Almighty says in the Holy Qur’an:

“This is the truth from your Lord, so be not of the disputers.”

At another place the Holy Qur’an has clearly said:

“But no! By your Lord! They do not believe (in reality) until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straightness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with entire submission.”

235 Al-Tarkastani, Ahmad Saif al-Din, Dr., Al-Hashab al-Adyan: Mashriyyatuwa wa Shuruthuwa wa Adabuhu p.38.
237 Ibid, p.43.
238 Al-Qur’an 3:60.
239 Al Qur’an 4:65.
Dr. Sāliḥ bin Abdullah bin Ḥamīd has very finely concluded the discussion of dialogue in the following words:

إذا كان القصد النظر في حكمها وأسرارها وبينان ذلك للناس وليس في صلاحيتها وملابسها فهذا لا حرج فيها.  

“However there is no harm to discuss the injunctions of shariah before a non Muslim to limelight the secrets and of its wisdom.”

- Philosophical and supernatural discussions must be avoided in dialogue as these issues are of no practical significance. 241
- Making comparisons of the companions of prophet and to identify their status should be avoided in dialogue as these were the most blessed souls on earth. 242
- Founding fathers and sacred personalities of all the religion must be respected and revered; any kind of insolence about them must be prohibited for interfaith harmony the holy Qurʾān has categorically prohibited insolent attitude about the religious leadership and God’s the holy Qurʾān says:

وَلَا تَسْتَبْعَثُوا الْإِنْسَانَ بَيْنَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيْسَبُوا اللَّهَ عَنْ ذَٰلِكَ عَرَّفَ عَلَى كَثِّرٍ مَّنْ كَانَ أُمِّيَّةَ عَمَلَهُمْ نَهُّ

إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعَتُكُمْ يَا كَانَوا يَضْعُفُونَ 243

“And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance. Thus have we made fair seeming to every people their deeds; then to their Lord shall be their return, so He will inform them of what they did.”

In view of the views viewed above, this can certainly be said that if these points may be observed during dialogue it may lead towards global peace, harmony and co-existence among the people of the world religions. Furthermore, scholars of Islam are supposed to be ready all the time for Dialogue and representation of Islam.

240 Sāliḥ bin Abdullah bin Ḥamīd, Uṣūl al-Ḥiwār wa Adābuhū, p.8.
243 Qurʾān 6:108.
Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

5.4

SUMMARY, INSIGHTS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY
SUMMARY, INSIGHTS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In examining contemporary Western representations of the Islamic Jesus, I have traveled along the subject with three different vehicles: the polemicist, the academic and the treasured texts. Each vehicle brought the examination of Jesus to a certain point, with an examination of the Islamic scriptures seeming to bring the fullest picture of the person of Jesus.

After examining the material of these Muslim scholars, I found that their representations of Jesus were very similar. Each of them made similar affirmations, despite differences in presentation, style, format and interpretation of Jesus personality. As such, I was able to gather these assertions into four major affirmations.

First was the affirmation that Jesus was not divine, but a prophet of God. They assert that Jesus was a human, like every human being, who was chosen by God to become a prophet and a messenger. Those texts in the New Testament that may suggest divinity are actually misinterpreted or taken out of context. Therefore to assume or promote anything more about the person of Jesus, such as divinity, is a grave error.

The second affirmation was that Jesus was a person close to God and was highly honoured by God. In claiming that Jesus holds a place of respect in Islam, Muslim scholarship point to the office and mission given to him and the titles attributed to him in the Qurʾān. Jesus, therefore, has an unparalleled level of regard among the affirmations of these scholars.

The third was the affirmation that Jesus had a particular message and mission. Here Muslim writers assert that Jesus’ mission was specific and localized to a particular people at a particular time: the Jews of the first century. This message of Jesus contained a significant political focus, whereby he wanted to free the Jews from certain legal, social and political forces that weighted heavily on them. Though Jesus’
message was very political, his central proclamation of the worship of the one God was in essence the same as all prophets before him and as the final prophet after him. Fourth was the affirmation that Jesus lived a miraculous life. Here most of the Muslims sustain that Jesus’ life and mission was marked by miracles: virgin birth, healings, raising the dead, etc. It was God alone who did these miracles through Jesus, to show the importance of Jesus as prophet and messenger.

Thus the examination of Muslim Scholarship becomes an important area of research. This is due to their impact on public presentations of the Islamic Jesus. More often than not a Western, or culturally Christian, person’s first connection with the Islamic Jesus is through a polemicist. These intellectuals often form the ground level of inter-religious encounters in the Christian world, therefore making their teachings an important area of investigation.

To substantiate our standpoint, we would like to mention Sajid Mir’s opinion in which he summarized many western scholars in these words:

“İddiye bütün mısıhiyanın anعناقلهم كلها مستمدة من أقوال المسيح أو أعماله، ورغم ذلك يؤمن أنباع جميع الفرق المسيحية بشيء لم يقل فيها المسيح كلمة ولم يسمع منها شيء.”

“All Christians claim that their beliefs stem from something that Jesus said or did, even though Christians of all sects believe many things of which Jesus himself never heard or spoke.”

What was revealed in this research was the staggering unity of all the academics in their representations of the Islamic Jesus. The only apparent differences seemed to be the amount of material dedicated to a representation of Jesus among these introductions. It has been discovered that there were six main affirmations presented by academics about the Islamic Jesus. The first is that Jesus was a prophet and messenger, one of an infinite number of prophets whom God has sent to humanity since the dawn of creation. Jesus is, however, one of the five most important prophets in salvation history. This is seen in the high titles placed upon Jesus (e.g., word of God, sign, servant) and by God electing him to be messenger along with being a

246 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p.35; See also:Floyd H. Ross and Tynette Hills: Great Religions By Which Men Live, New York, 1966, 139.
Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

prophet. A messenger is presented with a particular revelation, the Injil in the case of Jesus, which is to be communicated to the prophet’s people. This revelation was essentially the same as that communicated by all the prophets in history, though varieties in religious laws and practices come to each new messenger because of changing historical situations.

The second affirmation is that Jesus was often mistaken to be deity. Here academics note that the Qur’an clearly asserts that Jesus is not divine, but human alone. Worship belongs only to God, and is not the property of any human being. This misunderstanding of Jesus being divine is based on the belief that the scriptures of the Jews and Christians have been altered, thereby corrupting their faith. Islam has inherited the true Abrahamic faith and the Qur’an serves as a correcting force for the other two faiths.

Another established point of Muslim scholarship must be borne in mind that:

“There is a great difference ......... between the Christian religion and Christ’s religion, between the structure of dogma erected by Greek philosophy on a Jewish soil, and the faith held by Christ himself.”

The third affirmation by academics is that Jesus was a miraculous person. He was one who had a life punctuated by the supernatural. Being born of a virgin, Jesus’ mission contained miracles such as healings, knowing secrets, restoring sight to the blind and raising the dead to life again.

The fourth affirmation is the denial of Jesus’ death. Here academics note that the Qur’an denies the crucifixion of Jesus, though they add that there is some ambiguity concerning how Muslims interpret these Qur’anic statements. There are traditional understandings of where God substituted another for Jesus, and more untraditional interpretations, such as the one found among the Ahmadiyyahs.

245 Sajid Mir, Al-Masihiyyah, p.35; See also: Adolf Harnack: Christianity and History, Introductory Note to the English Translation by Bally Saunders (London, 1912), p.15.
The fifth affirmation for academics is the second advent of Jesus at the time of the eschaton and the rise of the Antichrist. This Second Advent will also include the rise of the Mahdi, with whom Jesus will affect the final victory of Islam over evil and error. The two will kill the Antichrist, defeat all false religions and establish an Islamic Utopia. After this, scholars explain that Jesus’ role will diminish being unable to intercede for believers on the Day of Judgment. It is valuable to point out that Jesus is present among other significant prophets on that Day.

Sixth, academics note the importance of Jesus’ prophetic office in announcing the coming of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the seal of the prophets, under the name Aḥmad. The name of Aḥmad is found in the Torah and in the Gospel, and is a pseudonym for Muhammad (peace be upon him). The name "Aḥmad" is apparently phonetically paralleled to the Greek word paraclete in Arabic translation, and it is asserted that the prophesy of Jesus sending the Paraclete in the Gospel of John was referring to Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The Holy Qurʾān highlighted the importance of the person Mary, the birth narratives, and the polemic against the People of the Book in the Qurʾānic narratives. The most qualitatively significant material about Jesus was found in the birth and infancy narratives of the Qurʾānic sūrahs 3 and 19. Furthermore, affirmations about Jesus’ humanity and prophethood find their context within polemical charges against the unfaithfulness of the Jews and Christians to the work of God. Jesus is then a "sign" from God to those who have strayed from God’s one religious faith.

After examining the Qurʾān, The first unique aspect of the Ḥadīth representation of Jesus is reference to his physical description. Here are statements that picture Jesus as a man of medium height and build, with a glowing reddish complexion and long dark hair. These physical descriptions formulate a unique Islamic view of Jesus, compared to the absence of such statements in the Christian scriptures.

The second important aspect of the Ḥadīth representation of Jesus is the focus on his eschatological work. As seen in Imām Muslim’s collection, Jesus’ eschatological work begins with the rise of al-Dajjāl. Jesus becomes God’s warrior agent sent to
affect the culmination of the divine plan on earth by destroying the Antichrist and establishing an Islamic Utopia on earth under Jesus’ rule. Jesus’ place in God’s eschatological plan, however, does not end with this earthly mission. Jesus will have a place on the Day of Judgment as one who shows the superiority of Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) prophethood to affect the final salvation of humanity. People who turn to the Prophet Jesus as a mediator between the believer and God will be refused and told to seek out the mediation of Muhammad (peace be upon him). Furthermore, those who have worshipped Jesus as their Lord will be cast into hellfire on that Day along with idolaters and Jews who worshipped another man as their Lord.

INSIGHTS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The idea of perspective has been a crucial question in this thesis. It has been discovered that, whether it was a polemicist, or an academic, or the Qur’ān, the same affirmations about the Islamic Jesus seemed to arise, affirmations such as the prophethood of Jesus, his non-divine nature, and the miracles God affected through him (his salvation from death, healings, etc.) What was discovered in this research was the staggering unity of all the intellectuals in their representations of the Islamic Jesus. The only apparent differences seemed to be differences in interpretation of the Qur’ānic denial of Jesus’ crucifixion by the polemicists and the amount of material dedicated to a representation of Jesus in the introductions by the academics.

Now this unity is uncharacteristic in all contemporary fields of Jesus research. To be sure, it can be said that such an assertion is much like comparing apples and oranges, for there is a difference between examining the faith-based representations of a person and seeking for some historical representation. For example, there is a difference in examining the representations of Muhammad (peace be upon him) among Muslim theologians and the quest for the historical Muhammad (peace be upon him) among academics. However, the point here is that the research on Jesus in the Western world has become so variegated, whether the research is among theologians or academics, that a scholar cannot disregard the implications of historical
Jesus research. Yet here in Islamic representations of Jesus, academics make no reference to these historical questions that could be applied to Islamic representations of Jesus.

A second insight and question is whether or not such questions of historical origin are important or even beneficial to examine. In any effort of interfaith dialogue and relations can or should questions of origin be raised? Darrol Bryant notes that Christian-Muslim dialogue on the person of Jesus has been burdened by polemical - ‘you are wrong’ - and apologetic - I am right’ - attitudes over the thirteen centuries of Christian-Muslim relations.\(^{246}\) And he calls for a removal of this polemic / apologetic tone to dialogue, seeking for allowance by each side to find God through their respective religious founders: Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon him).\(^{247}\) In light of the wealth research done on the historical Jesus, however, the academic issue of origin and historicity becomes raised the moment discussion of Jesus arises within any dialogue. And these questions become even more important in light of the Jesus narratives peculiar to the Qurʾān, such as speaking as an infant and the creation of a bird from clay.

Islamic scholars like, Muhib. Opeloye and Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali, also assert that these parallel accounts of the Qurʾānic narratives in these non-canonical gospels demonstrate some evidence of historicity.\(^{248}\)

Academic questions of historical origin and derivation, thirdly, cause one to wonder whether or not such historically earlier materials influenced the Qurʾānic statements. Ovey Mohammad states that Christianity was too divided, often along cultural lines in Arabia, and therefore Muhammad (peace be upon him)’s finest achievement was to accomplish what Christianity could not do - presenting a revelation in the people’s own language and own intellectual ethos. He adds that


\(^{247}\) M. Darrol Bryant, “Can there be Muslim-Christian Dialogue,” 173.

"what is remarkable about this revelation is not that it rejected the Western formulations of the divinity of Christ, but that it portrayed Jesus in a manner more keeping with the intellectual categories and cultures of the Middle East.\textsuperscript{249} Thus adoption and adaptation of earlier Jesus traditions also needs to be further examined. Another insight that could be developed further is the place of Jesus in Interfaith Dialogue. The person of Jesus becomes a natural entrance point for dialogue. Whether it is for a more evangelistic reason, as suggested by academics like James Beverley, or as a source for greater sympathetic understanding, as suggested by Ira Zepp, the person of Jesus is a solid entrance point for dialogue between the two faiths. This is because of the high regard in which Jesus is held in both religious traditions. The Hadith, even, have the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) speaking of the closeness between Jesus and himself, and thereby show how significant a discussion of Jesus can be for Christian-Muslim encounters. This closeness claimed by Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not only one of chronology, but also one of content and mission. Therefore, as William Phipps notes, the Islamic scriptures state that Jesus was a prophet and messenger, that the tradition calls him the "Seal of Sanctity" and that certain sayings of Jesus in Islamic traditions mesh with ones found in the New Testament Gospels.\textsuperscript{250} It would be wise to establish Christian-Muslim dialogue on the person of Jesus.

Additionally, the person of Mary becomes another natural door for dialogue between the two faiths, particularly between Roman Catholics and Muslims. We have seen how integrated the stories of Mary and Jesus are within Islam. Kenneth Cragg comments that it has been said that the New Testament Gospels are really passion narratives with extended introductions, while the Qurʾānic statements on Jesus are really infancy narratives with a "prolonged sequel.\textsuperscript{251} Mary factors importantly within these nativity narratives, and is always included in Qurʾānic and Hadith references to Jesus as the "son of Mary." The reverence for Mary in Islam and by the

\textsuperscript{249} Ovey N. Mohammad, Muslim-Christian Relations: Past- Present- Future (Maryknoll: Orbis'1999), 62.
\textsuperscript{250} William Phipps, \textit{Muhammad and Jesus: A Comparison of the Prophets and Their Teachings}, 2.
\textsuperscript{251} Kenneth Cragg, \textit{Jesus and the Muslim}, 26.
Significance of Jesus Christ in the Promotion of Dialogue & Peaceful Coexistence in the Christian Muslim World

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is clear within the Islamic scriptures, and is common knowledge to the Muslim believer. So much was this reverence for Mary, Geoffrey Parrinder recounts, that the oldest historian of Mecca (Azraqi, d. 858 C.E.) said that in the Ka’ba of Mecca, on the column nearest the door, was a picture of Mary with Jesus on her knee. When Muhammad (peace be upon him) entered Mecca in triumph he gave orders to destroy the idols of the Ka’ba and its paintings of prophets and angels. But it is said that when his followers began to wash away the painting with water from the Zamzam well, Muhammad (peace be upon him) put his hands on the picture of Jesus and Mary and said, "Wash out all except what is below my hands."252

The historicity of this narrative is in question, but nevertheless it shows how even the earliest Muslims noted the high regard Muhammad (peace be upon him) had for Mary. This being so, it would also be a solid bridge to generate effective dialogue between the two communities.

A seventh insight, which parallels the insight on historical questions, is the methodology used by the intellectuals examined in the first two chapters to develop their representations of the Islamic Jesus. We can pinpoint five sources in developing their respective methodologies; all five are used by polemicists and two by academics. These sources are: the Qur’an, the Ḥadīth, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and non-canonical Christian writings. All scholars researched in this thesis, use the Qur’an, and this is in fact the only source for most of the representations found among academics. For the polemicists, the Qur’an becomes an important source for developing the limited number of positive affirmations found in their lectures and debates; however, it is not the only source. This of course is natural, since the Qur’an is the primary source for the generation of Islamic praxis, law, thought, culture and faith. Additionally, Jesus has found an important position in Islamic mysticism (i.e., Sufism) and folk religion. In determining a true Islamic representation of Jesus, one would want to examine the writings from these traditions, and even more to do field research with Muslim believers from many different cultural societies.

252 Geoffrey Parrinder. *Jesus in the Qurʾān*, 66.
CONCLUSION

Additionally, the material covered in this thesis becomes important when one can see how effective a discussion on Jesus can be for the dialogue between Christian and Muslim religious traditions. To be able to recognize all the similarities and differences between the representations of Jesus found in two religions that hold him in such high regard allows members of those faiths to understand better and communicate with one another. Moreover, Wilfred Cantwell Smith says:

“I would even make bold to say that the future progress of one’s own cherished faith even within one’s own community, depends more largely than most of us have realized on the ability to solve the question of comparative religion. Unless a Christian can contrive intelligently and spiritually to be a Christian not merely in a Christian society or secular society but in the world; unless a Muslim can be a Muslim in the world; unless a Buddhist can carve a satisfactory place for himself as a Buddhist in a world which other intelligent, sensitive, educated men are Christians and Muslims - unless, I say, we can together solve the intellectual and spiritual questions posed by comparative religion, then I do not see how a man is to be a Christian or a Muslim or a Buddhist at all.”

Therefore, the proper understanding of another’s faith leads one to a better understanding and practice of one’s own faith. The person of Jesus allows for a way to enter into the Christian or Muslim religious tradition in order to understand each tradition better. If religion, then, is truly the manifestation of a person’s "ultimate concern,” as Paul Tillich has claimed, it becomes fruitful for an academic of religion to understand how the ultimate concern of ChristianÃs and Muslims are played out through the person of Jesus, a figure of great magnitude in both religious traditions.

---


BIBLIOGRAPHY
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Ayoub, Mahmoud M. ‘Towards an Islamic Christology,II :The Death of Jesus, 
Reality or Delusion. (A Study in the Death of Jesus in Tafsir Literature’).The 
Muslim World, LXX, no. 2 (1980): 91-121.

Ayoub, Mahmoud M. “Towards an Islamic Christology:An Image of Jesus in Early 

Ayoub, Mahmoud M. Christological Issues. Muslim Perspectives, in A Mulism view 
of Christianity. Essays on Dialogue by Mahmoud Ayoub. New York: Orbis 
(containing the four articles by Ayoub listed abov), 2007.

Ayoub, Mahmoud M. The Miracle of Jesus: Muslim Reflections on the Divine Word. in 

Ayoub, Mahmoud. Jesus the Son of God: A Study of the Terms Ibn and Walad in the 
Qur’an and Tafsir Tradition in Y. Y. Haddad and W.Z. Haddad eds. Christian-

Aziz-Us-Samad, Ulfat. A Comparative Study of Christianity and Islam. Lahore, 

Badawī and Craig, Concept of God, Badawī and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 39:00; and 
Badawī, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 36:00.

Badawī, Jamāl and Shorrosh, Anis. The Divinity of Jesus, videocassette. Kansas: 
Ghazzali Islamic Video, 1993. This debate can also be found on the Internet at <www.islamicity.org/video/ch21_9B.ram>.

Badawī, Jamāl, And Craig, William Lane. The Concept of God in Islam and 

Badawī, Jamāl, Woodberry, Dudley and others, "Is Mohammed a Prophet of God?" 

Badawī, Jamāl, Woodberry, Dudley and others, "Is the Bible the Word of God?" 

Badawī, Jamāl, Woodberry, Dudley and others. "Was Jesus Divine? Or was he a Prophet 

Badawī, Jamāl, Woodberry, Dudley and others. Concept of God in Christianity and 

Badawī, Jamāl. Jesus in Islam III. Also note that when Badawī uses the term” one 
scholar,” it normally refers to Ahmad Deedat.


Borrman, M. “*Muslims and the Mystery of the Cross: Rejection or Incomprehension?” Encounter* (Rome), 25 (1976)


Cragg, K. ‘The Qur’an and the Cross-less absent than you Think,’ in Singh, (ed.), 2008a, 177-86.


Deedat, Ahmad. “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 27:00; and Deedat: “Christ in Islam” 25:00-29:00.


Dwight M. Donaldson, in his *Studies in Muslim Ethics* (London: SPCK 1953)


Elmar S. Gruben and Holger Kersten, *The Original Jesus. The Buddhist Sources of*
Christianity. (Shaftesbury: Element Books Ltd.,1995).


Faris, G. ‘Le Christ et L’Islam contemporain’. In Mediterrana, Carrefour des religions, 28


Hastings, James. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. 596, New York: Scribner’s, 1925. also 1926.


Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (Welling borough: The Aquarian Press, 1985,


Bibliography


Bibliography


Ritchie, J. ‘*What do Christians mean when they say that Jesus is ‘the Robinson, N. ‘Fakhr al-din al-Razi and the Virginal Conception*. Islamochristiana, 19, 1-16.


Strauss, D.F. The Life Of Jesus, 4 vol., Birmingham, 1842-4, a translation from the German Das Leben Jesus which had been published in 1836.


Troll, C.W. “Catholic Teachings on Interreligious Dialogue: Analysis of some recent official documents, with special reference to Christian-Muslim Relations,” in


Yaḥyā bin Muḥammad Ḥassan bin Ahmad Zamzamī. *Al-Ḥiwar Adābihū wa Dhawâbîtuhū fī Dhau il-kitāb wa al-Sunnah*, Dar al Maani, Jordon.


