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**CONTEMPORARY WESTERN
REPRESENTATIONS OF JESUS IN
ISLAM**

by

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**Submitted to the Department of Religion
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requirements for**

Master of Arts

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2001

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Wilfrid Laurier University

Abstract

CONTEMPORARY WESTERN
REPRESENTATIONS OF JESUS IN
ISLAM

by Harold Chad Hillier

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee:
Professor Michel Desjardins
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Unknown to many in “Christian” North American society, the person of Jesus is highly revered among the millions of Muslims in the world. This shared reverence for Jesus between Muslims and Christians allows for possible dialogue and greater understanding between adherents of the two religions. Moreover, the renewed interest in scholarship on Jesus, whether historical or theological, allows the Jesus traditions of Islam to become additional sources in this field of scholarship. Given these two reasons, the academic scholar of religion, then, has a motivation to dive into the growing wealth of discussions on the Islamic Jesus in the West.

This thesis examines three different areas of Western scholarship on the Islamic Jesus. This is done in effort to discover what affirmations are made about the Islamic Jesus in Western scholarship, and to determine what differences and similarities can be discovered between these three areas. After an introductory chapter, Chapter Two deals with an examination of the representation of Jesus found in the public discourses of Muslim polemicists, by examining the debates and lectures of two polemicists: Ahmed Deedat (South Africa) and Jamal Badawi (Canada). Chapter Three turns to the representations by the academics of religion who study Islam and world religions, who have published introductions to the Islamic religion. Chapter Four then looks at the English translations of the primary Islamic textual sources, the Qur’an and the hadith collections. This is done in light of the affirmations made by the scholars of the previous chapters, pointing out areas that have been passed over or emphasized. Finally, Chapter Five provides some insights and questions for possible future study.

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1.0 Introduction

Christian theologian Hans Küng claims that humanity is on the verge of a fourth epoch 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.”¹ Küng prophesies that this will be the greatest phenomenon of the twenty-first century.

This process, however, seems to be very slow and evidence of such global awakening is difficult to observe. A recent survey, funded by Pew Charitable Trusts in the Fall of 2000, noted that only seven percent of Americans claimed to understand Islam’s basic beliefs “very well,” seventeen percent said the same of Judaism, twenty-eight percent of evangelical Christianity, and forty-three percent of Catholicism.² Yet at the same time interest in spirituality and religion is growing at a tremendous rate. Public discourses in different forms of media are all becoming more and more popular. As such, when one wants to discover more about a particular religious tradition, they will certainly turn to these to find answers to the questions they seek.

In this thesis, I will be using the analogy of a young North American university student who is interested in discovering more about world religions. Likely such a person would have come from a social community with some level of

¹ Hans Küng, *Christianity & World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), xv.

² The study called *For Goodness Sake* focused more on the issue of religion and politics, along with questions of social perceptions of religion. See “Few Americans Know Islam,” *Islamic Horizons* (March/April 2001), 12.

Christian influence. This being so, the student would have some familiarity with the person of Jesus. He or she can likely identify some of the key Christian narratives about him, and be aware of the importance of that figure in Western society. To discover in university that this person, Jesus, is also revered in another religious tradition, one that may appear “foreign” to them, may cause curiosity about that religious tradition and how Jesus is understood within that tradition. The key question of this thesis is, then, “what sort of representations of Jesus will this student find when examining the Jesus of Islam?” In addition, are there great differences or similarities between different groups of people who discuss the Islamic Jesus? Who are the key figures in publicizing an Islamic representation of Jesus? These are questions I am attempting to address in order best to understand what that young university student will find when entering the religion of Islam.

Research on Jesus within Christianity has exploded in the last decade, sparked in part by the millennium and the rise of spirituality in the West. As Michel Desjardins notes, “the 1980s and 1990s have witnessed a breath-taking revival of historical-Jesus studies. Recovering the first-century Jesus matters more to Christian Origins scholars now than it has for over a century.”³ Not only has it mattered more for scholars of Christianity within the academic study of religion, but also it has become more important for Christians apologists, philosophers and believers in general. The question of who Jesus really was even finds the occasional call for contemplation by media and the average person on the street. Jesus has captured the attention of many in Western society, and the search for the “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. The Jesus traditions of India and Tibet hardly enter into the discussion for Jesus scholars. Even more so, the Jesus traditions found within the religion of Islam receive far less attention. The Qur'an, hadith and other Islamic writings seem to be too historically removed, and too much like the New Testament and/or ancient Christian fables to be taken seriously.

Nevertheless, Jesus also captures the minds of Muslim believers. To the Muslim the Jesus of Islam is the real Jesus, and the Jesus narratives found in the Islamic scriptures are historical. Jesus 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.

In order, then, to open the door to better dialogue between Christianity and Islam by overcoming the most difficult obstacle to such dialogue, misunderstanding, this thesis will examine the Jesus of Islam to discover what particular understandings about Jesus are present in that tradition. As opposed to past studies of Jesus in Islam, I will be taking an approach that is more natural and traditional to the study of Islam. I will be moving from studying lay scholars, to studying academics, to finally examining the scriptures. This approach will also allow for the chance to discover diversity in that representation.

³ Michel Desjardins, "Preface." In William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins (eds.), *Whose Historical Jesus?* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 1.

The second chapter, then, will be an examination of the two popular Muslim polemicists: Ahmed Deedat and Jamal Badawi. These two scholars, the first from South Africa and the latter from Canada, have been the pioneers of modern Muslim apologetics in English. They have been participants in many inter-religious debates, and have produced a substantial amount of educational resources for the Muslim community in the West. Often the first encounter a university student will have with a person of another faith will be with an apologist/polemicist – a defender and promoter of one's religion. I will examine the vast amount of material these two scholars have produced on Jesus within debates and public lectures. Afterward, I will compare and contrast the material of these two scholars to find variety in their representations of Jesus.

The third chapter will be an investigation of scholars who have been trained and work in the academic study of religion. These are academics of Islam and/or comparative religions who have written introductions to the Islamic faith. Once again, the reading of an introduction to a religious tradition is often a part of an early examination of any faith. In examining a number of these introductions, I want to find out what sorts of representations of Jesus are found by those who are professional scholars of Islam, where these discussions occur within their texts, the amount of material they devote to a discussion of Jesus and what similarities or differences are found between them.

The fourth chapter will be an examination of the Islamic textual sources, the Qur'an, and the hadith collections of Imam Bukhari and Muslim. These are the primary sources used by the scholars of the previous two chapters to develop their

representations of Jesus. I am attempting to discover what information on Jesus can be found in these documents, and discuss it in light of how scholars use them in their studies. Are there themes or ideas that are highlighted over and above others, and are there ideas that are completely ignored by scholars in these documents?

The fifth chapter, a conclusion, will summarize the endeavors and findings of the previous three chapters. I will be highlighting some key insights discovered when comparing the information portrayed by the examined scholars. Additionally, I will note some possible questions for further study that have arisen during my study. This is all done in effort to find a foundation for better inter-religious encounters between Christianity and Islam.

In conclusion, a note should be made regarding the classical debate on “subjective versus objective” (or insider versus outsider) approaches to the academic study of religion. Classically, according to Eric Sharpe, a comparative religious methodology “presupposes, if it does not absolutely require, a certain degree of detachment from a dominant religious tradition, and a degree of interest in the religious beliefs and practices of others.”⁴ As Rita Gross notes, however, the “relationship between religious studies as a discipline and the personal practice of religion [is] an issue which should be faced head-on rather than skirted.”⁵ Gross states that, as scholars of religion, we need to approach the data of a religion with empathy, trying to perceive the data in a way an insider to that tradition would

⁴ Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion – A History* (La Salle: Open Court, 1987), 2.

⁵ Rita Gross, *Feminism & Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 11.

perceive it. This is opposed to a detached scientific methodology called for by some academics of religion.⁶

The question of religious affiliation and scholarship arises a couple of times within the research for this thesis. Yet even from the onset, as a scholar of Christianity, focusing particularly on comparative religious thought and inter-religious dialogue and coming from a conservative evangelical Christian background, there is no question that my background, affiliations, and presumptions affect my research. Even the empathetic position I take towards world religions is based on inclusive theological presumptions found in some groups of evangelical theology.⁷

This same question of subjective versus objective scholarship by an insider specifically enters into this thesis with my use of Muslim polemicists as scholarly resources for discovering Islamic representations of Jesus. This issue also arises with my questioning of the importance of faith affiliation in the third chapter in the material presented by academics. The faith question, as Gross notes, cannot be avoided and should be addressed, as I have been done in this research.

To dismiss the religious scholarship of a Muslim or Christian scholar because of their adherence to faith is in my view a grave mistake, and would set precedents that would make it impossible for any scholar's research to be accepted. From the conservative Muslim, to the liberal Protestant, to the atheistic/agnostic, all scholars have presumptions that should be made clear and should be debated – not be

⁶ See for example Donald Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999). Wiebe is a major proponent of using a scientific methodology in the academic study of religion. This methodology would require academics to bracket their religious values, and would dismiss the works of those who do not follow such a methodology. For a counter perspective, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "On the Comparative Study of Religion." In W. H. Capps (ed.), *Ways of Understanding Religion* (New York: MacMillan, 1972), 95-109. Smith sees both science and religion as dynamic essences, and an academic's final loyalty is to truth (i.e., God).

dismissed. Even Gross' comment, that a genuine analysis of religious data requires empathy, is something that should be debated, for a wealth of research is lost when those in the academy deem one person's work unprofitable because of their religious disposition, including those scholars who do not look at data from religious traditions with much empathy.

⁷ For a discussion on evangelical theologies of inclusivism, see Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

Chapter Two - Western Polemicist Representations of the Islamic Jesus

1.0 Introduction

Polemicists of any religious tradition are usually viewed with suspicion in the academic study of religion.⁸ Here are a small number of intellectuals, many of whom hold recognized academic credentials, who, for a variety of reasons, have applied their abilities to the defence of their own religious traditions. Such intellectuals seek to affirm the assertion that their particular understanding of reality is absolute, true and superior to all other religious and philosophical systems. As such, many in the academic study of religion hold their work to be suspect, believing it to be weaker than studies by those who are unrestrained by dogmatic affiliations.

Ironically, in an academy that promotes pluralism and tolerance, at times it seems that only those who share the same presumptions are perceived to be truly part of that institution. This deep-seated suspicion, then, seems to make these scholars polemicists in their own right, defending what they perceive to be true against those who are seen as flawed. This idea rings true in a sub-field of the academic study of religion: the quest for the historical Jesus. Here, scholars of various faith persuasions, such as evangelism, Roman Catholicism, liberal Protestantism and atheism, attempt to discover who Jesus really was. In doing so, many scholars have become polemicists in defending their own representations of Jesus, but it is often those with more liberal perspectives who are accepted by the

⁸ I have chosen to use the word “polemics” and “polemicist,” instead of “apologetics” or “apologist,” due to the popular association in the West of apologetics with Christianity. A polemicist is one who attacks an idea or belief, while an apologist is one who defends personal beliefs or ideas. Those who make it a point to challenge the rationality of particular religious

academy. My position is this: in light of the central academic values of tolerance and pluralism, however, the right of conservative religious academics to defend their tradition is to be accepted and included as part of scholarship. Additionally, the insights that they promote in regard to issues studied in the academic study of religion should be evaluated with the same degree of tolerance and critical scrutiny as those found in scholars who hold different ideological and religious positions.

Based on this premise, the following chapter will critically examine the presentations of the Islamic Jesus found in two well-known Muslims polemicists. A wealth of information about the Jesus of Islam can be found among the slings and arrows of these polemical dialogues. The two chosen polemicists, Ahmed Deedat (South Africa) and Jamal Badawi (Canada), have earned worldwide reputations for their rhetorical skills and study of their faith. Though there are a growing number of female and white male Muslim speakers, these two men have been chosen for two reasons. First, these men have been chosen precisely for their respected position among the communities of Western Muslims who enjoy polemical dialogue. So their opinions and representations of Jesus can be seen as normative for a number of contemporary Muslims in Western countries. Second, they have produced more polemical materials than any other Muslim polemicists in English speaking nations. Therefore, their materials on the person of Jesus are both plentiful and significant.

In trying to develop a fuller picture of each polemicist's representation of Jesus, I will examine both their extensive lecture and debate materials. In examining each polemicist's rhetorical format, I will highlight some typical affirmations about the person of Jesus. Beginning with the affirmations found in the debate materials

beliefs that they deny, along with defending the rationality of their own beliefs, can be referred to

and then with those found in the lecture material, each section will be divided into positive and negative affirmations about Jesus – that is to say, what can and cannot be said about Jesus in an Islamic context. These two types of affirmations will then be compared followed by a series of comparisons: between these positive and negative affirmations in both the debate and lecture materials, and between the polemicists themselves.

2.0 Ahmed Deedat: The Jesus of the Swoon

2.1 Introduction

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 religion convictions of other faith communities. His popularity as a speaker and debater reach 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.⁹

Deedat resides now lives in his hometown of Durban, South Africa, where, after a stroke in May 1996, he has unfortunately remained bed-ridden. He is diabetic, unable to speak, eat or move, and can only communicate short messages through a computer system set up to read his motions.

as either an apologist or polemicist.

In order better to understand Ahmed Deedat's representation of the Islamic Jesus, one must examine both his public debates and lectures. I will begin here with his debates. Since Deedat's popularity reached an apex in the 1980s, most of the materials referred to here, obtained from his Propagation Centre, are from that time period.

2.2 The Islamic Jesus of Debate

Ahmed Deedat is a challenging polemicist. At times he borders on being a comedian, at others, on hate-mongering. With a smile and jovial demeanor, Deedat proceeds to enlighten audiences on Islamic beliefs and train Muslims on how to defend their faith. He sets fires underneath his opponents through such charged linguistic attacks as calling Christians "brainwashed" and "diseased," or "sick." He makes claims to be able to disprove the Christian understanding of the crucifixion inside a courtroom within two minutes. This combination of passion for his faith and aggressive denunciation of Christianity has brought him notoriety across the world.

Deedat has debated some of the leading Christian polemicists of the 1970s and 1980s. This section will examine three of these dialogues: with Anis Shorrosh, Josh McDowell and John Gilchrist. Since these Christian polemicists have a sufficiently high reputation to draw out other Christians to hear these debates, it is reasonable to suspect that within any one of these debates there will be non-Muslims, who would have heard a presentation on the Islamic Jesus for the first

⁹ For a brief biography on Ahmed Deedat see <<http://deedat.ifrance.com/deedat/>> and <www.virtual-p.c.com/wipeccr/aboutad.htm>.

time. This being likely, what sort of representation of Jesus would one receive from hearing Ahmed Deedat?

As will also be seen in the following section on Jamal Badawi, Ahmed Deedat's presentation of the Islamic Jesus, in dialogues and debates with Christian polemicists, focuses more on denying particular Christian affirmations about Jesus than affirming a Muslim position. These are *negative affirmations*. They provide a representation of Jesus based on deconstructing another representation. This is not a surprising methodology. In order to present a different representation of Jesus, a comparison with the more popular Western or "Christian" understandings of Jesus would need to be made. This would be different if they were attempting to present a representation of Muhammad or 'Imran, where such figures would need to be defined rather than deconstructed. Deedat also presents *positive affirmations* about Jesus, citing reasons 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 a distinctive representation of the Islamic Jesus to his audience.

2.2.1 *Negative Polemical Affirmations for Developing an Islamic Representation of Jesus*

Always affirming that Muslims believe that Jesus is not divine, Deedat comments that the only difference between Christians and Muslims is the "divinity of Jesus."¹⁰ He further notes that "the only way we differ is saying that he is not God

¹⁰ Ahmed Deedat and Anis Shorosh, "Is Jesus God?," videocassette (South Africa: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1985), 1:16:00.

in humanly form, that he is not God incarnate, he is not the begotten Son of God.”¹¹ 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 a dream of a man who had too much to eat.¹² Thus Deedat affirms that “there is not a single vocal statement in any of the sixty-six books of the Bible where Jesus says ‘I am God’ or says ‘worship me.’”¹³

Nor in his view is the doctrine of the Trinity a rational doctrine, one that a Muslim can uphold. 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 sense to “hang the other.”¹⁴ Therefore, Deedat affirms that both scripture and reason inhibit the belief that Jesus was divine.

Deedat’s points can be grouped in four areas: the submission of Jesus, the titles of Jesus, the message of Jesus, and the humanity of Jesus. Concerning the first point, the submission of Jesus to God, Deedat notes that Jesus told people to worship Allah, “who is my Lord and your Lord,” and that associating anything with him will be damnation.¹⁵ Deedat 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,

¹¹ 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.

¹² Deedat and Shorosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:17:00.

¹³ Deedat and Shorosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:15:00.

¹⁴ Deedat and Shorosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:18:00.

¹⁵ Deedat and Shorosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:20:00.

metaphorically, [the] creator, sustainer, involver, cherisher of everyone. But physically he does not beget, because begetting is an animal act.”¹⁶

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.”¹⁷ For how then, Deedat adds, should one understand the references to the other sons of God, like Adam, in the Christian Bible? Deedat 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 tonnes...* Every Tom, Dick or Harry, if you follow the will and plan of God, you are a godly person.”¹⁸ 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).¹⁹ Jesus’ message, then, was that God was one, and that he himself was not God.

Deedat’s most common area of debate, the fourth point here, concerns the humanity of Jesus. Deedat 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 and not divine. Deedat first notes that “God is not like

¹⁶ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:21:00.

¹⁷ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:23:00.

¹⁸ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:22:00 (*italics mine*). This statement in italics is a common one for Deedat, and one to which Jamal Badawi often refers in his debates.

¹⁹ 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.”

anything you can imagine.”²⁰ Humans cannot conceive of what God is like; they can know certain things about him, but not what comprises his essence. Deedat remarks, however, that humans are told what God is not: he is not human.²¹ Basing his defence on Job 25:6, Deedat states that Jesus was born of a woman, and that every person born of a woman 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 had 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].”²²

Furthermore, the New Testament states that Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), to which Deedat voices: “God getting circumcised?”²³ Deedat then asks his audience 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].”²⁴ In addition, the New Testament and the Qur’an 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 sometimes find a toilet.”²⁵ For Deedat, these things seem unclean and therefore are not worthy of a 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

²⁰ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:29:00.

²¹ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:29:00.

²² Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:57:00.

²³ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:32:00.

Testament 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, “who is he crying to? Himself? Is he putting up an act? If he is God, how can he let himself down?”²⁶

What then of John 10:30 where Jesus says that he and the Father are one? Deedat responds that the context of the passage shows that this was a 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.”²⁷

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,²⁸ although Deedat himself does not explicitly make that connection in debate, lecture,

²⁴ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:33:00. Deedat also notes that Mary was made unclean by the birth of Jesus, and asks if God can make one unclean.

²⁵ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:51:00.

²⁶ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:58:00. Deedat also makes a comment that Jesus’ words on the cross, “Eli, Eli,” sound like “Allah, Allah,” which he was probably saying. Deedat also says here that the word Hallelujah is really Alla-lu-ya, “he is Allah.” In other lectures, Deedat makes a greater point of how Allah is secretly found throughout the Bible.

²⁷ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 2:19:00.

²⁸ Many of Deedat’s points about the crucifixion account seem to parallel the statements made by Maulana Muhammad Ali, an Muslim intellectual called on by the founder of the 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 Bah’atism or the Ahmadiyya Movement. There are those Muslims who, however, point to some of Deedat’s respected mentors

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,²⁹ 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 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 their 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,

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>.

²⁹ Ahmed Deedat and Josh McDowell, "Was Christ Crucified?," <http://answer-islam.org/debates/deedat_mcdowell.html>.

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 bodies” after three days of decomposition. No, Deedat answers, and says that she must have expected Jesus to be alive. Deedat 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 up 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 that he was 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 died 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 away 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 die 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 die. Yet, “if [Jesus] died, there is no miracle. There’s no sign. If he didn’t die, it’s a miracle.” For Deedat the miracle is in the idea that everyone expected Jesus to die, but he did not, just like one would expect a man who was “shot six times” in the heart to die, 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. 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.³⁰ 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 humans.”³¹ According to Deedat, Jesus is a mighty messenger of God, and listening correctly to “what he says” will lead you to Islam.³²

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 to 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 titles attributed to Jesus as implying his divinity, that person is wrong. Nor do the crucifixion and resurrection imply divinity, for these events never occurred in the way Christians have traditionally understood them. Rather, Jesus was able 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 died, worshipped and led others to worship the one and only God.

³⁰ Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 1:52:00.

³¹ Deedat and Gilchrist, “Islam and Christianity,” 16:00.

³² Deedat and Shorrosh, “Is Jesus God?,” 2:02:00-2:03:00.

2.2.2 Positive Polemical Affirmations for Developing an Islamic Representation of Jesus

In Deedat's debates, he makes little effort to defend Qur'anic statements about Jesus. Nor does he refer much to what the Qur'an has to say about Jesus. Nevertheless, the brief passing references to the Qur'an and Muslim belief do aid in developing a Deedatian 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,"³³ 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.³⁴

What this means, then, is that Judaism, Christian and Islam are not three different religions, but the "same religion on different levels."³⁵ God gave his messengers fitting instruction for the needs of the people at that time. Jesus' mission was to come and "solve the problems for the Jews."³⁶ Thus, without referring to any particular passage in the Qur'an or hadith, Deedat presents these positive polemical affirmations of the Islamic Jesus as based in Islamic doctrine.³⁷

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'an, the

³³ Deedat and Gilchrist, "Islam and Christianity," 1:00.

³⁴ See Deedat and Gilchrist, "Islam and Christianity," 16:00; Deedat and McDowell, "Was Christ Crucified?"; and Deedat and Shorosh, "Is Jesus God?," 1:15:00-1:16:00.

³⁵ Deedat and Gilchrist, "Islam and Christianity," 4:00.

³⁶ Deedat and Gilchrist, "Islam and Christianity," 4:00.

last and final revelation of God, that they didn't kill him, nor did they crucify him. But it was made to appear to them so."³⁸ Then in debate with Shorrosh, Deedat adds that the Qur'an condemns anyone who says that Jesus is God as a "kafir" (unbeliever).³⁹ 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 a righteous woman."⁴⁰

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 fall 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 Jewish people to correct problems.

2.2.3 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

³⁷ Deedat and McDowell, "Was Christ Crucified?," 8.

³⁸ Deedat and McDowell, "Was Christ Crucified?," 1.

³⁹ Deedat and Shorrosh, "Is Jesus God?," 1:20:00.

⁴⁰ Deedat and Shorrosh, "Is Jesus God?," 1:49:00.

does not focus on the miraculous life of Jesus,⁴¹ and in his positive affirmations he does not discuss the claims of others for the divinity of Jesus.⁴²

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. 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 claimed to be*. Second, *Jesus was a messenger 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 are 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

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² However, he does make one reference to a Qur'anic passage that states that one is an infidel if they say Jesus was God.

admitting that he was not divine, and have been misunderstood. Can these three affirmations be similar to those found in Deedat's descriptive material?

2.3 The Islamic Jesus of Lectures

Ahmed Deedat is 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 lectures and booklets. It would be best, therefore, to examine these lectures as a whole, emphasizing again both their positive and negative depictions of Jesus.

2.3.1 Positive and Negative Descriptive Affirmations for Developing an Islamic Representation 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 are 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 one evening? In one lecture, noting that a Christian announcer admitted "that there is more accommodation for the person of Jesus Christ in Islam than

there is for Muhammad in Christianity,”⁴³ Deedat adds: “our Christian countrymen are unaware that Islam is the only religion outside of Christianity that makes it an article of faith to believe in Jesus.”⁴⁴ Deedat affirms that Christians often think that he is pandering to them by praising Jesus, “to curry favor with them.”⁴⁵ Deedat also assures Christians that Muslims “don’t have another Christ.”⁴⁶

Speaking to a majority Christian audience at Wichita State University on the subject “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,”⁴⁷ 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.”⁴⁸ 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.”⁴⁹

Confirming that the name “Jesus” is mentioned five times more than the name of Muhammad in the Qur’an, a book which is “supposedly the book that is made up by Muhammad,”⁵⁰ Deedat mentions that the Qur’an highly honours Jesus, “son of Mary,” referring to him as “Messiah,” “messenger of God,” “servant of

⁴³ Ahmed Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” videocassette (South Africa: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1983), 10:00-11:00.

⁴⁴ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 12:00.

⁴⁵ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 13:00.

⁴⁶ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 16:00.

⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁸ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 14:00.

⁴⁹ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 14:00-15:00; and Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 12:00-13:00.

⁵⁰ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 16:00; and Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 14:00.

God,” “spirit of God,” “word of God,” and as “the sign of God.”⁵¹ As such, Deedat states that 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 Qur’an states that Mary was “chosen above all women,” a notion that is not even “found in the Christian Bible.”⁵² Recounting a story that in Christian circles 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.⁵³ Deedat teasingly asks from where Muhammad could get such information if he himself had written the Qur’an rather than God revealing it to him – and how could it come to pass that an Arab man would speak so highly of a Jewish woman? For him the conclusion is evident: it must have been God who commanded him to say so.⁵⁴

Mary, according to Deedat’s narrative taken from the Qur’an (surah 3:45), 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

⁵¹ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 14:00-15:00.

⁵² Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 22:00.

⁵³ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 23:00-25:00.

⁵⁴ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 27:00; and Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 25:00-29:00.

company of those nearest to God.”⁵⁵ 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.”⁵⁶ Deedat adds a comment saying that if God wanted to make millions of Jesuses, all not having a father, he could do so. No doubt, Deedat is downplaying the uniqueness of the virgin birth of Jesus.

Deedat continues the Qur’anic story of Jesus by mentioning the first miracle of Jesus (surah 19:23). When the time for Mary’s childbirth came, she retired to the East. “In the Qur’an, there is no Joseph the carpenter and no stable,” Deedat adds.⁵⁷ 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’s defence, Jesus speaks (surah 19:30), saying that he is a servant of God, and that Allah has made him “kind and not overbearing.” “So peace be to me on the day I was born, the day I die, and the day that I shall be raised to life again.”⁵⁸

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.”⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

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

⁵⁵ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 28:00.

⁵⁶ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 29:00.

⁵⁷ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 33:00; and Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 34:00.

⁵⁸ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 36:00; and Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 37:00.

⁵⁹ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 48:00.

⁶⁰ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 51:00-52:00.

incarnate, and that he is not begotten,”⁶¹ adding that God cannot beget, because begetting is an action of the lower animal function of sex.

Noting that there is “not a single verse where Jesus says that he is God, or worship me,”⁶² 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 1 John 5:7.⁶³ Furthermore, Deedat states that out of the 124, 000 manuscripts of the New Testament, “no two are identical.”⁶⁴ In his view, then, the Christian notion of God begetting a son is erroneous. For instance, the title “Son of God” is figurative for showing a close relationship.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶ 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 claims.⁶⁷ He adds that the ascension narrative has been discredited in the gospels of

⁶¹ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 37:00; and Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 55:00.

⁶² Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 57:00.

⁶³ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 46:00 and 50:00-52:00.

⁶⁴ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 47:00.

⁶⁵ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 40:00.

⁶⁶ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 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.

⁶⁷ Deedat, “Christ in Islam,” 1:10:00.

Matthew and Luke, suggesting that it is a fictitious event.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹

In another lecture, to a largely Muslim audience in South Africa, Deedat explains his notion of crucifixion as a defence for the human nature of Jesus.⁷⁰ Titriling 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.”⁷¹ He adds that the Muslim needs no other proof than this statement, but that the Christian can not understand how a man “one thousand miles from the scene, and six hundred years away in time, knows something that happened in Jerusalem.”⁷²

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 event.⁷³ 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 rate in the country, the lowest gambling rate in the country, the lowest prison rate in the country, the lowest divorce rate in the country, and has the highest charity rate in the country.”⁷⁴ Muslim practices, therefore, in his view

⁶⁸ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 56:00.

⁶⁹ Deedat, “Jesus Christ in Islam and Christianity,” 1:08:00.

⁷⁰ Ahmed Deedat, “Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction,” 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).

⁷¹ Deedat, “Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction,” 16:00.

⁷² Deedat, “Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction,” 18:00.

⁷³ Deedat, “Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction,” 19:00-20:00.

⁷⁴ Deedat, “Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction,” 21:00.

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 expectation to establish of the Kingdom of God.⁷⁵ 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 swords, 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,⁷⁶ the Jews came. Deedat states that the Jews were cunning, for they brought Roman soldiers with them. Jesus underestimated their intelligence. So when Peter attacked one of them, Jesus told his men to put their swords away, for he knew he would not win.⁷⁷ 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."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Deedat, "Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction," 32:00-34:00.

⁷⁶ Deedat, "Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction," 43:00-45:00. Deedat counters what Luke said about them falling asleep from sorrow, and wonders whether Luke even knew medicine at all.

⁷⁷ 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 Cruci-fiction," 48:00.

⁷⁸ Deedat, "Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction," 51:00.

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 had escaped.⁷⁹

In explaining why Christians read these accounts and do not see what he sees, Deedat says: “people can be brainwashed.”⁸⁰ Adding that the crucifixion “has become a joke by God,”⁸¹ 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 and 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 three nights during which Jesus was supposedly in the tomb are not consistent with the time period from Good Friday to Easter Sunday. Then he claims that Christians will begin affirming that Jesus died on a Good Wednesday, for “when new

⁷⁹ Deedat, “Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction,” 1:07:00.

⁸⁰ Deedat, “Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction,” 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.

⁸¹ Deedat goes on to show different examples of how people conceive a crucifixion. He notes that Josh McDowell’s version looks like a frog, so it is “frog-i-fixion.” Also, the Jehovah Witnesses

things come out, you Christians just lap it up.”⁸² In his finale, Deedat assures Muslims that they “don’t have to apologize for [their] religion. The Christian has to apologize for his religion, for his Trinity, for his Jesus.”⁸³

2.3.2 *Conclusion*

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 three main affirmations. The first affirmation is that *Jesus is highly respected by Muslims and praised by the Qur’an*. 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 Gospels. The third affirmation is that *Jesus was not divine*. Deedat points to the titles attributed to Jesus in

have Jesus on a stake, hence it is “stake-i-fixion.” He also notes how people in the Philippines reenact the crucifixion every Good Friday.

⁸² 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.

the 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 on the crucifixion and resurrection accounts to affirm that the Qur'anic injunction that Jesus was not crucified and to highlight Jesus' humanity and reliance on God for salvation.

2.4 Conclusion: Contrast and Comparison of Polemical and Descriptive Materials

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 with our examination of Jamal Badawi. After examining some of the key polemical dialogues in which Ahmed Deedat 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.

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. References 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

⁸³ Deedat, "Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction," 1:57:00.

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 a miraculous life*. The miracles concerning Jesus began with the miracle of his mother's birth, being born to a woman who was barren. Mary was blessed by God to bear the 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.

3.0 Jamal Badawi: The Prophetic Jesus

3.1 Introduction

Dr. Jamal Badawi is Associate Professor of Management at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. After studying for his undergraduate degree in Egypt, Badawi 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 Badawi, 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 Badawi is the most respected and sought after Muslim polemicist in North America. Debating the

leading Christian polemicists of the 1990s and today, Badawi has traveled throughout the world in his work and has mentored others in the same endeavours.

I will examine Jamal Badawi's representation of Jesus by looking at both the extensive debate and lecture material. Badawi 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.

3.2 The Islamic Jesus of Debate

Since Jamal Badawi 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 a 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?

3.2.1 Negative Polemical Affirmations for Developing an Islamic Representation of Jesus

In most of Badawi'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, Badawi'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 Badawi for not putting forth any positive arguments for defending the Islamic conception of God.⁸⁴

Badawi's polemic against Christian representations of God is based on three basic foundations, grounded in the Qur'an and Islamic theology. The first foundation is the belief that the *Qur'an is the ultimate authority for the Muslim*. The second foundation is the positive affirmation of the *Islamic concept of monotheism (tawhid)*. The third foundation is the Qur'anic statement that the *religious texts of Judaism and Christianity have been corrupted*. All three give pride of place to an Islamic perspective.

First, Badawi clearly asserts that Muslims put their trust in the Qur'an, and "that alone," as the first and last source for truth.⁸⁵ 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, Badawi replies: "for Muslims, [the] Qur'an 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."⁸⁶

Second, Badawi states that the Qur'anic concept of God is a genuine monotheism. He offers three conditions for a believer to have a genuine monotheism (*tawhid*): God is the sole creator and sustainer of the universe; God

⁸⁴ Jamal Badawi and William Lane Craig, "The Concept of God in Islam and Christianity," audiocassette (Illinois: InterVarsity, 1991), 59:00.

⁸⁵ Jamal Badawi, Dudley Woodberry, and others, "Is Mohammed a Prophet of God?," videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video, 1993), 5:00. Please note that all Badawi's videos

alone is worthy of worship and none can be worshipped besides him; and God is one numerically in both attributes and person.⁸⁷

Third, Badawi 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 Badawi's polemic against the Christian conceptions of Jesus. Badawi affirms that the Christian Bible only contains some of the words of God, but is not the word of 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.⁸⁸ 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 discover what parts of the Jewish and Christian scriptures are true? Badawi claims that the Muslim "does not accept the Bible in total, or reject it in total":⁸⁹ the "Qur'an is the criterion for what is true in the Bible."⁹⁰

Based on these three foundations, Badawi sets out in debate to show two contentions: the 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.

referred to in this chapter are produced by Ghazzali Video, and can be found on the Internet at www.islamicity.org/video, as well as through Ghazzali Video.

⁸⁶ Badawi and Craig, "Concept of God," 71:00.

⁸⁷ Jamal Badawi, 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 Badawi and Craig, "Concept of God," 29:00.

⁸⁸ Jamal Badawi, Dudley Woodberry, and others, "Is the Bible the Word of God?," videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video, 1993), 10:00-11:00.

⁸⁹ Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 32:00.

⁹⁰ Badawi and Woodberry, "Bible," 18:00.

Badawi'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. Badawi separates these statements into statements of misinterpretation and statements of metaphorical language. The second argument is that Jesus affirmed his full and exclusive humanity, which is opposite to Christian thought over the centuries.

Regarding statements that traditional Christianity has misinterpreted in the New Testament, Badawi first makes the assertion that textual criticism of the Gospels has cast a lot of doubt on the authenticity of Jesus' words.⁹¹ Curiously, however, his criticism assumes that the words are authentic. He seems to assume that these statements are genuine to the historical Jesus, and proceeds to offer alternative understandings. For instance, one text that Badawi 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). Badawi 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," Badawi affirms. "And if this be true, nobody can come to the Father except by following the prophet."⁹² Another popular reference that Badawi uses is the quotation of the Apostle Thomas when meeting Jesus saying: "My Lord, and my God." Badawi offers three alternative interpretations of this text. One is that Thomas focused more on the "my Lord," which can be understood as referring to a

⁹¹ Badawi 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 Jamal Badawi, 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.

master, teacher, or rabbi.⁹³ A second interpretation is that Thomas “was so surprised to see him, he says ‘and my God, the creator of Jesus.’”⁹⁴ Here, in his view, the expression “my God” is used in a colloquial way similar to saying “Oh my God!” The third interpretation Badawi gives to this same text is that some commentators understand the passage to really be saying “my godly Lord,” meaning that Jesus was righteous.⁹⁵ Other words of Jesus to which Badawi 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 oft referred to title for God by Jesus, “Father,” which he 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 Badawi often refers is the acceptance by Jesus of worship. The second is the narrative accounts of Jesus forgiving sins. Badawi often states that the acceptance by Jesus of people worshipping him is not to be equated with worship of God. Rather, Badawi adds: “worship can also mean intense love.”⁹⁶ Furthermore, the apparent power of Jesus to forgive sins is not a sign of divinity. Rather, Badawi mentions that “when a prophet says, ‘you are forgiven,’ it means that God [has] revealed to me that you are forgiven.”⁹⁷

⁹² Badawi and Shorosh, “Divinity,” 35:00.

⁹³ Badawi, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 27:00.

⁹⁴ Badawi and Shorosh, “Divinity,” 44:00.

⁹⁵ Badawi and Craig, “Concept of God,” 45:00.

⁹⁶ Badawi and Craig, “Concept of God,” 45:00; Badawi and Shorosh, “Divinity,” 39:00; and Badawi, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 36:00.

⁹⁷ Badawi, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 27:00.

According to Badawi, 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*,⁹⁸ Badawi 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.”⁹⁹ For instance, Badawi 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 (John 10:33). Like Deedat, Badawi states in a number of places that this “oneness” is metaphorical, for it is oneness of “purpose,” not “essence.”¹⁰⁰

In line with this, Badawi states that titles like “Son of God” and “Begotten” are also metaphorical. Badawi notes that there were many prophets in the Hebrew scriptures who were identified as sons of God (e.g., David and Solomon).¹⁰¹ 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

⁹⁸ John Hick, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

⁹⁹ Jamal Badawi, Dudley Woodberry, and others, “Concept of God in Christianity and Islam: Part Two,” videocassette (Kansas: Ghazzali Islamic Video, 1993), 58:00. Badawi also adds that, according to Hick, much of the New Testament genre is poetic statements about how they interpreted their experience with Jesus.

¹⁰⁰ Badawi and Craig, “Concept of God,” 44:00; Badawi and Shorrosh, “Divinity,” 35:00; and Badawi, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 24:00. Badawi 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.

¹⁰¹ Badawi, Woodberry, and others, “Jesus,” 24:00.

metaphorical as well. These terms were applied to people like Isaac, Abraham, Jacob, and David and they are not believed to be divine.¹⁰²

Besides these textual-type arguments, the second argument that Badawi employs to prove that Jesus should not be considered divine is that Jesus' words and actions show clearly that he did not have a conception of divinity in his self-consciousness. Badawi commonly uses eight points to support this argument.¹⁰³ 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 (e.g., John 5:30; Matt 11:27). So the one giving is greater than the one who is receiving. Second is the recognition that Jesus was tempted. Keeping with the beliefs common to the Abrahamic religions, God cannot be tempted (Matt 4:1-11; James 1:13). Third, Jesus denied knowledge of at least some future events and the unseen, like the time of the Day of the Lord (Mark 13:32; Matt 24:36). This is the kind of knowledge, future-knowledge, which an omniscient God would have. Fourth, Jesus refused to be called "good" because God is the only one who is good (Mark 10:18). Fifth, the Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom. This indicates change, which is impossible in an immutable God (Luke 2:21, 52). Sixth, Jesus referred to himself as a prophet and was called a prophet by others (Luke 7:16; 13:33-34; 24:19; John 6:14; Heb 3:1). Seventh, Jesus was a created being, who was circumcised. Anything born of a woman, however, cannot be perfect (Job 25:4-6; cf. Deedat). Eighth, according to the New Testament it was God who raised Jesus from the dead. This statement of

¹⁰² Badawi and Craig, "Concept of God," 31:00-35:00.

¹⁰³ Badawi, Woodberry, and others, "Jesus," 37:00-39:00; Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 47:00-48:00; Badawi and Craig, "Concept of God," 80:00-85:00. In this last citation, Badawi refers to assertion one, three, and five.

causation leads one to see that there is a subject-object distinction between God and Jesus.

Therefore, with these interpretations and scriptural evidences in mind, Badawi 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.”¹⁰⁴

The examination of biblical materials has been Badawi’s primary polemic against the Christian representations of Jesus. Badawi’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, Badawi states: “for Islam it does not make any difference whatsoever 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 were crucified...it does not make any difference...because the death, crucifixion, or murder of any one Prophet does not make him divine.”¹⁰⁵ The notion of the crucifixion and resurrection essentially is a non-issue with Badawi.

Nevertheless, in debating Craig, Badawi 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

¹⁰⁴ Badawi and Craig, “Concept of God,” 48:00. See also, Badawi, Woodberry and others, “Jesus,” 23:00.

¹⁰⁵ Badawi and Craig, “Concept of God,” 72:00-73:00.

“irreconcilable contradictions.”¹⁰⁶ Badawi states that, although some contradictions could be reconciled, the dozen or more of them raise reasonable suspicion about the 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 Badawi. Even if the story were true, Badawi admits, John the Baptist was martyred and he is not divine. As such, crucifixion and resurrection are of very little consequence in the matter of Jesus’ divinity.

In other debates Badawi 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, Badawi responds to a statement by Dudley Woodberry who claimed that Muhammad gave misinformation about Jesus and the crucifixion. Badawi responds by saying that the Bible has been shown to be inauthentic in places, the source of much misinformation. The truth of the Qur’an, 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.¹⁰⁷

In all of this Badawi concludes that, what once was a “religion of 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.

¹⁰⁶ Badawi and Craig, “Concept of God,” 71:00-72:00.

¹⁰⁷ Badawi, Woodberry and others, “Mohammed,” 30:00.

However, due to theological developments in Christianity, the authentic religion of Jesus was transformed to one about Jesus.¹⁰⁸

Most of Badawi's debates centre more on negative affirmations to prove the Islamic representation of Jesus. What sort of representation is Badawi showing through this methodology? The following six ideas of Jesus can be recognized from Badawi's negative polemical affirmations. First, since the Christian scriptures are corrupt, the *Qur'an is the sole trustworthy source for information about Jesus*. Second, *Jesus was a man who never 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 the 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, the conclusion would still be that only a man and his life lay in the hands of God.

3.2.2 Positive Polemical Affirmations for Developing an Islamic Representation of Jesus

As seen above, Badawi'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, Badawi has offered a more developed positive representation of

¹⁰⁸ Badawi, Woodberry and others, "Bible," 1:03:00.

the Islamic Jesus. He has asserted the scriptural statements on Jesus in the Qur'an and briefly explained them. This seemed to have occurred more in Badawi's earlier debates. For instance, in a 1989 debate against Anis Shorrosh, Badawi presented fourteen points "that summarize the Islamic position on who Jesus was."¹⁰⁹ These same points are written in Badawi's pamphlet printed for his *Islamic Information Foundation*.¹¹⁰

Based on verses dealing with Jesus found in the Qur'an, Badawi notes fourteen ideas about the Islamic Jesus. First, his mother Mary and her family are "praised" in the Qur'an (referring to surah 3:36, 37, 42 and 5:78). Badawi, neither in debate nor print, expresses the content of this praise. Rather, he focuses on an apologetical issue normally raised by Christian polemicists, that the Qur'an speaks of Mary in surah 19:28 as the "sister of Aaron." Christian polemicists at times state that Muhammad confused Jesus' mother with Miriam, the biological sister of Moses and Aaron in the Hebrew Scriptures (Num 12).¹¹¹

Second, Badawi notes "that the Quran 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."¹¹² Basing this assertion on surah 3:45-47, Badawi challenges his audience to compare the virgin birth with the creation of Adam (surah 3:59), and with John the Baptist (surah 19:1-9). Badawi does not expand upon this

¹⁰⁹ Jamal Badawi 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_9B.ram.

¹¹⁰ Jamal Badawi, "Jesus (peace be upon him) in the Qur'an and the Bible," www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/6808/Jesus.htm.

¹¹¹ 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).

¹¹² Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 18:00.

assertion in his positive affirmations, but does expand on it in his use of negative affirmations about Jesus.

Third, Badawi states that the Qur'an refers to Jesus as "a word from Allah" (surah 3:39, 45; 4:170). In asserting this, Badawi 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*.¹¹³ Badawi notes that *a word* "according to Qur'anic terminology means that Jesus was created by the creative order and command of God – *kun* or 'be.' In fact, the Quran 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."¹¹⁴

Fourth, Badawi affirms that Jesus is called "a spirit from Allah" in the Qur'an (surah 4:171). In clarifying the point, Badawi adds that this does not mean "the Spirit" in an incarnational sense, where it could mean that a human could possess divinity. Rather that "a spirit" here means that every human being is created, and Allah endowed him or her with that instinctive spiritual nature."¹¹⁵

Fifth, the Qur'an states that Jesus is "someone who is honoured in this life and the hereafter, and is among those who are nearest to God" (surah 3:45).¹¹⁶

Badawi 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, Badawi

¹¹³ *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.

¹¹⁴ Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 19:00.

¹¹⁵ Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 19:00.

¹¹⁶ Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 20:00.

in his pamphlet adds that the same words attributed to Jesus are attributed to others in the Qur'an as well.¹¹⁷

Sixth, Badawi notes that the Qur'an calls Jesus a "pure child," or "sinless" (surah 19:19). He adds, however, that Muslims believe that all children are born sinless, and that Muslims consider all prophets to be sinless.

[W]e do not accept stories that attribute horrible moral conduct to the great prophets and messengers of Allah. The Quran 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.¹¹⁸

He adds that the Qur'an does not contain the story of Aaron supporting the making of a 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 word and message of Allah." Furthermore, Badawi adds, John the Baptist is referred to as even purer than Jesus in the same surah (citing surah 19:13 in pamphlet).

Seventh, the Qur'an says that Jesus was "supported with the Holy Spirit" (surah 2:87, 253; 5:113). Badawi is quick to mention that the term "holy spirit" in the Qur'an "actually means the angel of revelation, Gabriel," and that his spirit supported other humans as well.¹¹⁹

Eighth, the Qur'an states that Jesus performed various miracles. Badawi elaborates by saying that such a statement is supporting the divine nature of the

¹¹⁷ Badawi 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 witness to those who are closest to God.

¹¹⁸ Badawi and Shorosh, "Divinity," 20:00-21:00.

¹¹⁹ Badawi and Shorosh, "Divinity," 22:00 (referring to surah 16:102).

revelations received by Muhammad. Badawi wonders why, if Muhammad wrote the Qur'an himself, he would include this idea, since it would support his opponents who wanted to reject him. Badawi concludes that it must be "to show that the Qur'an is the truth revealed from God, and the Prophet simply communicated it as it is."¹²⁰

Ninth, Badawi states that the Qur'an 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."¹²¹

Tenth, according to Badawi, the Qur'an indicates that the mission of Jesus was culturally and geographically restricted to the people of Israelite descent (citing surah 3:49; 5:75; 61:6 as scriptural support in pamphlet). Badawi adds that even though Jesus' 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'an rejects all forms of deification of Jesus. Badawi adds that a major mistake of some Christian polemical writings is to say that the Qur'an only condemns some heresies of Christianity. For Badawi this charge implies that Muhammad was the author of the Qur'an, and that the only forms of Christianity that he knew were these aberrant theologies. This is false because, according to Badawi, the Qur'an 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'an is universal.

¹²⁰ Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 23:00. Badawi cites surah 3:49; 5:113, 115-118, as scriptural support.

¹²¹ Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 23:00. Badawi cites surah 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'an 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 far the Muslim goes with the Christian. For, thirteenth, Badawi notes that the Qur'an says that "they killed him not, nor did they crucify him, but it so appeared to them."¹²² Badawi admits in public debate that the Qur'an does not speak about how exactly Jesus was saved, only that Allah saved him. Badawi adds that even the statement in the Qur'an 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 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 who died on the cross."¹²³ Badawi then speaks about the Islamic notion of the Second Coming of Jesus, the general resurrection of all people, and the Qur'anic quotation of Jesus saying: "peace be upon me the day that I die and the day I resurrect 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'an prophesied the coming of the Prophet Muhammad, 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'an as revelation, "would have no question or complaint at all about the very honourific terms, the respect, the love and honour

¹²² Badawi and Shorosh, "Divinity," 26:00. Badawi cites surah 4:157 in his pamphlet.

attributed to Jesus in the Qur'an."¹²⁴ He adds that if Christians showed one tenth of this same respect towards the Prophet Muhammad, 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 Badawi'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 Israelite 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 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 Badawi. Most of Badawi's debates do not contain such a comprehensive positive assertion of the Islamic Jesus. Rather, the polemical representation of the Islamic Jesus by Badawi is often piecemeal.

¹²³ Badawi and Shorrosh, "Divinity," 27:00.

3.2.3 *Conclusion of Badawi's Polemical Representation*

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 others to the worship of the 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 close 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, one who would be greater than all other prophets.

There are two areas of contrast between the two types of affirmations. First, Badawi makes special note in his negative polemical affirmations that the *Christian scriptures are corrupt*. Therefore, he claims, the Qur’an is the only reliable source of

¹²⁴ Badawi and Shorosh, “Divinity,” 30:00.

revelatory information. Second, also in his negative polemical affirmations, Badawi comments that *Jesus was greatly loved, and that love was expressed in metaphorical language*. The statements of worship or praise of Jesus in both the Qur'an and the New Testament, he insists, are metaphorical in nature. They symbolize people's positive and overwhelming experience of Jesus.

3.3 *The Islamic Jesus of Lectures*

Badawi 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, Badawi 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 Badawi 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.¹²⁵ The highest percentage of programs deals with the person of Jesus,¹²⁶ where Badawi covers topics ranging from the Qur'anic presentation of Jesus to Jesus' predictions of the advent of the Prophet Muhammad. These programs on Jesus are also highly polemical. Badawi only spends eight of the sixty-four programs in his series "Jesus, Beloved Messenger of Allah," on positive descriptive affirmations of the Islamic Jesus. These are based on both Qur'anic 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

¹²⁵ 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>.

¹²⁶ 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'an and its interpretation. Following that there is a significant decrease in the amount of programs dealing with any one topic.

and determine how an outsider, first hearing about the Islamic Jesus, could perhaps conceive of him.

3.3.1 *Negative Descriptive Affirmations for Developing an Islamic Representation of Jesus*

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 representations 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.¹²⁷

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.”¹²⁸ This calls for an examination of the “authority and authenticity of both scriptures.” It entails examinations of the internal and external evidences showing that the Holy Book has a 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

¹²⁷ Badawi 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. Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Comparative Christology I. K-9: Methodology,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986).

¹²⁸ Badawi, “Comparative Christology I,” 15:00.

any evidence that would indicate that these may not be the words uttered by the Prophet himself.¹²⁹

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.¹³⁰ This is done through philosophical examination and through encouraging “both sides to reexamine their own Holy Books.”¹³¹ Badawi 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 Badawi’s debates as well; it is certainly the one he uses in the other thirty-five lectures. Badawi 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 Gospels of the 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 Christian 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, Badawi again creates a representation of the Islamic Jesus through the denial of certain Christian conceptions.

¹²⁹ Badawi, “Comparative Christology I,” 16:00.

¹³⁰ Badawi, “Comparative Christology I,” 17:00.

¹³¹ Badawi, “Comparative Christology I,” 17:00.

For a person who may hear just these negative descriptive presentations, what kind of picture of the Islamic Jesus could be formed? Badawi begins by outlining the five areas of argumentation by Christian theologians for the divinity of Jesus.

One claims 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 shows that these miracles only come from someone that is divine. Fourthly, the message, the nature of the message, and mission of Jesus on earth...raises the notion of God Incarnate, who came in the form of his divine son. The question of Trinity, the question of sin, atonement, and how can one reconcile himself to God. Fifth, as some people suggest, is the proof of the personal experience as a matter of mystery.¹³²

It is these five groups of arguments that Badawi, over the next thirty lectures, tries to deconstruct.

Similar to what he did in his polemical dialogues, Badawi 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, Badawi refers to passages such as Matthew 27:28, 29; John 1:1, 7:45, 46; Colossians 1:15-17, 2:9; Philippians 2:6 and 1 Timothy 3:16. To dismiss them, Badawi 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.”¹³³ Badawi 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, Badawi, as in his debates, takes these same texts and offers different interpretations of them. To cite an instance, Badawi states that “speaking with authority” means

¹³² Jamal Badawi. “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Did Jesus Claim Divinity? I. K-11: Approach to Study,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 13:00-14:00.

that he was unique as a prophet, not just a scribe (Matt 27). Another example is that some call Jesus the “image of God,” yet Adam was created in the image of God also. As such, Badawi 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,”¹³⁴ it does not matter (echoing David Hume), for it is not sufficient proof. Even Buddha, 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. Badawi notes a number of New 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 (John 10:30) 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.¹³⁵ Badawi then goes on to discuss other texts where Jesus speaks of oneness with God and his disciples (John 14:9; 17:11, 21; 1 John 4:12). For each one Badawi offers an 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

¹³³ Badawi, “Divinity I,” 16:00-17:00.

¹³⁴ Badawi, “Divinity I,” 20:00.

¹³⁵ Badawi, “Divinity I,” 25:00-27:00; and Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Did Jesus (P) Claim Divinity? II. K-12: Claims Attributed to Jesus (P),” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 9:00-13:00.

miracles, but these miracles are similar to those found with other prophets, as seen in the stories of the Hebrew prophets.¹³⁶

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 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."¹³⁷ 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 their authority comes from surah 4:157-158, which states "that even though there was a conspiracy to kill Jesus, that they did not kill, nor crucify him, but it was made to appear to them as such."¹³⁸ Badawi 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, Basilidans, Nazariities, and whose connected with the *Gospel of Barnabas*. Barnabas was an eyewitness of Jesus; and his gospel indicates that an angel carried Jesus off the cross and that God changed the face of Judas Iscariot to look like Jesus. Therefore, it was Judas who was crucified. Badawi adds the scrolls of Nag

¹³⁶ Jamal Badawi, "Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Miracles and Divinity. K-18: Biblical Parallels," *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986).

¹³⁷ Jamal Badawi, "Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice IX. K-42: Crucifixion – 1," *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1987), 1:00-2:00.

Hammadi, 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'anic view that something had happened to make people believe that it was Jesus who was crucified, although it was not. Badawi then turns to prophecies found in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, which Christians use for supporting the crucifixion. Badawi focuses particularly on the prophecies found in the Psalms. For example he speaks of Psalm 22, "God why have you forsaken me," repeated in the New Testament (Mark 15; Matt 6:26-27; Luke 23; John 14; Heb 2:5). He notes that in Psalm 22, the subject of the psalm is being "scorned and mocked at by others."¹³⁹ 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).¹⁴⁰ Badawi 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.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, Badawi notes that in this particular psalm God saves the distressed person from death. This then cannot be about the crucifixion, Badawi claims.¹⁴² The idea of the salvation from death of a suffering person is a common assertion of Badawi's when referring to

¹³⁸ Badawi, "Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice IX," 4:00.

¹³⁹ Badawi, "Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice IX," 12:00.

¹⁴⁰ Badawi, "Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice IX," 14:00-15:00. Badawi here refers to Denis Neiham's article in John Hicks, *Myth of God Incarnate*.

¹⁴¹ Badawi, "Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice IX," 21:00.

¹⁴² Badawi, "Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice IX," 23:00.

Psalms that may deal with prophecy of the crucifixion. He makes the same point in regards to psalms 9, 20, 21, 109, and 118.¹⁴³

Badawi then makes an assertion that Psalms 38 and 69 refer prophetically to Judas, not Jesus. As such, Badawi concludes by saying that there are six basic elements about the prophecies of Jesus concerning his death.¹⁴⁴ 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 responds 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 the righteous servant. Sixth, God miraculously saves the righteous person by raising him to heaven. Badawi 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,¹⁴⁵ Badawi 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 a divine son or crucifixion.¹⁴⁶ 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

¹⁴³ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice X. K-43: Crucifixion – 2,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1987), 3:00–17:00.

¹⁴⁴ Badawi, “Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice X,” 28:00-29:00.

¹⁴⁵ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XI. K-44: Crucifixion – 3,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1987); and Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XII. K-45: Crucifixion – 4,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1987).

¹⁴⁶ Badawi, “Crucifixion – 3,” 8:00-9:00.

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.¹⁴⁷

As for the New Testament, Badawi states that the event does occur in all four canonized gospels. However, “it is not true from the standpoint of fair, impartial, critical analysis or biblical criticism that the four canonized gospels speak about the crucifixion in a way that is consistent and authentic.”¹⁴⁸ As we have seen above, many Qur’anic 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 Gospels 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 a story that is full of contradictions of basic facts.¹⁴⁹ These contradictions include details of the Last Supper, the arrest of Jesus, the trial of Jesus, and the crucifixion account itself.¹⁵⁰ 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.¹⁵¹ In the story of the resurrection, there is much inconsistency between the different accounts.¹⁵² As

¹⁴⁷ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XIII. K-47: Crucifixion – 6,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax, : Islamic Information Foundation, 1987).

¹⁴⁸ Jamal Badawi, “Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice X. K-43: Crucifixion – 2,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 6:00.

¹⁴⁹ Badawi, “Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XIII,” 6:00-17:00.

¹⁵⁰ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XVI. K-49: Crucifixion – 8,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1987), 1:00-12:00.

¹⁵¹ Badawi, “Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XVI,” 23:00.

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 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 Josephus and his works, *Wars of the Jews* and *Antiquities of the Jews*. Each of these seems to contain later Christian insertions about Jesus.¹⁵³ Therefore, it seems that they too are not reliable for supporting the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, while reinforcing the claim that the presentation of Jesus changed over time.

Badawi asserts that this idea of God Incarnate came from “mythological religions,” like those found in Central Asia, Syria, Greece, Egypt, Mexico and India.¹⁵⁴ Badawi presents the account of Baal from Babylon and Buddha as astonishing parallels to the Jesus as Incarnated God theory. Badawi 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.¹⁵⁵

Badawi’s negative discussions 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, Badawi has focused on this one main affirmation. Built

¹⁵² Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XVIII. K-51: Resurrection – 2,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1987).

¹⁵³ Jamal Badawi “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XX. K-53: Roots of God Incarnate – 1,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1987), 4:00.

¹⁵⁴ Jamal Badawi “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice X. K-54: Roots of God Incarnate – 2,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1987), 2:00-3:00.

¹⁵⁵ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Trinity, Atonement & Blood Sacrifice XXII. K-55: Roots of God Incarnate – 3,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information

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. Badawi insists that the contradictions found in the crucifixion and resurrection accounts are so important, that they cast doubt on the historicity of the events. Furthermore, he argues that there is no proof from the prophecies of 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.

3.3.2 Positive Descriptive Affirmations for Developing an Islamic Representation of Jesus

As noted above, Badawi spends eight episodes of his series on a positive descriptive presentation of the Islamic Jesus. Badawi 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.”¹⁵⁶ He notes that there could be as many of 125,000 prophets, but there are five major prophets, Jesus being one of them. Badawi 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 closest major prophet to Muhammad.¹⁵⁷ Muhammad even went on to say that they are “kin,” or brothers in religion.

Foundation, 1987). Badawi borrows this theory from Michael Goulder’s article in *Myth of God Incarnate*.

¹⁵⁶ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Jesus (P) in Islam I. K-1: Introduction,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 3:00.

¹⁵⁷ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam I,” 5:00.

Badawi mentions that out of the one hundred and fourteen surahs of the Qur'an, eleven relate to Jesus. The story of Jesus in the Qur'an begins in the third surah, in the context of the story of Abraham, for Jesus was a descendant of Abraham according to the Qur'an.¹⁵⁸ 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 a righteous woman, Badawi notes, and was a descendant from Aaron the priestly family of Israel. Mary's mother became pregnant, and desired a son, but birthed a daughter whom she named Mary. Badawi adds that in the hadith collections of Bukhari and Muslim, Muhammad is recorded as saying that Satan pokes each child, except for Mary and Jesus.¹⁵⁹ Mary was later given to her uncle and aunt, likely because her mother and father had died. Badawi 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, Zacharias, prayed for a child despite his old age and John the Baptist was given to him.¹⁶⁰

Badawi 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,

¹⁵⁸ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam I," 14:00.

¹⁵⁹ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam I," 17:00-24:00.

¹⁶⁰ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam I," 24:00.

each man prepared the way for the next prophet, each preached the same message of the Kingdom of God, and each man praised the other for their missions.¹⁶¹

Badawi continues by saying that Mary 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.¹⁶² Badawi notes that in the Qur'an Mary is stated to be "chosen above women," speaking of her unique destiny among her people. Also, he adds, in one hadith, Muhammad is quoted as saying that Mary and his wife Khadija are the best two women in paradise.

After the announcement by Gabriel about the coming of Jesus, Badawi states that Gabriel "breathed" into Mary to cause conception.¹⁶³ This was not a physical way, but in context of the Qur'an (32:9; 38:72) it was a figurative statement of divine breath being given to Jesus. The childbirth 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 (19:23-26). During this ordeal Mary wishes that she was dead and wanted to break her fast. Badawi 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.¹⁶⁴ Badawi adds that the strength with which Mary shook a tree was a miracle because she had just given birth. The dates also fix the birth in the summer, for they do not grow in Palestine in December.¹⁶⁵

After the birth of Jesus, Mary brought the infant Jesus to her people (surah 19). The people praise her and Jesus, noting that she is the sister of Aaron. The

¹⁶¹ This narrative begins in Badawi, "Jesus in Islam I", 25:00; and ends at Jamal Badawi, "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.

¹⁶² Badawi, "Jesus in Islam II," 6:00-7:00.

¹⁶³ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam II," 14:00-18:00.

infant then speaks to the people about his mission, his message, and the blessing that is upon him. Badawi notes that this is not in the canonized gospels of the New Testament. Yet since the Qur'an is revelation from Allah, and since Allah makes no mistakes, this episode may have been omitted or forgotten by the biographers of the prophet. Or perhaps since Jesus speaks here of being a servant of Allah and a prophet, Christian writers would want to suppress that notion.¹⁶⁶

Badawi 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'an says that Jesus' nature is like that of Adam, who is not considered divine. Badawi notes that "one scholar said that Allah created human beings through four miraculous ways."¹⁶⁷ 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'an and the New Testament, as well as discussion about the Trinity.¹⁶⁸ Badawi 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'an 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'an, attributed to many different people. Additionally, the word "spirit" does

¹⁶⁴ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam II," 21:00.

¹⁶⁵ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam II," 22:00.

¹⁶⁶ Jamal Badawi, "Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Jesus (P) in Islam III. K-3: His Nature," *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 3:00-8:00.

not indicate Trinity. The same word has four different meanings in the Qur'an and none refers to a Trinity. Rather, when one finds Jesus and "spirit" in the Qur'an, it refers to Allah breathing his spirit into Jesus.

Moreover, Jesus in the Qur'an is clearly a human being. Jesus is called a "messenger," "prophet" and "servant" of Allah.¹⁶⁹ He is appointed to the people of Israel, and Jesus told them to worship his God and their God. Here in these terms, Badawi states, he is clearly seen as a human creature.

The Qur'an does mention that Jesus was sinless, but again this is not a support for the divinity of Jesus. According to Badawi, the Qur'anic Jesus was holy, sinless, and close to Allah. Yet all the prophets are sinless in Islamic thought, for they are the best of us, Badawi 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 the Qur'an, and Muhammad's mission was to "purify the people."¹⁷⁰

The mission of Jesus and all prophets, according to Badawi, referring to Bukhari, was to their own people. The Qur'an states that Jesus was a messenger to the children of Israel (surah 3:49), that he spoke to his people (surah 61:6), and that he was sent to confirm the Torah (surah 5:49). Badawi adds that the New Testament reaffirms that this was the real mission of Jesus.¹⁷¹ This does not mean that his

¹⁶⁷ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam III," 9:00-15:00. Also note that when Badawi uses the term "one scholar," it normally refers to Ahmed Deedat.

¹⁶⁸ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam III," 15:00-28:00.

¹⁶⁹ Jamal Badawi, "Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Jesus (P) in Islam IV. K-4: His Nature and Mission," *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 3:00-5:00.

¹⁷⁰ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam IV," 7:00-9:00.

¹⁷¹ Badawi 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" could be translated as Israel.

teachings are useless for others, but that his mission was in preparation for the coming of the last universal prophet.¹⁷²

Badawi concludes by saying that the mission of Jesus in the Qur'an is threefold: to invite people to the worship of Allah (surah 61:6); to remove some legal punishments on the people of Israel (surah 3:50); and to bear glad tidings about the last prophet, Muhammad (surah 61:6). However, Badawi adds, the key part of Jesus' mission was to submit to the one God.

Badawi describes the mission of Jesus based on some New Testament documentation. He adds that Jesus was interested in social action and political change. He is seen as expecting a confrontation with oppressive forces (Matt 12:29-30). He said that he came to bring a sword and not peace (Matt 10:34-39), and was violent in his actions in the Temple. He told people to estimate the cost of building a house before doing so, which may explain why he chose not to use physical confrontation (Luke 15:26-33). 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.¹⁷³

According to the Qur'an 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

¹⁷² Badawi, "Jesus in Islam IV," 12:00-15:00.

¹⁷³ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam IV," 20:00-23:00.

of Allah.¹⁷⁴ In a later lecture, Badawi adds that surah 5:111-115 speaks of the miracle of feeding the multitudes.¹⁷⁵

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 books of other prophets and, like the Qur’an, was communicated by Jesus not a biography written about Jesus. Badawi 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.¹⁷⁶

Badawi 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’an and the New Testament, Badawi 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.¹⁷⁷ Of course, Badawi notes that the main difference is the identity of the one who was crucified. The Qur’an 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 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.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam IV,” 23:00-25:00.

¹⁷⁵ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Jesus (P) in Islam VIII. K-8: Second Coming of Jesus (P) – cont.,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 13:00-15:00.

¹⁷⁶ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam IV,” 25:00.

¹⁷⁷ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Jesus (P) in Islam V. K-5: End of Jesus’ Mission,” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 4:00-5:00.

¹⁷⁸ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam V,” 11:00-12:00.

After a series of statements to defend the Islamic view of the crucifixion of Jesus,¹⁷⁹ Badawi turns to the Ascension and Second Coming of Jesus. Badawi states that in the Qur'anic description of the crucifixion event, the scripture says that Allah "raised" Jesus up (3:55; 5:158). Again, Badawi 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 of a person or their good deeds. A second possible interpretation is that the Qur'an speaks about the 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.¹⁸⁰ Badawi 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.¹⁸¹ For example, Muhammad on his "night journey" ascended spiritually and physically to heaven. Also, God saved Muhammad 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.

¹⁷⁹ Badawi adds that the Qur'an 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 Badawi concludes that there is no unanimous opinion.

¹⁸⁰ Jamal Badawi, "Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Jesus (P) in Islam VI. K-6: Ascension and Return of Jesus (P)," *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 10:00-11:00.

¹⁸¹ Badawi, "Jesus in Islam VI," 15:00-20:00.

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,” Badawi maintains.¹⁸² For this means that no one will come after Muhammad 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. Additionally, one has to acknowledge that there is “no conclusive passages to say that Jesus is coming again.”¹⁸³ Rather there are two Qur’anic passages that allude to this, surahs 43:61 and 4:159, but their interpretation is disputed.¹⁸⁴ The strength of this doctrine seems to come from the hadith collections, for Badawi notes that there are seventy hadith that speak of this issue. But Badawi adds that some of these hadith seem authentic, others are disputed.¹⁸⁵

Within these hadith, there is an indication that Jesus’ return will occur close to the “Day of Judgement.” This will be a time of great ungodliness, say some hadith, “led by the false Messiah. And Muslims will be the main force in standing up to the evil of the Antichrist.”¹⁸⁶ 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.¹⁸⁷ This descending is believed to occur at daybreak during “the time when

¹⁸² Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VI,” 21:00.

¹⁸³ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VI,” 27:00.

¹⁸⁴ Jamal Badawi, “Jesus: Beloved Messenger of Allah – Jesus (P) in Islam VII. K-7: The Second Coming of Jesus (P),” *Islamic Teachings* (Halifax: Islamic Information Foundation, 1986), 2:00-14:00.

¹⁸⁵ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VII,” 15:00-16:00. The importance of the distinction, Badawi notes, is that the more authentic hadith are required belief by all Muslims, while the less authentic hadith are not mandatory.

¹⁸⁶ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VII,” 20:00.

¹⁸⁷ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VII,” 21:00. One should note that Badawi does not give references to particular hadith in his descriptive teachings. He also notes the hadith collections of Imam Muslim and Imam Bukhari at this place. The description that Badawi gives from these hadith

Muslims perform the first prayer.”¹⁸⁸ Badawi then offers dramatic detail of the foreseen event. He expresses how Jesus “will descend” from heaven during the morning prayers with the army who will fight the Antichrist. When the warriors see Jesus, “the leader of the prayers will ask Jesus to lead the prayer... Jesus will decline the offer and pray behind them, saying that their leader should be from among them,” showing that he is not coming as a new prophet but as a Muslim.¹⁸⁹ Badawi continues, describing the story from the hadith, saying “that Jesus will join the fight against the Antichrist. When the Antichrist sees Jesus, he will dissolve as salt dissolves in water.”¹⁹⁰ According to some hadith, Badawi adds, this event is to take place thirteen kilometers from Tel Aviv, where there currently stands an airport.

After the defeat of the Antichrist, Jesus will perform the Hajj, and become a just ruler bringing an abundance of wealth.¹⁹¹ This will begin an era of peace, and of the worldwide acceptance of Islam. One hadith states that Jesus will live for forty years, and another says that he marries and has children.¹⁹² After his time on earth, Badawi continues from the hadith, Jesus will die a natural death and will be buried in Medina next to the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.¹⁹³

Badawi’s positive descriptive section contains far more information than Deedat’s descriptive lectures. No doubt the amount of time devoted to the topic aids in this. Yet the attention also seems indicative of the importance of such concepts to Badawi. In this positive descriptive section, Badawi seems to be

include: medium height, reddish and fair complexion, and his hair will flow down from his head as if it were wet. See chapter four for the examination of these particular hadith references.

¹⁸⁸ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VII,” 22:00-23:00.

¹⁸⁹ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VII,” 22:00-24:00.

¹⁹⁰ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VII,” 25:00.

¹⁹¹ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VII,” 26:00-27:00.

¹⁹² Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VIII,” 4:00-5:00.

¹⁹³ Badawi, “Jesus in Islam VIII,” 8:00-9:00.

exhaustive in his presentation. He refers not only to Qur'anic and New Testament material, but also to the hadith collections. Such a discussion gives a grand picture of the Islamic Jesus.

Yet, Badawi's positive descriptive concerns can be narrowed down to four central affirmations. The first affirmation is that *Jesus lived a miraculous life*. In discussing the miraculous life of the mother of Jesus, the breath of Gabriel for his conception, his virgin birth, his miracles, the revelation of the Injil, the salvation from dead, the ascending to Allah, and his Second Coming, Jesus' life from before his conception was set apart for blessing of the miraculous. The second affirmation is that *Jesus is praised in the Qur'an*, being seen by Muslims as one of the five greatest prophets of history. Jesus is referred to as one who is close to Allah and a word and spirit from Allah. The third affirmation is that *Jesus had a distinctive mission*, one of a prophet and messenger of Allah. He was not sent to die and be a sin offering to humanity. Rather, being given the Injil, he was sent to the people of Israel, to invite them to the worship of Allah, free them from certain legal restrictions, and to prophesy about the last prophet, Muhammad. The fourth and final affirmation is that *Jesus was a human, not divine*. Despite the miraculous life, the virgin birth, and the praise from Allah, Jesus was just a human like any other, in essence.

3.3.3 Comparison and Contrast

What are the differences and similarities between Badawi's positive and negative reconstruction of Jesus? His first eight lectures develop positive affirmations using the Qur'an as his foundation. The next fifty-six lectures aim at a negative descriptive group of affirmations, where Badawi develops an extensive

argument against the Christian representations of Jesus as divine. This insistence of the human nature of Jesus is found in the positive affirmations also, but to a much lesser degree.

Overall, one could develop four major affirmations of the Islamic Jesus from Badawi's descriptive lecture materials. The first is that *Jesus is not divine, but a man*. The second is that *Jesus was a great prophet, dear to the heart of God*. Third, *Jesus had a particular mission and message*. Fourth, *Jesus led a miraculous life*.

3.4 Conclusion: Contrast and Comparison

In conclusion, one finds that there is remarkable similarity between the affirmations made by Badawi in polemical and descriptive venues. Badawi's positive polemical affirmations, however, fall into one single debate early in his career. As such, there is one single grand affirmation that Badawi makes in both his polemical and descriptive materials. That key point is that *Jesus was not divine, but a prophet*. This is the capstone of all of Badawi's materials, and in all venues. This is the single point upon which he focuses, and the other common affirmations become secondary.

Nevertheless, to be fair to the whole of Badawi's material, these other broad affirmations should be noted. These then include that, second, *Jesus was a man dear to and honoured by Allah*. He is seen as part of the company of the most righteous who have close communion with God in Paradise. Third, *Jesus had a unique message and mission*. This was a mission that was specifically directed toward the people of Israel and about the people of Israel. This does not mean that what Jesus had to say is not valuable, universally, especially in the matter of his prophecy about the advent of Muhammad. Fourth, *Jesus led a miraculous life* from before conception, to his mission

on earth, to his escape from death, and to his future return to set up the Kingdom of God.

4.0 Contrast and Comparison: Deedat and Badawi

The greatest immediate difference between Deedat and Badawi is their conception of the accounts around the crucifixion. Deedat promotes a swoon theory of Jesus' crucifixion, while Badawi affirms a substitutionary theory, where Judas is crucified in place of Jesus. Whether these two differences are significant in their relationship to Islamic scripture and theology is not a matter for this thesis.

Another important issue of difference is the amount of source material that Badawi refers to in making his affirmations. In his positive affirmations, Badawi refers to both the Qur'an and the hadith, while Deedat seems never to refer to the hadith collections. Badawi will also refer to contemporary scholarship and historical materials to defend his interpretation of the Christian Bible and denial of the Christian representation of Jesus. Deedat refers solely to the Bible in making his case.

Yet despite these two differences, there is great similarity between the affirmations made by Deedat and Badawi. In fact, there are no differences in the final conclusions between the materials of the two intellectuals. Each polemicist makes the same four great affirmations.

The first affirmation is that *Jesus was not divine, but a prophet of God*. Both men affirm that Jesus was, in essence, a human like every other human. The only difference is that he was set apart by God to be a prophet. Moreover, both intellectuals spend most of their time and energy in deconstructing the Christian

divine representations of Jesus. Believing that the Christian representation of Jesus is not fully adequate, they focus on issues that show the contradictions and weaknesses in the Christian understanding of Jesus. Both intellectuals refer to the same passages of the New Testament, remarking that they have been misunderstood. The texts where Jesus seems to be claiming divinity, they claim, are either taken out of context or misinterpreted. The texts where someone seems to be attributing divinity or worship to Jesus are misunderstood, for they were all figurative expressions. The events of Jesus' life – his miracles, ministry, and passion – all do not promote the idea of divinity, for none of them cannot make a person divine.

In spending so much time on disproving the Jesus of Christianity, they devote little time to making positive affirmations about the Islamic representation of Jesus. Even so, there are some positive affirmations that can be deduced by the observer in these materials. These add three more points to their overall view of Jesus.

The second affirmation is that *Jesus was a man close to and highly honoured by God*. Jesus is seen as one who is in the company of the most righteous and dearest to God. Even from before the conception of Jesus, God foretold that Jesus would be one of the greatest men in history.

The third affirmation is that *Jesus had a unique message and mission*. Jesus was set apart from the beginning to speak and minister to the people of Israel. In some ways, he preached the message that every other prophet preached before: the worship of the only one God. He sought to liberate Jews from certain legal, social and political weights that bogged them down. He sought for political revolution, but

failed. Yet, he did speak of another prophet who was coming after him and who was greater than he: Muhammad.¹⁹⁴

The fourth affirmation is that *Jesus lived a miraculous life*. Both Deedat and Badawi affirm that Jesus was born of a virgin, one who was blessed above all women, born miraculously herself. Both polemicists affirm that Jesus spoke as a babe, and performed other great miracles of healing and raising the dead, through the power of God. Both also affirm that Jesus was saved from death by crucifixion, though they both conceive of the events of that salvation differently. Yet, Badawi goes further than Deedat in discussing the ascension of Jesus and his second advent, speaking of the miracles to occur at that time.

Therefore, one finds that in the representation of the Islamic Jesus by Muslim polemicists there is a great deal of unity. For a university student, or adherent of another religious tradition, hearing a presentation of the Islamic Jesus for the first time, there would be four major concepts that they would receive from either polemicist. They would picture a Jesus who was definitely not like the Christian views of Jesus. He was a great and mighty man, a prophet, who came to tell the Jews about Allah like all prophets before him. He performed mighty works to support his mission and eventually became so popular that some plotted his demise. Despite the planning and actions of those who wanted Jesus removed, God miraculously saved Jesus from death. Jesus now is in communion with God, awaiting his return to finalize his mission and message.

Christians see Jesus as the capstone, not as someone who pointed to another. They see him as having died and been raised, removing people's sins. And they do

¹⁹⁴ Traditionally the prophecy of Jesus sending the *Paraclete* in John 16:5-15 has been understood

not see him converting to Islam when he returns to help regenerate the world. Their Jesus is theirs alone, despite the universal claims to the contrary; to see him as a key player in another religious tradition would most certainly be unsettling – despite having appropriated Abraham, Elijah, and Moses for instance, in the same way from Judaism.

by Muslims as a prophecy of Muhammad.

Chapter Three – Western Academic Representations of the Islamic Jesus

1.0 Introduction

In the last chapter, I examined representations of the Islamic Jesuses in the scholarship of Muslim polemicists. What I found there were several major areas of agreement between the two polemicists, Ahmed Deedat and Jamal Badawi. They differed mainly over interpretations of the death of Jesus. This chapter will examine the representations of Jesus found among scholars in the academic study of religion. These are specialists in the study of Islam and/or the study of World Religions.

In following the dramatic theme of the last chapter, picturing a university student ignorant of Islam, who is curious to discover that tradition's view of Jesus, I determined that the search for this chapter should be limited by what a typical student might find in their literature search and found on course reading lists. Naturally, subjective limitations affect the outcome of research. However, I believe that the research sample is broad enough to represent contemporary Western scholarship on Islam.

My first decision was to use only *introductions to the religion of Islam*. This meant excluding a number of academic books and articles dedicated solely to a representation of Jesus in Islam (e.g., Geoffrey Parrinder's *Jesus in the Qur'an*). However, it also meant examining a broad variety of introductions to Islam. I will return to the more specialized articles on Jesus in Islam for comparative purposes in the concluding chapter.

In focusing my research on introductory texts, there were further criteria for limiting the amount of material I examined. The second criterion was the limitation

of this search to local university libraries.¹⁹⁵ This was done in order to reflect a typical student database. However, since the libraries chosen contained an extraordinarily broad collection of books, my selection can, with some justification, be taken to offer a representative sample.

The third criterion when obtaining books from these libraries was language. Most of the books chosen for the research pool were written in English, though a small number of French books were examined as well.¹⁹⁶ Out of the chosen number of French books, one came from a scholar teaching at a Canadian university, while the rest came from scholars at universities in France. This limitation mirrored the library selections, and also accorded with my own language capabilities. An ability to read Arabic and German would have broadened the selection somewhat.

The fourth criterion was the academic qualifications of the authors. All of the books chosen were written or edited by academics who had a recognized terminal degree in religion or theology, and/or held a university or seminary post at the time of writing the book.¹⁹⁷ Sample texts were taken from scholars of various

¹⁹⁵ The search included the Ontario libraries of the University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, University of Guelph, and Wilfrid Laurier University.

¹⁹⁶ French books examined in this research included: Roger Arnadez, *L'Islam* (Paris: Desclée, 1988); Louis Gardet, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1970); Louis Gardet, *L'Islam: Religion et communauté* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer 1967); Jacques Jomier, *Introduction à l'Islam actuel* (Paris: CERF, 1964); Jacques Jomier, *Pour connaître l'Islam* (Paris: CERF, 1988); Jean-René Milot, *L'Islam et les musulmans* (Québec: Fides, 1993).

¹⁹⁷ Books included in the research pool of this chapter included the following: Akbar S. Ahmed, *Islam Today: A Short Introduction to the Muslim World* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999); Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000); James A. Beverley, *Christ & Islam: Understanding the Faith of the Muslims* (Joplin: College Press, 1997); George W. Braswell, *Islam: Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996); E. E. Calverley, *Islam: An Introduction* (Cairo: The American University at Cairo Press, 1958); John B. Christopher, *The Islamic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985 [1956]); Kenneth Cragg, *The House of Islam* (Encino: Dickenson, 1975); Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1994); C. George Fry and James R. King, *Islam: Survey of the Muslim Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent*

religious and philosophical dispositions. This criterion was selected in order to assure that this chapter contained only recognized “scholars” of religion.

The fifth criterion was the quality of the book itself. My particular interest was in finding books that had a date of publication after 1949, and were produced by a recognized publisher. Though all of the books chosen were dated after 1950, some are revised or reprinted editions of earlier publications.

This search for a pool of research came up with thirty-eight introductory books on Islam. Each book chosen fulfilled at least four of the five criteria. Therefore, I am confident that a sufficient representation of contemporary Western introductions to Islam has been examined for this thesis. This should allow for an adequate indication of how contemporary Western academics of Islam represent the Jesus found in Islam.

in Light of the Cross (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism: A Historical Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950 [1949]); Caesar E. Farah, *Islam: Beliefs and Observances* (Woodbury: Barron's, 1970); Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine: Volume 1: Beliefs (Aqida)* (Mountain View: As-Sunna Foundation of America Publications, 1998); H. Lammens, *Islam: Beliefs and Institutions* (London: Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1968 [1929]); Paul Varo Martinson (ed.), *Islam: An Introduction for Christians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1994); Kenneth Morgan (ed.), *Islam – The Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1958); C. R. North, *An Outline of Islam* (London: Epworth, 1952 [1934]); Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979 [1966]); John Renard, *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and Religious Life of Muslims* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Andrew Rippin, *Muslims, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices: Volume 1: The Formative Period* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Andrew Rippin, *Muslims, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices: Volume 2: The Contemporary Period* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Neal Robinson, *Islam: A Concise Introduction* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999); Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981); Abdulkader Tayob, *Islam: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999); A. S. Tritton, *Islam, Belief and Practices* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1966 [1951]); David Waines, *An Introduction to Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); W. Montgomery Watt, *What is Islam?* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1968); John Alden Williams (ed.), *Islam* (New York: George Braziller, 1961); and Ira G. Zepp, *A Muslim Primer: Beginner's Guide to Islam* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000).

2.0 Research Findings: The Islamic Jesus in Academic Publications

In examining these introductory academic books on Islam, one discovery stood out head and shoulders over the others: *there was a remarkable, staggering unity in the material on Jesus presented by the various authors.* This level of unity is uncharacteristic for contemporary research on Jesus.¹⁹⁸ Regardless, in almost every introductory text on Islam that mentions Jesus (not all do), one finds that there is some sort of combination of the following *six* affirmations about the person of Jesus in Islam. These affirmations will be presented in a descending order, ranking from the one having the highest percentage of academics that make such an affirmation, to the one with the lowest percentage.

2.1 Jesus, the Prophet and Messenger

The first affirmation, found in one hundred percent of the introductions to Islam examined for this thesis that mention Jesus, is that the Jesus of Islam is first and foremost a *prophet and messenger*. However, this is the furthest one can push any complete agreement among all academics, for some academics did little in expanding this affirmation. Yet even in the introductions with limited information on Jesus, the base affirmation was that the Islamic Jesus was a prophet and messenger. Even so,

¹⁹⁸ For example, in the study of the historical Jesus, found among the scholarship of early Christianity, there is no such overwhelming unity of representation. Academic representations of the historical Jesus vary drastically, despite examining the same primary source materials. This can be clearly seen in the book edited by William Arnal and Michel Desjardins, *Whose Historical Jesus?* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1997), which contains articles from leading academics on the historical Jesus. Their views vary from a Mediterranean focus on Jesus, to a Galilean focus, to a feminist focus, to a African focus, to a Dead Sea Scroll focus, and to a Christ of Faith focus. This variety of Jesuses is even found among theologians, where representations of Jesus in liberation theology tend to be different from those found in conservative evangelical and Roman Catholic theologies. These fields of research, or even the questions raised in these fields, do not appear in any of these academic Islamic representations of Jesus.

the following expansions of this affirmation are often found in the discussion of the Prophet Jesus.

According to many academics, Islam believes that there have been at least 124,000 prophets, that is to say, an infinite number. This sum of prophets has been divinely sent to give humanity “knowledge of what is lawful and permitted” for religion.¹⁹⁹ This is to say that, “at all times and to all peoples, including the jinn, God has sent messengers and prophets” to preach the message God wanted revealed to humanity.²⁰⁰ So there is no group of peoples in the world who have not, at some time in history, been the recipient of God’s message from a prophet.

Moreover, these academics refer to something unique in the office of a messenger, different from that of the prophet. Jomier states that

L’Islam distingue entre le prophète (nabi) inspiré qui n’a pas reçu de mission particulière et l’Envoyé (rasûl) qui en a une. Tout envoyé est forcément prophète mais la réciproque n’est pas vraie. En outre, un petit nombre de ces envoyés a reçu comme mission de transmettre des livres sacrés.²⁰¹

Denny adds that the Islamic definition of a prophet is one to whom God has spoken, while a messenger “is charged with communicating what God has told him.”²⁰² A further explanation of this division is not found. One cannot determine from these introductions how exactly the offices are thought to differ. One is left wondering what is the function of a prophet, aside from the function of a messenger.

Though the Qur’an lists twenty-seven figures besides Muhammad who have been commissioned or selected by God to spread the message of Islam,²⁰³ Jomier

¹⁹⁹ Calverley, *Islam*, 65.

²⁰⁰ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 58.

²⁰¹ Jomier, *Pour connaître l’Islam*, 54.

²⁰² Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 69.

²⁰³ Rippin, *Muslims – Volume 1*, 17.

goes on to say that in the Qur'an, outside of Muhammad, the key messengers are the ones who are found in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures; these are primarily Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus.²⁰⁴ Rippin notes that these Qur'anic accounts of the prophets are

recounted frequently in stereotyped passages, reflecting the general Islamic message: the prophet is commissioned by God, the prophet confronts his people, the people reject him and the people are, as a result, destroyed and the prophet and any persons faithful to his message are saved by the mercy of God.²⁰⁵

Apparently, the prophets and messengers of Islam all proclaimed a message solely to their respective peoples.²⁰⁶ Only Muhammad had a universal message, whereas other named Qur'anic prophets, like Jesus, were sent to their own people. Jacques Jomier notes that

les Envoyés ont tous été dépêché auprès de peuples particuliers, chacun d'entre eux est allé vers "son" peuple auquel il appartenait et dont il parlait la langue. Ainsi du point de vue musulman, Jésus n'a été envoyé qu'aux Enfants d'Israël. Seul Mohammed, le sceau des Prophètes, a fait exception à cette règle et a reçu une mission universelle.²⁰⁷

This of course does not mean that the message of Jesus is null and void for the Muslim today. Rather, it is just as potent as ever, for it was essentially the same message as Muhammad's.

In the understanding of the Qur'an, all prophets and messengers proclaimed the same message. Tritton explains that "the [Qur'anic] theory of revelation is static; revelation was first given to Adam and later prophets have repeated that message."²⁰⁸ Braswell, affirming that the message of all prophets has been identical, states that

²⁰⁴ Jomier, *Pour connaître l'Islam*, 54.

²⁰⁵ Rippin, *Muslims – Volume 1*, 17.

²⁰⁶ Watt, *What is Islam?*, 83. Watt claims that Muhammad only believed to be one among many prophets. He adds that Moses was seen as the messenger "par excellence" to the Jews, but it is not clear if David, Solomon or Jesus were sent to that same community.

“the basic message is to acknowledge the oneness of God, to obey his laws, and to perform good works in light of the life to come.”²⁰⁹ This message was finally presented, universalized and sealed by Muhammad, to whom Jesus was the immediately preceding messenger.²¹⁰

However, this “sameness” seems to have applied only to essential content, not to a repetition of one message verbatim. Karen Armstrong adds that “all [messengers] had brought their people a divinely inspired scripture; they might express the truths of God’s religion differently, but essentially the message was always the same.”²¹¹ Calverley expands this by saying:

The Muslim belief is that each revelation is divine in its origin and permanently valid in its doctrine. Each contains rules and regulations suitable for its own time and for the people who received it, but later laws and methods of worship and service are improvements on earlier systems of ethics and obedience.²¹²

This differentiation of God’s revelation, as explained in the Qur’an, can be seen through the four main books of revelation. As Jean-René Milot explains,

Les divers moments ou stages de la Révélation sont représentés par plusieurs Livres donnés à certains des plus grands Prophètes. Quatre de ces Livres sont mentionnés, nommément: la Tawrah (la Torah juive) donnée à Moïse, le Zabour (les Psaumes) donné à David, l’Indjil (l’Évangile) donné à Jésus, et le Coran, donné à Mohammed.²¹³

The Injil, or “Gospel,” was the particular book of revelation given to Jesus. Ira Zepp states that the Injil cannot be confused with the Gospels found in the New

²⁰⁷ Jomier, *Pour connaître l’Islam*, 54.

²⁰⁸ Tritton, *Islam*, 49.

²⁰⁹ Braswell, *Islam*, 49.

²¹⁰ Ahmed, *Islam Today*, 22; Farah, *Islam*, 75; and Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 63 (speaking from a hadith in the Bukhari collection).

²¹¹ Armstrong, *Islam*, 8.

²¹² Calverley, *Islam*, 65.

²¹³ Milot, *L’Islam*, 73.

Testament,²¹⁴ although it was conceived much like Muhammad's reception and presentation of the Qur'an to the people of Arabia. The Gospel of Jesus was the divine revelation given by God to Jesus, and one that Jesus communicated to his people verbatim. What is found in the New Testament is a life of Jesus, not the Injil itself.

What can one know about the actual message of the Injil? Zepp again notes that Islamic theology affirms that there may be elements of Jesus' message found in the New Testament gospels, but it is not an exhaustive record of the Injil message. As Cantwell Smith puts it, "the Bible is the record of revelation, not revelation itself."²¹⁵ Geisler and Saleeb state that the content of Jesus' "revelation was basically one of confirmation and revision of the Mosaic covenant (5:46-47)."²¹⁶ Martinson adds that the mission and message of Jesus was to redirect the focus of the people of Israel upon the one God and the one message preached by Moses. A central point was that Jesus and Moses were called to purify the faith from errors that had entered into the true religion.²¹⁷

Academics note that Jesus, considered a prophet, is highly revered in Islam, and that this is a fact unknown to many members of other religious traditions, notably Christianity. Farah states that "Muhammad, the messenger of Islam, believed Jesus and Moses to be the most important bearers of God's one hallowed message to His people as enshrined in the Testaments and the Torah."²¹⁸ Akbar Ahmed adds: "the Prophet of Islam would always display special affection for Jesus.

²¹⁴ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, 171.

²¹⁵ Smith, *On Understanding Islam*, 239.

²¹⁶ Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 63.

²¹⁷ Martinson, *Islam*, 36.

²¹⁸ Farah, *Islam*, 2-3.

It was Bahira, the Christian monk, who predicted he would be a prophet and Warqah, the Christian relative of Khadijah, the Prophet's wife, who encouraged him to believe in his call to prophecy."²¹⁹

Seen as the second greatest prophet next to Muhammad, this high view of Jesus in Islam can be seen by the many unique titles attributed to the Prophet Jesus. Ira Zepp and John Williams list the several titles attributed to Jesus in the Qur'an. These include: "messenger," "messiah," "prophet," "son of Mary," "word of God," "sign," and "servant."²²⁰

Most academics seem to refer in passing only to Qur'anic titles attributed to Jesus, yet some do elaborate on the significance of these titles. For instance, Lammens, who sets out to write "an entirely objective account...of the beliefs and institutions of Islam,"²²¹ takes special note of three particular titles for Jesus. Stating that the Qur'an "has been strongly influenced by the literature of the apocryphal gospels,"²²² the titles "Messiah, the Word and spirit of Allah...seem here to retain an echo of the Logos of St. John."²²³ Lammens explains the title "Word" further by stating:

The sense which [the Qur'an] attached to "Kalima" – Word – remains enigmatic. No doubt [Muhammad] wished simply to convey that the Messiah had acted as an organ and intermediary to divine revelation...Jesus is only the "servant of Allah," a mere mortal like the other prophets.²²⁴

Lammens also makes note of the title "son of Mary." He thinks that Mary was confused with the sister of Moses in the mind of Muhammad. North, for his part,

²¹⁹ Ahmed, *Islam Today*, 22.

²²⁰ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, 169; and Williams, *Islam*, 31.

²²¹ Lammens, *Islam*, ix.

²²² Lammens, *Islam*, 50.

²²³ Lammens, *Islam*, 50.

explains that the title is “perhaps intended as a protest against the usual Christian title ‘Son of God.’”²²⁵

What then can be learned here is that, for Islam, the affirmation that Jesus was a prophet and messenger of God is central. Within that affirmation one can see the high regard that the Qur’an gives to Jesus, with the association of impressive titles and with the giving of a specific book of revelation to his people, the Injil. So high a regard is given to Jesus that one can say that no other prophet, save Muhammad, is regarded with so much esteem.

2.2 Jesus, the Mistaken Deity

Fazlur Rahman goes on to say that, “while the Qur’an had, since a very early date, accepted Jesus as God’s Prophet, it has also rejected, again fairly early in Mecca, the claim of the divinity of Jesus (e.g. sura XIX).”²²⁶ Thus, Rahman speaks of another clear affirmation found in the great majority of introductions researched: that Islam upholds the belief that Jesus is not divine, but fully human as any other human.²²⁷ Citing a Qur’anic surah, “He does not beget and is not begotten” (112:3), Kenneth Cragg, for instance, states that Islam holds to a

formal rejection of the doctrine of Christ as the Son of God. To allow such doctrine is to “associate” a man with God, to deify the human and so lift it to the status of the worshipful, which belongs only to God. It is to commit the supreme sin against the basic assertion of the Muslim shahadah.²²⁸

²²⁴ Lammens, *Islam*, 50.

²²⁵ North, *An Outline of Islam*, 79.

²²⁶ Rahman, *Islam*, 26.

²²⁷ Rippin, *Muslims – Volume 1*, 16; and Rahman, *Islam*, 26.

²²⁸ Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 258.

This affirmation is clearly one that is set up to stand in contradistinction to any Christian affirmation that Jesus possesses more than a complete human nature.

Gibb, who maintains that the doctrine of the divine sonship of Jesus was “emphatically repudiated” by Muhammad, claims that Muhammad rejected the “crassly anthropomorphic form in which it has been presented or presented itself to the Arabs.”²²⁹ Gibb, and a small number of other academics, suggest that Muhammad and the Arabs may have understood the sonship of Jesus as a product of a physical sexual relationship between God and Mary.²³⁰ This would then be a misunderstanding of the historical orthodox Christian idea of the divine sonship of Jesus. Yet there seems to be no attempt to discredit this assertion in any of the other introductions examined.

For a number of academics, the denial of Jesus’ divinity in Islam seems to either be based on, or parallel to, another assertion: that the scriptures, and thus the faith, of the Jews and Christians has been corrupted.²³¹ Waines states “that following the deaths of their founding prophets, Jews and Christians alike allowed their scriptures to become altered, consequently distorting and corrupting the original revelation.”²³² Thus, the monotheism of Jews and Christians “was regarded as a corrupted version of the pure Abrahamic faith to which Islam was the genuine heir.”²³³ Jacques Jomier adds that “le nom de Saint Paul est parfois mis en avant comme celui du corrupteur de la foi,”²³⁴ thereby demonizing Paul’s role in early Christian development. The Qur’an then “serves a correcting function” to the

²²⁹ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 44.

²³⁰ Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 62; North, *An Outline of Islam*, 21.

²³¹ Watt, *What is Islam?*, 88; and Esposito, *Islam*, 21.

²³² Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 27.

²³³ Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 101.

tampered messages of the earlier prophets.²³⁵ From their perspective, the message of Muhammad was the same as the one presented by Moses and Jesus. However, “Jesus’ meaning and message were soon altered by those who made him into a god,” notes Esposito in describing the Muslim perspective.²³⁶

Jesus is therefore not the deity incarnate, nor is he any sort of redeemer, as Ruthven concludes.²³⁷ God, in the Islamic conception, could never become an incarnated being, nor need he do so, particularly given the absence of any doctrine of original sin. Furthermore, readers are urged to appreciate the belief that Jesus could provide salvation or atonement for humanity because his divine nature is an error, and is not necessary.²³⁸ Rather, Jesus is, and needs only to be, a prophet and a messenger given a revelation from God to communicate to his people.

2.3 Jesus, the Miraculous One

Common to the presentation of the Islamic Jesus in academic introductions is a reference to his miraculous beginning and workings. Normally, academics refer to two particular miraculous themes in the life of Jesus in Islam. The first is the miracles surrounding his birth, and the second is the miracles surrounding his mission.

A large minority of the introductions examined clearly announce one particular statement: Jesus was “born of a virgin.” Scholars like Cragg, Beverley, Braswell, Fry and King, Geisler, Gibb, Jomier, Lammens, Martinson, Milot, North,

²³⁴ Jomier, *Pour connaître l’Islam*, 50.

²³⁵ Ripplin, *Muslims – Volume 1*, 22.

²³⁶ Esposito, *Islam*, 21.

²³⁷ Ruthven, *Islam*, 26.

²³⁸ Smith, *On Understanding Islam*, 246; and Williams, *Islam*, 32.

Rippen, Ruthven, Waines, Williams, and Zepp, all take the time to make this specific assertion about the person of Jesus in Islam. Yet, for many of these academics, this is the extent of any discussion of the miraculous birth narrative. Considering the amount of time spent on this issue in the Qur'an, the brief mention in academic works is notable; we will return to this further below.

These academics refer to one particular aspect of the birth narrative, the virginal conception and birth of Jesus. Some, however, also note, in passing, the importance of several other events in the birth narrative. For instance, Ira Zepp, in speaking of the centrality of surah 19 to the narrative of Jesus, notes the events surrounding the birth of John.²³⁹ Mary, a person highly honoured in the Qur'an, is also key to these pre-birth narratives. Milot notes that "Marie (*Maryum*) est le seul nom propre féminin mentionné dans le Coran. Avant même sa naissance [of Jesus], Marie est consacrée à Allah par sa mère enceinte et, enfant, elle vit au Temple (Cor. 3:33-37). C'est là que se manifeste la prédilection d'Allah à son égard (Cor. 3:42)."²⁴⁰ Several academics also acknowledge the miracle of Jesus speaking as an infant, where he confirms his Islamic mission and defends his mother's chastity. These academics often add a note stating the apparent parallels with Christian apocryphal literature of this narrative account.²⁴¹

In discussing the miracles within the mission of Jesus, there seems to be also a similar silence about them. Most of the academics who do refer to these events merely state that the Qur'an speaks of Jesus performing miracles. Some of them,

²³⁹ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, 169-170. These include the birth narrative of the Prophet John, whose parents were given a divine promise of a son despite being old and barren. It speaks of the divine sign of Zachariah's muteness.

²⁴⁰ Milot, *L'Islam*, 67. It is also noted that Mary was commanded by God to say that she was not able to speak, after the birth of Jesus, because she was on a fast (see Robinson, *Islam*, 117).

however, make a brief list of the miracles attributed to Jesus in the Qur'an, including miracles of healing, knowing secrets, restoring sight to the blind, and raising the dead to life.²⁴²

Two particular miracles have been highlighted by a small number of academics. One has been a miracle of food, and another is a miracle of creation. First, Kabbani, recounting a particular Qur'anic story that polemicizes against another Islamic sect, states that the "Prophet Jesus asked Allah to send him a feast so they could celebrate. Explanations of the Quran have shown that the feast consisted of a table of seven loaves of bread and seven fish."²⁴³ Cragg observes that this miracle seems to parallel the account of either the Last Supper or the Feeding of the Five Thousand, found in the New Testament Synoptic Gospels.²⁴⁴ Second is the miracle of the Prophet Jesus fashioning birds out of clay and bringing them to life.²⁴⁵ This story often comes with an asterisk for these academics. Beverley, for instance, states that "this story of the clay bird taking flight is from later Christian lore, not the authentic Gospel material."²⁴⁶

Despite arguments on the origin of particular miracle accounts, what one does find in scholarship is that the Jesus of Islam is a person who lived a miraculous life. Conceived and born under miraculous signs and in a miraculous way, Jesus proceeds to exercise a mission that is punctuated by miracles: healings, revelations, reversal of death, and creation accounts show a person who was empowered by God for great service.

²⁴¹ See North, *Outline of Islam*, 78-79.

²⁴² See Morgan, *Islam*, 181; and Rippin, *Muslims – Volume 1*, 19.

²⁴³ Kabbani, *Encyclopedia*, 20.

²⁴⁴ Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 233.

²⁴⁵ Rippin, *Muslims – Volume 1*, 19; and Ruthven, *Islam*, 47.

2.4 *Jesus, a Death Denied*

One of the most popular doctrines to have occupied the view of the Jesus of Islam in Western Christian thought has been the denial of the crucifixion and death of Jesus. Approximately half of the Introductions examined include some reference to this affirmation. As with the other affirmations, however, the common assertion of this affirmation has been brief. For example, Williams simply notes: Islam believes that “Jesus did not die on the cross.”²⁴⁷ Tritton, for his part, briefly states that “Jesus was not crucified.”²⁴⁸ Many scholars simply refer to or quote the Qur’an, surah 4:157-158, which states that “they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them.”²⁴⁹ Zepp claims that this “is an explicit denial of Jesus’ crucifixion in the Quran.”²⁵⁰

It is in the discussion of the final events of Jesus’ life, however, where the most variance between academics is found concerning Jesus’ death. In examining these introductions, one finds an exposition on three particular Islamic affirmations about Jesus’ last days. The first and foremost is on the apparent difference of interpretation over the Qur’anic statement “but so it was made to appear to them” (surah 4:157). Academics explain that the traditionally Islamic understanding of this passage has been that someone else was made to look like Jesus and was crucified in his place.²⁵¹ Historically, Muslims have cited one of two likely candidates to replace Jesus on the cross. These are Judas Iscariot and Simon the Cyrene (the one who

²⁴⁶ Beverley, *Christ & Islam*, 61.

²⁴⁷ Williams, *Islam*, 32.

²⁴⁸ Tritton, *Islam*, 50.

²⁴⁹ Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 224.

²⁵⁰ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, 181.

²⁵¹ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 45, 59.

carried Jesus' cross).²⁵² Geisler and Saleeb add that Judas has been popularized among contemporary Muslims today because of the discovery of the *Gospel of Barnabas*.²⁵³

A handful of academics comment that Muslims have not all held the belief in a substitution of Jesus on the cross. Braswell asserts that “another view is that Jesus fainted on the cross, was removed, [and] recovered.”²⁵⁴ Cragg, Robinson, and Milot inform readers that this particular swoon view comes from the Ahmadiyyah Movement.²⁵⁵ Milot maintains: “Ils [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad] professent également un culte pour Jésus qui, selon eux, n'aurait pas été crucifié.”²⁵⁶ Robinson further explains that “Mirza Ghulam Ahmad admitted that Jesus had died but he was taken down off the cross alive.”²⁵⁷ Therefore, the publications point to a difference in Islam over how to interpret the surahs speaking about the apparent crucifixion of Jesus. There is no discussion among academics on the merits of either position over the other, nor whether there is any debate over these interpretations among Muslims themselves.

Another difference of interpretation can be seen in describing the final events of Jesus. It is grounded in the Qur'anic statement, “nay, God raised him [Jesus] up unto Himself” (surah 4:158). Robinson says that in Ahmadiyyah interpretation, “[Jesus] found his way to Kashmir, where he died and was buried.”²⁵⁸

²⁵² Beverley, *Christ & Islam*, 59-60.

²⁵³ Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 65. Braswell and Cragg also affirm that Judas is seen as the common choice of Muslims for the question of who was the substitute for Jesus. Cragg states that “another suffered the full brunt of a hostility that was intended for him” (*The Call of the Minaret*, 266).

²⁵⁴ Braswell, *Islam*, 251.

²⁵⁵ Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 223; and Robinson, *Islam*, 173.

²⁵⁶ Milot, *L'Islam*, 159.

²⁵⁷ Robinson, *Islam*, 173.

²⁵⁸ Robinson, *Islam*, 173.

Cragg expands Robinson's statement on the Ahmadiyyah interpretation by saying that "Jesus was so nailed and later taken down, still living, and laid in a cold tomb. Thus they did not succeed in killing him by crucifixion. He revived in the tomb, escaped, and later journeyed east, to die at a great age in Kashmir."²⁵⁹

Most academics, however, affirm that "it is commonly held by Muslims that Jesus did not die on the cross, but was taken up to heaven by God before his death."²⁶⁰ Waines phrases it differently by saying that Jesus "rather had been elevated by Allah into the realm of his special grace."²⁶¹ So there seems to be another difference concerning whether Jesus was "translated," using Gibb's language, around the time of the crucifixion, and concerning the existence of a relatively large amount of time between surah 4:157 and 158, that would allow Jesus to travel east and die after preaching to others. Again there is no discussion of this difference in interpretation among academics; rather, there is merely an acknowledgement of its existence.

There is also some speculation on why the Qur'an even contains this narrative on Jesus, a narrative that seems intentionally to counter the Christian representations of the crucifixion of Jesus. Montgomery Watt gives the most common academic answer for the denial of Jesus' crucifixion in the Qur'an, saying that it was "primarily a denial that the Jews were victorious over Jesus; and the underlying thought is that it is impossible that God should allow a prophet sent by him to fail."²⁶² North, who claims that Muhammad is following a doctrine from heretical Christian sects, insists that "the cause of God and his Apostle must

²⁵⁹ Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 224.

²⁶⁰ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, 181.

²⁶¹ Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 55.

therefore be victorious in the sight of all.”²⁶³ Beverley adds that “Muslims believe that God would never let Jesus die the death of a common criminal.”²⁶⁴ Thus a handful of academics seem to think that Muhammad, being the author of the Qur’an (a notion, I might add, that is anathema to Muslims themselves), intentionally altered the crucifixion narrative in order to better suit “his sense of the fitness of things.”²⁶⁵

This most common theological explanation for the presence of this narrative in the Qur’an has not been debated by the other academics. Still, two other explanations have been given by academics. Gibb asserts that the Qur’an was simply correcting a Jewish “fable” or “calumny,” thus speaking against the Jewish and Christian groups surrounding him.²⁶⁶ Zepp believes that this narrative is best understood as a polemic against the Jews who were slandering Mary, the mother of Jesus, as unchaste.²⁶⁷

Nevertheless, what is agreed upon is that the Qur’an affirms that there was some animosity between “the Jews” and Jesus. This led to a Jewish plot to have Jesus crucified, which was somehow divinely foiled. Therefore the death of Jesus did not occur at the hands of his enemies, but rather occurred, or will occur, at another point in time through natural processes.

²⁶² Watt, *What is Islam?* 219.

²⁶³ North, *An Outline of Islam*, 38. Andrew Rippin notes that this crucifixion narrative represents the reflection of a continued discussion of the nature of Jesus, as human or divine. “The Qur’an would seem to reflect a strange amalgam,” claims Rippin. “On the one hand supporting the argument for the truly divine nature of Jesus and thus denying the reality of his death, while on the other hand denying that Jesus was anything other than a human being,” (*Muslims – Volume 1*, 19).

²⁶⁴ Beverley, *Christ & Islam*, 59.

²⁶⁵ North, *An Outline of Islam*, 38.

²⁶⁶ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 45, 59.

²⁶⁷ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, 171.

2.5 *Jesus, the Returning Victor*

The narrative of the life of Jesus does not end at the apparent death or transfiguration for Islam, according to academics. Quoting a theological creed by Imam Tahawi, Kabbani asserts that “[Muslims] believe in the signs of the Hour such as the appearance of the Antichrist (dajjal) and the descent of Jesus son of Mary.”²⁶⁸ Here we find a statement of an eschatological belief, where at the end of this current historical timeline Jesus will return to earth during the time of the Antichrist or al-Dajjal advent.

Academics also note that Islamic theological tradition, coming from Sufi, Shi’ia, and/or Sunni influence,²⁶⁹ includes the involvement of the Mahdi. Academics do not explain the Mahdi’s nature, or his function in the end time. One academic, though, states that the Mahdi is the return of the Twelfth Imam in Shi’ia Islamic history.²⁷⁰ Additionally Gibb adds that the Mahdi is the “‘rightly-guided one’ who will affect the final victory of Islam by means of divine catastrophe.”²⁷¹

It is unclear how exactly Jesus and the Mahdi will relate to each other during this eschatological period. Apparently Islamic tradition records that there will be particular events and actions that the Mahdi and/or Jesus will perform during this time. Tritton gathers it best by saying that “Jesus and the Mahdi will come down to earth; Jesus will help the Mahdi to kill the Dajjal, kill all swine, and re-establish the Muslim faith; Jesus will pray behind the Mahdi, who will rule for seven, eight, or nine

²⁶⁸ Kabbani, *Encyclopedia*, 61.

²⁶⁹ Scholars do not agree on the origin of this doctrine. The majority of scholars affirm that this eschatological view is influenced by Sufi doctrine (see Lammens, Gibb, and Rahman). Others claim that the doctrine has direct influence from Shi’ia Islam (see Christopher), or Sunni tradition (see Braswell).

²⁷⁰ Christopher, *The Islamic Tradition*, 76.

²⁷¹ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 130.

years of peace and prosperity when gold will be as dust on the ground.”²⁷² Yet North attributes these and other actions, like the destroying of churches and Christians who do not accept Islam, solely to Jesus.²⁷³

After the establishment of an Islamic utopia, academics are vague on what will become of Jesus. Geisler and Saleeb, and Fry and King record that Jesus will “live for forty years and then will be buried in the city of Medina beside the prophet Muhammad.”²⁷⁴ Others record that Jesus will have a place in the Day of Judgement, occurring sometime around the establishment of the Islamic utopia.²⁷⁵ Fry and King add that Jesus will have a direct hand in helping Muhammad with the judgement of humanity,²⁷⁶ while Cragg and Braswell speak of a different event. They speak of how, on the Day of Judgment, a person will request a prophet to intercede for them before God. However, each prophet will speak of his inadequacy of interceding before God, and will pass the request to the next prophet in line. Finally, the request will go to Jesus, who will also state his inadequacy, passing the request to Muhammad. Muhammad will then be the only person who is able and permitted to intercede for the human being before God.²⁷⁷

Therefore, the academic narratives of the Islamic Jesus include an eschatological aspect where he will play a direct and major role in the plans of God for the culmination of history. Paralleled to the Christian position is the belief that Jesus will return in a Second Advent, to destroy evil and overcome an Antichrist

²⁷² Tritton, *Islam*, 51.

²⁷³ North, *An Outline of Islam*, 79.

²⁷⁴ Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 65-66.

²⁷⁵ Of the scholars that do speak of this event, Calverley, Cragg, Braswell, and Fry and King, only Calverley claims that the events of Jesus and the Dajjal will occur after the Day of Judgement (*Islam*, 66).

²⁷⁶ Fry and King, *Islam*, 60.

²⁷⁷ Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 103; and Braswell, *Islam*, 54.

figure. Beyond that, we are told, Islam seems to perceive Jesus' role in the eschaton as fighting to bring the universal rule of Islam to the world, setting up a place of theocratic rule and prosperity for Muslims.

2.6 *Jesus, the Announcer of the Seal of Prophets*

Found in only six of the introductions examined for this chapter is a particular affirmation about the prophetic role of Jesus. It is based on surah 61:6, which states:

And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the apostle of God (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of an Apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad."

These academics claim that the Islamic Jesus prophesied the coming of Muhammad.²⁷⁸ Gibb states: "it is declared that the coming of Muhammad was foretold by Jesus under the name Ahmad, and that his name is specifically recorded in the Tawrah and Injil as the 'Prophet of the Gentiles' (*an-nabi al-ummi*, interpreted by later orthodoxy as 'the unlettered Prophet')."²⁷⁹

Beverley and Waines note that this name "Ahmad" is paralleled to the name "paraclete," found in the New Testament Gospels.²⁸⁰ Beverley further adds that "Muslims contend that the Paraclete mentioned by Jesus in the Gospel of John is not the Holy Spirit, it is the prediction of the coming of Muhammad."²⁸¹ This statement is not elaborated in any academic book; again it is simply stated. Therefore, one is not able to determine anything further about it.

²⁷⁸ See Lammens, *Islam*, 51; Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 56; North, *An Outline of Islam*, 78; and Morgan, *Islam*, 181.

²⁷⁹ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 60.

²⁸⁰ Beverley, *Christ & Islam*, 61; and Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 58.

2.7 Conclusion

In surveying an extensive number of introductions to Islam, a composite representation of the person of Jesus is uncovered. As mentioned above, what is remarkable about the finding of this research is the unity of the representation. We read that Jesus is a man who is highly respected and venerated in Islam. This is seen in the Qur'an placing grand titles upon him – none of which, however, contained more regard than the title of prophet and messenger. Jesus is depicted in the annals of the Qur'an as a man who was honoured by God to present to his people a book of revelation. That message contained the same elements that were found in other books and revelations previously given. As the immediate precursor to the Qur'an, however, the Injil is unique in its attempt to restore the true religion of Abraham back to Israel.

Though Jesus seems to be esteemed more than any other prophet, save Muhammad, Islam and the Qur'an are clear in their claim that Jesus was no more divine than any other human. This affirmation clearly counters the Christian doctrine of the deity of Jesus, and the difference between the Islamic and Christian representations is explained by claiming that Christians corrupted the original, purer, understanding of Jesus. Despite any denial of a divine nature for Jesus, however, Islam, we are told, asserts that Jesus lived a miraculous life, right from the announcement of his birth by angels, to the virginal conception and birth, and to the miracles he performed during his mission to Israel. Jesus seemed to have lived a more miraculously eventful life than had any other Islamic prophet.

²⁸¹ Beverley, *Christ & Islam*, 62.

Included in this miraculous existence is the salvation of Jesus from death on the cross. Though the events of this salvation have been interpreted differently, all Muslims seem to understand that somehow God miraculously prevented Jesus from dying at the hands of his enemies. It is clear that the Jesus of Islam depended on, and submitted solely to, God. His dependence on God is seen in areas like salvation, miracles, and revelation. His submission to God can be seen in his prophecy of the coming of one who is greater than he was and in his Second Coming where he will lead the way for the final vindication of Islam over its enemies.

The Islamic Jesus, therefore, through the scholarly lenses, is a powerful, yet submissive person. He has accomplished, and will accomplish great things for the glory of the faith. Yet it is all on behalf of God and through the power of God that he is able to do anything. Though he seemed to be honoured above all other prophets, he is able clearly to admit that Muhammad is his successor and superior, the Seal of the Prophets.

3.0 Differences Between Scholars' Representations of the Islamic Jesus

As just mentioned, there is a considerable degree of uniformity in the representation of the Islamic Jesus among academics. One other thing needs to be kept in mind, though: the six affirmations outlined above were presented in a descending order of the number of academics who referred to that particular affirmation, beginning with the affirmation of Jesus as a prophet and messenger and ending with Jesus' prediction of the advent of Muhammad. In ordering the material this way, it became clear that there were differences in emphasis between academics in their presentations on the Islamic Jesus. Some academics mentioned all six

affirmations about the person of Jesus in Islam, while others only stated one or two. Therefore, the following section will examine the actual references to the person of Jesus by academics, noting some important issues of editing and presentation, and attempting to draw some conclusions from such findings. Since introductions themselves varied in length, the criterion of pages length offers only a rough idea of proportionality.

3.1 Placement, Quantity and Quality of Statements about Jesus in Texts

When surveying the selected introductions for this chapter, one matter of presentation stands out from the others. This is the amount of space dedicated to a discussion of the person of Jesus found in a particular introduction. Of course the nature of an introduction to Islam is to explain the beliefs, practices, and rituals of that particular religious system. Yet it is interesting still to note how each academic in this context placed varying amounts of emphasis on the person of Jesus. Based on this insight, therefore, I separated the introductions into three groups, each representing a particular amount of written material given about the person of Jesus. The first group, a low level, includes those introductions that contained less than two pages of written material.²⁸² The second group, a moderate level, includes written material that was found to be between the two and four page mark.²⁸³ Finally, the

²⁸² Scholars in this group include: Ahmad, Armstrong, Christopher, Denny, Esposito, Kabbani, Rahman, Renard, Robinson, Ruthven, Smith, Tritton, Watt, and Williams.

²⁸³ Scholars in this group include: Calverley, Farah, Fry & King, Gibb, Lammens, Milot, Morgan, North, North, and Waines.

third group, a high level, includes those introductions in which the material exceeded five or more pages.²⁸⁴

3.1.1 *Group One: Low Level of Content*

Within the first group of scholars, those containing less than two pages of material, some interesting characteristics can be noted. For one, there are scholars who have no content about the person of Jesus at all. For instance, Abdulkader Tayob's introduction, published in 1999 for Oneworld, contains approximately one hundred and sixty pages of material (excluding notes and preface) about Islam and has no mention of Jesus. Tayob claims that although there are many great introductions to Islam, there are none that give students a "direct access to the material and tangible aspects of the religion of Islam."²⁸⁵ Tayob, using the "key structures of the mosque" to explore the practices and important contemporary issues of Islam,²⁸⁶ is focused more on praxis and ethical issues than matters of history and doctrine. This may explain why there is an absence of discussion on Jesus.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith's introduction also contains no reference to Jesus in the index. The book itself has only a few references to Jesus. Attempting to seek a better understanding of Islam, because "misunderstanding is so easy and has been so common, of any religious position by outsiders,"²⁸⁷ Smith spends more time on the history of Islam than on doctrine and praxis. Even in his chapter on Muslim-Christian Relations, outside of statements on the Islamic rejection of the Trinity and

²⁸⁴ Scholars in this group include: Beverley, Braswell, Cragg, Garget, Geisler and Saleeb, Jomier, Rippin, Martinson, and Zepp.

²⁸⁵ Tayob, *Islam*, ix.

²⁸⁶ Tayob, *Islam*, x.

²⁸⁷ Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam*, ix.

Christianity's perception of Jesus being paralleled to the Islamic perception of the Qur'an, nothing is said about the person of Jesus in Islam.

Frederick Denny, in his well-known introduction, contains no content on the person on the Islamic Jesus.²⁸⁸ The only reference to Jesus is found in his chapters on religious traditions before the advent of Islam. Here, in his third chapter, Denny spends three pages discussing the representation of the person of Jesus in Christianity.²⁸⁹ In these pages Denny speaks of Jesus' mission, message, and gospel as perceived by Christians, and has no reference to differing views within Islam.

Outside of the academics who note nothing about Jesus, many of the introductions in this group do have some material on the person of Jesus in Islam. What is interesting about these brief references to Jesus is the location of these references. Any discussion of Jesus normally finds itself in a discussion on Islamic doctrine of prophets and messengers. For example, Karen Armstrong only has one statement on the Islamic Jesus in her introduction of one hundred and eighty-eight pages. This reference, very early in her text, is to show how Islam affirms that there is an indefinite number of prophets, all of whom expressed the same truth of God, though differently.²⁹⁰

John Renard in his introduction sought to include more source material than only texts, and wanted to describe more than one particular group in Islam.²⁹¹ Therefore, one finds two of the three references to Jesus dealing with folk religion and art. However, the single most extensive statement on Jesus is found early in his

²⁸⁸ Denny does not have any reference to Jesus in Islam in his index. However, the person of Jesus is named in sections of Denny's text that speak about the lists of prophets found in Islam.

²⁸⁹ Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 33-35.

²⁹⁰ Armstrong, *Islam*, 8.

²⁹¹ Renard, *Seven Doors to Islam*, xiii-xiv.

text, in his discussion on prophets and messengers. Here he mentions the several revelations of the scriptures to a long chain of prophets, including the revelation of the Injil to Jesus.²⁹²

In Fazlur Rahman's text, another classic in the field, Rahman makes a simple note about how Islam sees Jesus as a prophet, not as divine, and how the Qur'an spoke about the persecution and opposition met by all prophets, including Jesus.²⁹³ The focus of his representation is solely on Jesus as a prophet, ignoring any other affirmation, except the Sufi doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus in a chapter on Sufism.²⁹⁴

Therefore, within this first group one can see that the references to Jesus are brief, contain little substance and are isolated in discussion on the Islamic doctrine of prophets. These then do not provide a breadth of information on Jesus. Normally, the only mention of Jesus is found in a list of other prophets, like Adam, Noah, and Moses. Therefore, there is only minimal highlighting of the Islamic representation of these prophets.

3.1.2 *Group Two: Moderate Level of Content*

The second grouping of scholars consists of those introductions that contain between two and four written pages of material on the person of Jesus. Within these texts there are either scholars who have a number of isolated references to Jesus, or those who have a couple of pages dedicated solely to a discussion of Jesus in Islam. For instance, Caesar Farah's introduction contains more than fifteen references to

²⁹² Renard, *Seven Doors to Islam*, 2.

²⁹³ Rahman, *Islam*, 26, 16.

²⁹⁴ Rahman, *Islam*, 245.

Jesus,²⁹⁵ while Lammens has three pages dedicated to “the Christology of the Qoran” in his discussion on the prophets of Islam.²⁹⁶

The context of these references to Jesus is varied, as one would expect when there is more content written. For example, David Waines’ introduction, written “to present the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad as Muslims might recognize them, rather than as others have described them,”²⁹⁷ invokes statements on Jesus in several places. For instance, Jesus first comes up in reference to the central doctrine of all the Islamic scriptures, like the Qur’an and the Injil, being the oneness of God.²⁹⁸ After discussing the Islamic concept of prophethood, where he includes Jesus, the next reference to Jesus is found in a discussion on early polemics among Christians and Muslims.²⁹⁹ Another reference is then found in a discussion on the existence of Christians and Jews (*dhimmis*) under Islamic occupation. Here Waines states that “the dhimmis’ monotheism was regarded as a corrupted version of the pure Abrahamic faith to which Islam was the genuine heir. The prophets Moses and Jesus had communicated the same message from the Lord to their peoples.”³⁰⁰

Jean-René Milot is another case in point. Jesus here comes up first in a discussion of angels, who are described as the agents of the divine revelation of scripture from God.³⁰¹ Another reference is found in the discussion of Mary and the birth narrative of Jesus. Jesus also appears again in discussions of the doctrine of

²⁹⁵ Farah, *Islam*, 2, 3, 4, 27, 37, 39, 62, 69-70, 75, 85-86, 93, 104, 150, 246, and 248.

²⁹⁶ Lammens, *Islam*, 50-52.

²⁹⁷ Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 3.

²⁹⁸ Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 25.

²⁹⁹ Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 54-55. In this section, Waines discusses John of Damascus’ polemic. John apparently claimed that Jesus’ divinity could be proved in the Qur’an, an affirmation that puzzled Muslims at the time.

³⁰⁰ Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, 101.

³⁰¹ Milot, *L’Islam*, 59-60.

revealed scriptures in Islam, and with reference to the Ahmadiyyah doctrine of Jesus' crucifixion.

Calverley, Lammens and North write their material on Jesus in large sections within the context of a discussion on the Islamic doctrine of prophets,³⁰² while Fry and King, for their part, gather their material on Jesus in two large sections found in chapters on the Prophet Muhammad and the theological components of his message.³⁰³ This then implies that there is no particular theme or editorial format that runs through the presentation context for the medium-level of content about Jesus.

3.1.3 *Group Three: High Level of Content*

In the third grouping of scholars, those who have content on Jesus exceeding four pages, one often finds that many of the six main affirmations outlined above are recorded in their pages. Within this group, all scholars have a large number of references to Jesus in their indices, with each reference often also containing a large amount of material on the representation of Jesus in Islam.

What is particularly interesting is where these discussions on the person of Jesus arise within the text. For example, Andrew Rippin's material on Jesus falls early in a discussion on the themes found in the Qur'an, in a context of the Qur'anic statements on prophets.³⁰⁴ In Gibb, on the other hand, the material on Jesus falls into two main sections: one in the context of his discussion on the Qur'an, and the other in the following chapter on Doctrine and Ritual in the Qur'an. The context of

³⁰² Calverley, *Islam*, 64-66; Lammens, *Islam*, 50-52; and North, *An Outline of Islam*, 75-80.

³⁰³ Fry and King, *Islam*, 47-48, and 59-61.

³⁰⁴ Rippin, *Muslims – Volume 1*, 15-19.

the first reference is a discussion on Muhammad's reaction to the Jews in Medina.³⁰⁵ The second reference is found in a discussion of the Islamic doctrine of monotheism and the revelation of scriptures to the great apostles.³⁰⁶

Looking at Ira Zepp and Kenneth Cragg, we see that their references to Jesus fall in distinctive sections that address dialogue between Muslims and Christians. The bulk of Cragg's quite exhaustive discussion on the Islamic Jesus falls in his final section on "The Minaret and the Christian." Believing that both Christians and Muslims do not really understand the other's views, this chapter seeks to interpret Islam for Christians and vice versa.³⁰⁷

Zepp, a self-proclaimed comparative religionist who is attempting to answer questions that have arisen about Islam in his teaching at universities and churches,³⁰⁸ also saves his discussion until the final chapter of his book, where he addresses dialogue.³⁰⁹ Here, at the beginning of the chapter, he gives an extensive discussion of Jesus. The points include affirming his high honour and titles, being born of a virgin, the infancy narrative, his revelation of the Gospel and its message, his death, and his prophetic status.

Geisler and Beverley's discussions on the Islamic Jesus are found in a third type of context. Geisler's text is divided into two major sections: the first is an

³⁰⁵ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 44-45. Here Gibb states that Muhammad reacted against the Jewish assertion that Jesus was not the Messiah. However, this polemic against the Jewish rejection of Jesus also went to the Christian affirmation of Jesus being divine.

³⁰⁶ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 55-60.

³⁰⁷ Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 243-302.

³⁰⁸ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, xvii-xxiii. Zepp gives a threefold reasoning for writing his text. One concerns the questions he was asked during teaching on Islam at university and in churches. Two is the attempt to help correct distortions and stereotypes of Islam in the West. Three is the fact that Islam is growing extremely fast in America, and Muslims are now "our neighbors."

³⁰⁹ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, 169-179, 181-182, 185, 193, and 196.

explanation of Islam, the second a Christian refutation of Islam.³¹⁰ References to Jesus come in both parts. The first discussion is found in the context of an elucidation of the Islamic view of prophets. Here, there is an extensive discussion of the Islamic Jesus.³¹¹ This includes discussions on his birth, a denial of divinity, the titles attributed to him, his miraculous life, mission, death, and return. The second part of the book contains very much the same material on Jesus, only at this point the goal is to defend the Christian doctrines of crucifixion, divine nature, Christocentric salvation, and Trinity.³¹²

Beverley designed his text to be a study guide for evangelical Christians who need to have a proper understanding of Islam in order to “witness to Muslims.”³¹³ Beverley goes on to outline ten teachings about the Qur’anic Jesus.³¹⁴ He notes five of the six affirmations outlined above, and includes statements on Jesus being “a model of virtue and wisdom” for Muslims, adding that the disciples of Jesus were called Muslims.³¹⁵ He then proceeds to refute Muslim understandings of Jesus, defending the Christian representation in the end of the section and the following chapter.

Those scholars who comprise this last group quantitatively contain the most material on the Islamic representation of Jesus. No doubt, their examinations of the material are helpful to anyone seeking to understand the person of Jesus in Islam. What is most interesting is the context in which these discussions occur. This observation becomes intriguing when compared to that of the other three groups.

³¹⁰ Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 9.

³¹¹ Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 61-66.

³¹² Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, 227-286.

³¹³ Beverley, *Christ & Islam*, 7.

³¹⁴ Beverley, *Christ & Islam*, 58-62.

3.1.4 *Summary*

What can explain the vast differences between scholars like Armstrong and Cragg and Tayob and Beverley, in the amount of material on Jesus they present? Why does one scholar see no need to say anything about the Prophet Jesus, while another spends almost a tenth of their book on Jesus? Outside of speaking to each scholar individually, the best way to base any particular academic's rationale is to examine the perspectives and presumptions they acknowledge in their texts. This then leads me to think that such differences *may* be ones of particular religious values and/or the historical context of the writing.

What one can note for sure is that certain scholars write their texts from a clear faith perspective. Scholars like Beverley and Geisler have obvious faith assumptions based in evangelical Protestant Christianity, and seek for their texts to be used in evangelizing Muslims. Beverley seems to use his discussion on the Islamic Jesus as a way for Christians to have a springboard to witness to Muslims. If evangelical Christians learn the Islamic representation of Jesus, they then can move a dialogue with a Muslim towards discussing a Christian representation and gospel presentation.

There are other scholars who have evangelical faith commitments, such as Braswell, and Fry and King, yet desire that their writings be used for different reasons.³¹⁶ These reasons include a desire to bring proper understanding of Islam to American Christians, because it is a growing religion within the United States.

³¹⁵ Beverley, *Christ & Islam*, 59.

³¹⁶ Both Braswell and Fry and King have their books published by an evangelical Christian publisher. Braswell notes that he "strives for objectivity" in his presentation of Islam, despite being influenced by a Western Protestant Christian ethos, which includes being a professor at a

Then there is a third group of Christian scholars, notably Cragg and Zepp, who seek a foundation of dialogue and understanding between Christians and Muslims. Half of Cragg's text is dedicated to Muslim-Christian relations. Zepp notes that "increasingly Muslims are our neighbours," so he seeks to present Islam to American Christians by comparing the best of the two religions, as opposed to the worst of Islam with the best of Christianity as has been done before.³¹⁷

It is interesting to note that these six academics are the ones contributing the most information on the person of Jesus in Islam. One could reason that the veneration of Jesus in Christianity leads a Christian academic to focus on the different, yet parallel, figure in Islam. However, one cannot say whether or not the coin can be flipped. Can one say that, because of a faith commitment to Islam, a scholar's focus on Jesus is minimized? It is reasonable to see how there may be little interest or need to elaborate on the person of Jesus for a Muslim insider – particularly one not engaged in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Other issues of the faith may seem more important and need to be expressed in an introduction than a discourse about one prophet.

Only one academic, though, makes a clear faith commitment to Islam. Kabbani claims that he is trying to refute another Islamic sect within his religious tradition.³¹⁸ Any further attempt to determine faith commitment may be mere conjecture. For instance, Akbar Ahmed states in his book that he hopes "to convey

Southern Baptist Seminary (*Islam*, xi). Fry and King dedicate their text to the "way of understanding and reconciliation" with the Islamic world (*Islam*, xi).

³¹⁷ Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, xxii.

³¹⁸ Kabbani, *Encyclopedia*, 2. Here Kabbani states that the reason for his work is to be a polemic against the Salafi movement in Islam.

what it feels like to be a Muslim today,”³¹⁹ so may be implying an Islamic faith commitment. A scholar’s faith stance, therefore, is rarely useful in comparative analysis. Still, it remains an important criterion for consideration in further studies of this nature.³²⁰

Another reason for differences between these groups of scholars could be one of the historical setting with which they were writing. Most of the scholars writing in the first and third groups have written after 1979, with a large percentage of those written in the 1990s.³²¹ The dates for those in the second, moderate-use group, contain mostly scholars who had written before 1979, many in the 1950s.³²²

One is tempted to suggest that the forces of globalization that have swept the world have resulted in what Wilfred Cantwell Smith (*Meaning and End of Religion*) called a situation where scholars who write about Islam need to do so in a context where they expect to be read by Muslim and non-Muslims alike, and in a context where different faith groups are in dialogue with one another. To write about Islam means paying considerable attention to Jesus, since Christians and Muslims will want to know how “their” Jesus resembles the “Muslim” Jesus, so that they can better understand the other. To write about Islam in this context, on the other hand, might also mean paying less attention to Jesus, since being faithful to a Muslim representation of itself will mean devoting more time to other issues. Jesus, after all, is not of prime concern to a Muslim, say, living in an Indonesian village today.

³¹⁹ Ahmed, *Islam Today*, xi.

³²⁰ Certainly, Cantwell Smith, Frederick Denny, and Montgomery Watt’s relationships to Islam as seen in other publications can cause them to be labeled as sympathetic outsiders.

³²¹ The exceptions in the first group include Williams (1961), Tritton (1966), Watt (1968), and Christopher (1972). The exception for the third group includes only Gibb (1950).

³²² The exceptions for the second group include Milot (1993) and Waines (1995).

The dichotomy we find, therefore – with more modern studies having either less or more to say about Jesus than one found previously – might reflect these global forces. The evidence we have uncovered in this regard, however, is more suggestive and tentative than it is convincing. We leave this issue to another time and another project.

4.0 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to present a representation of the Islamic Jesus found in scholars of religion. This has been based on a survey of introductions to Islam, and has focused on material that these introductions have presented about the person of Jesus in Islam. It has been observed that the academic representation of Jesus is very unified – so much so that we have been able to separate the academic representation of Jesus into six major affirmations. These state that the Jesus of Islam is a prophet and messenger, a mistaken deity by Christians, a man who lived a miraculous life, one who escaped death and/or crucifixion, one who plays a prominent role in the last days of our historic timeline, and a prophet who predicted the coming of Muhammad.

This unity does have some differences, and this chapter examined some of those. We noted in particular the varying amounts of space devoted to Jesus in these books, and the contexts in which the reference to Jesus appeared. I then sketched possible reasons that could explain these differences, wondering if what we found might be determined by an insider/outsider difference, or a difference in the historical context when it was written.

Let me offer this closing reflection. First, both this chapter and the previous one led to an uncanny uniformity of thought in regards to the Islamic Jesus. Do polemicists and academics simply examine the same source material to determine their presentation? If so, will an examination of this same source material show that these intellectuals have been faithful to the Islamic representation of Jesus? The next chapter takes up this challenge by exploring the Qur'anic and hadith representations of Jesus.

A more difficult question to answer is the following: what does this unified presentation of Jesus tell us about scholarship on the Islamic Jesus? Is there a desire to critically examine the particular assertions about the person of Jesus, as there is with figures in other religious traditions? This unity is surprising in the world of the academic study of religion; in its solidarity in representation, it creates further questions that need to be examined. We will offer a few closing thoughts on this matter in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Four – The Qur’anic and Hadith Representations of Jesus

1.0 Introduction

There are two basic textual foundations for the Muslim, establishing belief, practice, and policy: the Qur’an and the hadith. The Qur’anic material on Jesus has found a privileged place in the representations of Jesus discussed thus far. In fact, more often than not, the scholarly representations of the Islamic Jesus are derived from Qur’anic material alone. There is little or no reference to the hadith, Qur’anic commentary, Islamic theology, or Islamic folk traditions in these representations. The primacy of the Qur’an in the Islamic religion is not questioned, and must be the reason for such a practice of using only the Qur’an to develop the Islamic representation of Jesus. There is, however, something missing when the hadith are set aside, since they too are foundational to Islam.

This chapter will survey the Qur’an and hadith collections, searching for material that refers specifically to Jesus. My purpose is to explore the foundational Islamic texts, then to assess to what extent the scholarly representations of Jesus accord with these texts.

2.0 The Jesus of the Qur’an

The reverence for the Qur’an in Islam is unequalled. It is fair to say that the place these revelations hold to Muslims is paralleled to the position the person of Jesus holds in Christianity.³²³ The Qur’an is the eternal Word of God incarnated in

³²³ Wilfred Cantwell Smith notes the “Qur’an to Muslims what Christ is to Christians. It is difficult to exaggerate the centrality, and transcendence, of the Muslim scripture for Muslim faith.” In Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What is Scripture?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 46.

language and a book as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad, whereas Christians perceive Jesus to be the incarnated Word of God in human form. The Qur'an, then, is not only a book but also an "event," according to Kenneth Cragg. He states that "in all its psychic, political, social and religious elements, it constitutes a single dynamic reality."³²⁴

The Qur'an for Muslims is God's ultimate and only trustworthy revelation to humanity. God is the one who revealed it, and Muhammad is the one who received it and communicated it to his people. Fazlur Rahman notes that Muhammad was so convinced that he was a recipient of a divine message from God "that he rejected, on the strength of his consciousness, some of the most fundamental historical claims of the Judeo-Christian tradition."³²⁵ This includes some of the most central claims on the person of Jesus found in Christian traditions contemporary to him. Rejection, addition and adoption of particular affirmations about Jesus make for a distinctive Qur'anic representation. Later Islamic traditions elaborate on that representation.

The Qur'anic material on Jesus is found mostly in six surahs of the Qur'an (2-6 and 19); thereafter, statements on Jesus are sporadic and brief. This section will first survey the significant references to Jesus, placing the references in their context, so as to illuminate the information on Jesus. Then, I will outline the key themes or affirmations about the person of Jesus. This will provide the reader with a quick reference for comparison with the affirmations found in the previous chapters.

³²⁴ Kenneth Cragg, *The Event of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1994), 13.

2.1 A Survey of the Qur'anic Material on Jesus

2.1.1 *Surah Al-Baqara*

At the beginning of the second surah, the Qur'an institutes a running theme throughout the entire revelation, the division of humanity into three types: believers, unbelievers (*kafir*), and hypocrites (2:2-20). Against the unbelievers and hypocrites, the Qur'an affirms that God alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and alone is worthy of praise (2:21-29); such truth should be clearly seen from the Qur'an itself.

God has made covenants with humanity, including the Creation event, the events with Adam and his wife in the Garden, and miracles among the "Children of Israel."³²⁶ These works among the people of Israel were signs, and should not be covered or rejected, but recognized and affirmed. God has now sent another sign through the revelation of the Qur'an, and it should not be rejected. The Children of Israel, however, have rejected the blessing of God time and again (e.g., through worshipping the golden calf [2:51], rebellion [2:57], and complaining [2:61]). The Qur'an admonishes the Jews for their constant backsliding and rejection of God (2:83), noting a particular event of betrayal by them during the life of Muhammad (2:85).³²⁷

In this context of Jewish backsliding and rebellion against the signs of God is found the first reference to Jesus. In 2:87, the Qur'an states:

³²⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 30.

³²⁶ These blessings include preferred treatment, deliverance from Egypt and the Red Sea, revelation of Scripture to Moses, and the blessing of manna (2:47-61).

We gave Moses the Book, and followed him with a succession of Apostles; we gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear Signs and strengthened him with the holy spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you an Apostle with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride? – Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!³²⁸

Jesus and Moses are particularly raised here as ones who were in the line of those chosen by God to be messengers of divine revelation. The central idea of this passage is that messengers like Moses and Jesus were sent by God, but rejected by the Jews (2:89). Jews are admonished for not properly recognizing the revelation by the messenger Muhammad. It is interesting to note that Jesus is chosen here as representative of the rejected messengers. What this first reference to Jesus communicates is that he was an Apostle of God, like Moses, and this office was evidenced by particular manifestations of divine favour. Apparently the audience was aware of Jesus' "Clear Signs," which were likely references to his miraculous deeds. The reference to being strengthened with the "holy spirit" is not defined here, though it parallels some New Testament narratives. A Trinitarian concept, however, would not be acceptable here.

The next allusion to Jesus is also found later in the same surah (2:116): "They say: 'God hath begotten a son: Glory be to Him.'" In context, the Qur'an has affirmed that it is the perverse enemies of God who reject God's apostles, "Manifest Signs," and the angels Gabriel and Michael (2:99-101). The Jews and Christians have not kept their faith and guarded themselves from evil (2:103). One example of their lapse is this: stating that God has a son is not acceptable to God, because "to Him

³²⁷ Some Jews apparently assisted the enemies of God, i.e., the enemies of Muhammad. The Qur'an perceives their actions as a contradiction in affirming one part of their covenant while rejecting the rest.

³²⁸ All quotations from the Qur'an are taken from Abdullah Yusef Ali, *The Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Elmhurst: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an Inc., 1987).

belongs all that is in the heavens and the on earth: everything renders worship to Him” (2:116). God is the greatest conceivable being, fully non-contingent, sovereign and thoroughly decisive in judgements over cosmos, thus not needing a son (2:105-113). Arguments, then, between Jews and Christians on the validity of each other’s faith is pointless, for God’s revelations are never abrogated or forgotten – only superseded. The revelation given to Muhammad is now supreme. Muslims, therefore, should not heed the call of Jews and Christians to convert to their faith, because God has chosen to reward only those who are steadfast in prayer, charity, good deeds, and submit themselves totally to God.

The Qur’an grounds its authenticity as the revelation of the true faith in the story of Abraham (2:124-136). Abraham was called by God to be an “Imam” to the nations. His actions as Imam included the construction of the Great Mosque and the prophetic prayer asking God to send an Apostle and Scripture to the Arab people. Islam is then the religion of Abraham, and believers follow the true religion of Abraham. When asked by Jews and Christians to convert:

Say ye: “We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and *Jesus*, and that give to all Prophets from their Lord: we make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God in Islam.” (2:136, italics mine)

Again Jesus is included in the list of those prophets who are given revelation from God, in the same line of prophetic office as Abraham, and is honoured equally with these prophets.

Continuing the theme of the rejection of the clear signs given by God to the People of the Book, and the assurance that Muslims are following the true religion and revelation, the Qur’an contrasts two types of believers: those who have dazzling

speech and a claim to a pureness of heart, and those who are full of devotion to God. The former seek mischief, while the latter alone will receive God's kindness. So the Muslim should enter into Islam wholeheartedly. For if they backslide after the clear signs have been given to them, it will be too late when God comes in ultimate glory (2:204-210). The People of the Book have received many signs, such as those from the apostles Saul and David, but they sometimes added something else to these signs, and God will be strict in punishing them for doing so (2:211-252).

Those Apostles We endowed with gifts, some above others: to one of them God spoke; others He raised to degrees of honour; to Jesus the son of Mary We gave Clear Signs, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. If God had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other, after Clear Signs had come to them, but they chose to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting. If God had so willed, they would not have fought each other; but God fulfilleth His plan. (2:253)

Once more Jesus is brought into the picture as one who is a sign from God, like the apostles Saul and David. And again he is spoken of as exhibiting his divine call through clear signs, strengthened through the holy spirit. Once again we find that the text does not elaborate on the meaning of "holy spirit."

Therefore we find three affirmations concerning Jesus in the second surah, in the context of the rejection of God's revelations 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.

2.1.2 *Surah Al-Imran*

In the third surah, a switch occurs from a focus on the Jews to a focus on the Christians. It begins with an affirmation that God is the ultimate, and that "there is

no god but He, – the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal.” The Qur’an claims that “it is He who sent down to thee step by step, in truth, the Book confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus before this” (3:3). Jesus then is said to have received a revelation in similar form as the Law to Moses and the Qur’an to Muhammad. The Gospel Jesus received, and thereafter proclaimed, was an oral communiqué from God to humanity through direct verbal inspiration. This text modifies the Christian notion of the gospel, which includes both the teachings of Jesus along with the person of Jesus.

This passage affirms that those who reject faith in such signs will be punished (3:4), and that God shows his “good pleasure on those who worship God, show patience and self-control, and who pray for forgiveness in the early hours, because there is no god but He and his religion is Islam” (3:18-19). The Qur’an elaborates this thought by describing the lives of Mary and Jesus (3:35-63). Beginning with the story of Mary’s birth, from the family of Imran, the Qur’an narrates that Mary’s mother dedicated her unborn child to God and was surprised to be given a daughter instead of a son. God ordained the birth of a daughter, named Mary, and thereafter she was dedicated to the service of God in the Temple. Mary was eventually left in the custody of Zakariya (Zachariah), who discovered that Mary is constantly given divine provision in her chamber.³²⁹

The Qur’anic narrative then moves to the story of Mary and Jesus (3:42-57). It begins with the announcement to Mary, where angels inform her that she has been

³²⁹ The Qur’an also gives an account of the birth of Yahya (John), when Zakariya prays to God for a child of his own. Zakariya receives a message from an angel announcing that Yahya will be a noble and chaste Prophet, one “of the godly company of the righteous” (3:39). Zakariya asks how this could happen in light of his age and the barren status of his wife. The reply is that God

chosen by God “above the women of all nations,” since she bows down in prayer with those who do the same (3:42-43). The angels proceed to give Mary “Glad Tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus” (3:45). Her son will be held in honour in “this world 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” (3:46). However, Mary questions how her pregnancy could happen, because she is a virgin, and the same answer given before to Zakariya (3:39) is given to Mary – that whatever God wills happens (3:47).

The angels add that God will teach Jesus “the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel,” appointing him as an Apostle to the Children of Israel (3:48-49). The Qur’an gives the message that Jesus will pronounce to the Children of Israel, which is supported by signs: creating birds out of clay, healing lepers and “those born blind,” and quickening the dead, all by God’s leave. This message also states that Jesus has come “to attest the Law which was before me,” and now makes lawful particular things that were once unlawful for them, for he is a sign from God to fear God and obey (3:50). For Jesus claims, “It is God who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight” (3:51).

The Qur’an records, however, that Jesus encountered unbelief and asked for helpers in his work. The disciples respond by affirming that they believe in God, and that Jesus can bear witness that they are Muslims, adding that they believe and bear witness to what God has revealed through the Apostle Jesus (3:52-53). These unbelievers plan against Jesus, but God planned as well, and God said that he will

accomplishes what He wills. Zakariya then asks for a sign, which is answered by his not being

“take” and “raise” Jesus to himself and clear Jesus of all the falsehoods, and make those who follow him superior on the “Day of Resurrection.” At this time, everyone will return to God and God will judge between the disputed matters. Those who reject faith will be punished “with terrible agony,” and those who accept faith and do righteousness will be paid their reward in full (3:56-57).

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

Mary is also the first person to receive a message describing the truth about Jesus. This message states that Mary’s child will be named Jesus Christ, and is a Word and Sign from God. A sign has been identified as a manifestation of God’s communication to humanity, and is paralleled with the numerous references to divine signs found in the Qur’an thus far. Jesus being a “Word from God” is a new title attributed to him. It seems to parallel the *Logos* statements in the Gospel of John, although in this case the “Word” is not itself divine.

Additionally we find that Jesus is a person highly honoured 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

able to speak for three days.

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 other righteous, thus establishing the even higher honour Jesus will receive from God.

The reason for Jesus being honoured by God is found in the actions and wisdom that Mary is told he will display in his life. These miracles include his miraculous speech to the people as an infant and his miracles of healing, creating, and quickening done by God's leave. God will also teach him the Book and Wisdom. From other references in the Qur'an to "the Book and Wisdom" (e.g., 4:136, 140; 6:20; 7:52), we learn that this is the one comprehensive revelation of God to humanity. This revelation is found in part in the Law and the Gospel, which the Qur'an notes that Jesus will also learn. So in stating that Jesus will be taught the Book and Wisdom, the Qur'an notes that he will receive portions of the one comprehensive revelation, being the Law and the Gospel.

The portion of the Book that Jesus will receive will be a message to the Children of Israel, thereby making him a prophet to Israel. This message puts him in the succession of the prophets and messengers who went before him. The message of Jesus, however, will make certain practices lawful that were once unlawful. This could refer to certain New Testament accounts of where Jesus violates Pharisaic regulations, such as the Sabbath laws (e.g., John 5:9-19). In light of the context of being a warning to Jews and Christians about excesses in faith, this could be implying that the unlawful things were human additions to the revelation God had set up before in Moses. Nevertheless, the key to the revelation of Jesus would be his affirmation of God, the wholly other, as the only one who should be feared and

followed. This of course opposes any idea of Jesus being divine himself, since he performs miracles by God's power and proclaims the worship of the wholly other.

2.1.3 *Surah AL-Nisaa*

Reference to Jesus does not arise again until the fourth surah, which is a thematic continuation from the previous surah.³³⁰ Stating that the Jews have been deceitful in their actions with the Muslims, the Qur'an calls on them to believe now in these revelations. Those who set up partners with God will not be forgiven; this sin is the unpardonable sin (4:46-48; cf. 4:116), and those who reject the signs of God will be sent to the Hellfire (4:55-56).

The Qur'an cautions believers about befriending hypocrites and unbelievers, since they are not honoured by God (4:144). Unbelievers include those who deny all of the apostles, not accepting certain ones and rejecting others (4:151-152). For there have been "Clear Signs" sent to the People of the Book, but they have rejected them, broken their covenant, and slain God's messengers, thus causing divine displeasure (4:155). God has sealed their hearts to hellfire because of their blasphemy and rejection of faith. This rejection includes uttering "against Mary a grave false charge," and boasting about killing "Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God" (4:157). The Qur'an responds that "they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them." Rather, instead of death, the Qur'an states that Jesus was raised up to God and was "exalted in power" (4:158).

³³⁰ The Qur'an calls on the People of the Book to find common ground in the worship of One God, by associating no partners with God, and refraining from disputing over Abraham, for the one closest to him is Muhammad (3:64-71). The Qur'an also warns its followers to be wary of the People of the Book (3:72-80), for many of them are not trustworthy and some of them distort

Yet, despite these signs, none of the People of the Book believe this, and Jesus will be a witness against them (4:159).

It is intriguing to note the context for the Qur'anic 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'an claims that this is an error, however, for Jesus was not murdered, but rather was saved from death.

Those who do not believe these things (i.e., signs and apostles) have strayed from the straight path and will be punished with hellfire (4:160, 170).³³¹ Those, however, who do believe will be given a great reward (4:162). Belief is grounded in "inspiration" sent to humanity, by "Noah and the Messengers after him," including Jesus (4:163).³³² These apostles have given a sufficient amount of good news and warnings, so that humanity has no real "plea against God" because of them. People of the Book, however, are to "commit no excesses in [their] religion: nor say that God aught but the truth" (4:171). For Jesus "was no more than an Apostle of God, and His Word...and a Spirit proceeding from Him." God is one, not a Trinity, and everything in the cosmos belongs to God; thus, he is "is above having a son" who is a part of the cosmos. Therefore, Christians are to follow the example of Christ, who "disdaineth not to serve and worship God" (4:172).

previous revelations. Followers of Muhammad are to believe in God alone, follow their Apostle, and realize the signs that he gives to them (like the battle of Uhud) (3:121-200).

³³¹ The Qur'an notes that the making of certain foods unlawful for the Jews was a temporary punishment for them.

This surah provides a key to the Qur'anic representation of Jesus: 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. Nevertheless, even if one does accept Jesus as a man sent from God, that person can still 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 damns a person to God's punishment for being an unbeliever.

2.1.4 *Surah Al-Maida*

In the fifth surah believers are commanded to "fulfill all obligations" (5:1) to God, who is portrayed as completely sovereign. The Qur'an outlines some of these obligations in the following verses, including what is permissible and what is not. In verses 12-19, the Qur'an notes two ways in which the People of the Book have not fulfilled their obligations. One is that the tribes of Israel have broken their covenant, despite being told to pray, give charity, believe, and so forth. Second, they "say that God is Christ the son of Mary" (5:17). In light of what is said about Jesus in the fourth surah, believers are to respond to this by saying that God alone has power to destroy Christ the son of Mary and everyone on earth. It is God who has sovereign and complete power over the heavens and the earth, and Jesus is not to be equated with God.

³³² These inspired messengers include Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, Jesus, Job,

The Qur'an affirms, to the People of the Book, that Muhammad has come after a break in the succession of apostles, so they cannot say that there has come no "bringer of glad tiding and no warner from evil" (5:19). God has sent other signs but they have been rejected. For example, the Israelites disregarded the testimonies of Joshua and Caleb, thus causing God to punish the people with wandering for forty years (5:26). If the People of the Book commit excesses and reject faith, they will experience the grave penalty of the eternal fire (5:36-37).

The Prophet Muhammad should not be troubled about the actions of those who reject faith among Jews and Christians, for they are not really people of faith at all (5:43). Moses, with the Law, was sent to them and prophets, rabbis, and doctors of the law followed him, charged with protecting the Book (5:44-45). In their footsteps, God "sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light and confirmation of the Law that had come before him" (5:46).

If only the People of the Book had believed and had been righteous, and stood fast by the Law and the Gospel, their sins would have been blotted out (5:65-66). Yet when God sent apostles with a message that was not liked, those apostles were called impostors and were threatened with death (5:70). The People of the Book assumed that there would be no punishment; God forgave them again and again, and they are still blind and deaf (5:71). They blasphemed by saying that God is the Christ, the son of Mary, but Christ himself said: "O Children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord." For, according to the Qur'an, "whoever joins other gods with God – God will forbid him the Garden and the Fire will be his

Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, David in the Psalms, and Moses (4:163-164).

abode” (5:72). They also blasphemed by saying: “God is one of three in a Trinity” (5:73). If they continue in this blasphemy, however, they will suffer a harsh penalty, since “Christ the son of Mary was no more than an Apostle; many Apostles passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their daily food” (5:75). One should not worship a person who has no power “to harm or benefit you,” because God only is worthy of worship (5:76). These excesses are then identified by the Qur’an and people are encouraged not to follow the vain desires and misleading of the past (5:77), for curses were pronounced by David and Jesus on the Children of Israel who disobeyed and persisted in their excesses.

God is the ultimate witness between all disputes, such as disputes over the testimonies of witnesses in an inheritance trial (5:104-107). One day God will even ask the Apostles to account for what occurred under their teaching, and they will admit that God is the only one who can witness what is seen in the dark. At this time God will turn to Jesus and say:

O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, The Law and the Gospel. And behold! Thou makest out of clay, as it were the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird, by My leave, and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! Thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold! Restrain the Children of Israel from violence to thee when thou didst show them the Clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: “This is nothing but evident magic.” (5:110)

God, according to the Qur’an, continues the testimony of Jesus by noting again that the disciples had faith in God and witnessed that they were Muslims (5:111). Unique to this narrative, and not found in the parallel narrative in the third surah, is the addition of a particular miracle account. The Qur’an quotes God saying that the

disciples of Jesus asked if his Lord could send down a table of food from heaven to feed their hunger and for them to witness a sign (5:112-113). Jesus transmits their request to God, who replies that he will do what they have asked, “but if any of [them] after that resisteth faith, [God] will punish him with a penalty such as [God] has not inflicted on any one among all the peoples” (5:115).

The end-time narration continues: God will then turn to Jesus and ask if he encouraged humanity to worship his mother and him as gods, to the detriment of God (5:116). Jesus will deny ever doing such a thing, saying that God would be a witness to such things if he had. Jesus continues:

Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit. “Worship God, my Lord and you Lord”; and I was a witness over them whilst I dwelt amongst them; when thou didst take me up Thou wast the Watchers over them, and Thou art a witness to all things. (5:117)

Jesus then concludes by saying that God is free to punish them or forgive them. God answers by saying that on such a day the “truthful will profit from truth,” for God is pleased with them and their salvation is in that reward (5:119). The surah concludes by once again affirming God’s sovereign power over everything (5:120).

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. Even 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 ate and therefore have no power outside of God.

God divinely worked through Jesus 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 contain proper guidance and light – in other words, the divine knowledge revealed to humanity.

2.1.5 Surah Al-An'am

The sixth surah only makes one brief mention of Jesus. Again, the theme of this surah is the supremacy of God and the rejection of truth/faith by those all over the earth (6:1, 11). There are warnings of great punishment on the Day of Judgement for those who reject faith, and these are people who “join gods with God” and reject God’s signs (6:14, 21, 31). Muhammad is told not to worship the gods of his people. For if they reject God, it is God who gives them their consequence (6:56-60). God is watching his true worshippers, and it is at death when the angels come to take a person’s soul that has been delivered from “silent terrors” and “distress” (6:61-70). It is God who is the sole authority on the destination of one’s soul. So why would one want to reject God after receiving guidance from him (6:71)? No, instead one would submit to God by establishing regular prayers and fearing the one who created heavens and earth. This is what Abraham had done. For after seeing the stars, moon, and sun, he did not associate any partners with God, and submitted himself to God (6:74-82). Abraham’s message to his people was submission to the one God. God then raised and guided others in this same truth: Noah, his children, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron,

“and Zakariya and John, and Jesus and Elias: all in the ranks of the Righteous” (6:85).

“These,” and others, “were to whom We [God] gave the Book, and Authority, and Prophethood: if these their descendants reject them, Behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new Prophet who rejects them not” (6:89). Since the Qur’an has before stated that every message came with a time limit (6:67), this would be an affirmation of the validity of the revelation Muhammad has received, and its supersession of all other previous revelations.

2.1.6 *Surah Al-Tauba or Baraat*

Jesus does not appear again until the ninth surah, where the theme of the Islamic ummah is continued from the eighth surah. The ninth surah speaks about establishing a treaty with the pagans of Mecca, and how the treaty will be dissolved and war will be declared on the pagans. Believers are called to fight those who do not believe in the “Religion of Truth,” even if these non-believers are the People of the Book (9:29).

The People of the Book are considered unbelievers when the “Jews call ‘Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God” (9:30). Therefore God’s curse is on them, for they have been “deluded away from the Truth! They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of God, and they take as their Lord Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One God; there is no god but He” (9:30-31). This therefore adds to the affirmation that Jesus is not a divine being and any worship of him would be blasphemy. Consequently, believers are to seek the submission of Jews and

Christians, through war or by insisting that they pay the *jizya*, because of their rejection of Islam.

2.1.7 *Surah Maryam*

The nineteenth surah contains a number of narratives about different prophets and their relations with their society. These include stories of Abraham, Adam, Moses, and a parallel account of the birth of John and Jesus. Beginning with the infancy account of John (19:4-5),³³³ the Qur'an turns to an extensive account of Mary, expanding the narrative found in the third surah to include further miracles in the birthing account. Mary withdrew from her family to the East, and in the East an angel, who appears as a man, greets her. The angel announces the glad tidings of a virgin birth from God, stating that Mary's male child is appointed a sign and a mercy from God (19:21). She then conceives and retires to a remote place, where under the pain of childbirth she is driven to the trunk of a palm tree. Here she cries out, wishing that she was dead, only to be comforted by a voice telling her that drinking water will flow from the bottom of the tree and that she should shake the tree to obtain dates for her to eat (19:23-26).

After a long labour, the infant Jesus is born and Mary presents him to her people, who sarcastically remark, "O Mary! Truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!" (19:27). They then question how she, an unmarried woman, could allow

³³³ Though the language differs somewhat between the account in surah three and this surah, the narrative is the same. Zakariya (Zachariah) receives an answer to his prayer, saying that he will have a son whose name will be Yahya (John), and that he will be one who will have a "conferred distinction" from God (19:7). Zakariya also questions God on the possibility of this because of his age and wife's state. God replies by saying that such things are easy for him, and gives Zakariya the sign he requests: being mute for "three nights" (19:10). This narrative is expanded to include God's words about Yahya himself, that he was given "wisdom even as a youth," pity for all

such a thing to have happened since she has come from a noble and chaste family (19:28). Mary's only response is to point to her child, to which the people reply "how can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?" Immediately, the infant Jesus speaks:

I am indeed a servant of God: He hath given me Revelation and made me a prophet; and He hath made me blessed where so ever 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! (19:30-33)

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 behaviour that could have been charged 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" (19:35). For God is sovereign and God only needs to say "Be," and such a thing occurs. So despite the miraculous nature of Jesus' birth, we are reminded that it cannot be said that God fathered a child.

Those who disagree should worry about the Day of Judgment, when such differences will be judged. Some say "God Most Gracious has begotten a Son," but the Qur'an asserts that they "have put forth a thing most monstrous" in saying this

creatures and purity (19:12-13). The Qur'an states that he was "devout, and kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious" (19:14).

(19:88). These “offspring” are no more than servants raised to honour, insists the Qur’an (21:26). They do not say anything unless God has spoken to them first. And if one of these servants were to claim deity, their reward would be Hell (21:27-29).

“No son did God beget,” says the Qur’an,

nor is there any god along with Him: if there were many gods, behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others! Glory to God! He is free from the sort of things they attribute to Him! (23:91)

If anyone invokes another god besides God, then, they have no authority and the unbeliever fails to win (23:117). Jesus was only a servant of God raised to a place of high honour, nothing more. It is beneath God to have a son, and it was God who gave Jesus the authority to speak. Therefore, Jesus is not divine and should not be worshipped as a god besides the true God.

2.1.8 Other References: Surahs 13, 17, 18, 33, 42, 43, 57 and 61

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’anic denial that Jesus could be conceived of as a god next to God, and that God spawned offspring. For example, in 13:16 the Qur’an warns against those who assign partners to God among those God has created. This context may lean more to a rejection of idol worship, but in light of the admonitions elsewhere against making Jesus divine this text can also be seen to apply to Jesus. In 17:3, one also finds God telling Muhammad to say “Praise be to God, who begets no son, and has no partner in His dominion.” In 18:50-52, the Qur’an states that on the Day of Judgment God will ask a person to call upon the one whom they thought to be a

partner with God, but that assumed partner will not listen to the person. So that person will then be sent to the place of “common perdition.”

The next two specific references to Jesus are in passing, and are found in a context where Jesus is found among a list of prophets. Each is found in a context that describes the unrighteousness of the hypocrites and unbelievers, and how a believer should follow the guidance of God as found in his revelation. In 33:7, the Qur’an notes that God made a solemn covenant with the prophets, as God did with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Then in 42:13, the Qur’an tells believers that the religion God has established for them is the same as the one God had established for Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Therefore believers should be “steadfast in Religion,” make no divisions within it and worship none other than God.

In the forty-third surah one finds a short narrative about Jesus. This reference is found after the Qur’an has warned listeners not to fall astray, holding faithfully rather to the revelation sent down to them in the Qur’an (43:43-44). It gives a short account of Moses being sent with signs to Pharaoh, who “ridiculed” the signs despite their growth in magnitude (43:46-56). God finally was provoked enough to punish Pharaoh and his people, by drowning them, thereby making them “an Example to later ages” (43:56). In this context of rejection, the Qur’an offers a statement on Jesus (43:57-64). The Qur’an states that “Jesus the son of Mary is held up as an example,” but the people ridiculed him by saying, “are our gods best, or he?” The Qur’an further adds that Jesus was no more than a servant, given favour by God to be only an example to Israel. If it were the will of God, God would have done his work through angels. However, “Jesus shall be a Sign for the coming of the Hour of Judgement,” so believers should not have doubt about the hour itself and

follow God on the “Straight Way.” Jesus came as a clear sign, the Qur’an concludes; he came “with Wisdom, and in order to make Clear to you [Israelites] some of the points on which ye dispute: therefore fear God and obey me. For God, He is my Lord and your Lord: so worship ye Him: this is a Straight Way.” Here it is important to note the importance of Jesus being a sign from God. Jesus will apparently be a sign of the eschaton, as he was a sign of God at his first advent. The mere existence or manifestation of the human Jesus, as opposed to his actions or speech, is a sign to the world.

The second to last reference to Jesus occurs in a discussion about how people see life as all play and rivalry. But God, we are told, decrees all fortune, whether bad or good, for all people (57:20-24). God is recorded as saying, “We sent aforetime Our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance of Right and Wrong, that men may stand forth in justice” (57:25). God sent Noah and Abraham, establishing with them the line of prophethood (57:26); some followed, but many rebelled. God then sent “Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel.” Compassion and mercy were given to those who followed him, while others established “monasticism,” which God did not want. So believers should follow the Prophet on the straight path and grace will abound to them (57:29-30). The connection is again made with Mary; what is new is the renunciation of monasticism, said to be attributed to some of Jesus’ followers.

The final narrative on Jesus is found in the sixty-first surah, Surah *Al-Saff*, in which God teaches believers that God loves those “who fight in His Cause” and do as they say they will do (61:2-4). To illustrate this, the Qur’an calls listeners to remember what Moses said to his people about upsetting him as an apostle of God.

Additionally the Qur'an asks listeners to remember Jesus, who said "O Children of Israel! I am an apostle of God sent to you confirming the Law which came before me, and giving Glad Tidings of an Apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad" (61:6). Jesus, who affirmed the same revelation of God as all prophets, then is also seen as the one who prophetically paves the way for Muhammad's advent six hundred years later.

Yet despite the clear signs, Jesus' audience believed him to be a sorcerer. For who, the Qur'an comments, does greater wrong than the person who "invents falsehood against God" even after being invited to Islam (61:7). Those who do intend to "extinguish God's light" (61:8). However, God will complete his revelation despite these people, as seen through the sending the Muhammad. Those who believe in this message and strive for the cause of God will be forgiven and saved from the grave penalty coming. Believers should be helpers of God – as the disciples of Jesus said, "we are God's helpers!" Even though a portion in Israel did not believe, believers prevailed over them (61:4).

2.2 Summary

This extensive survey of the material on Jesus found in the Qur'an has given a number of specific affirmations. The majority of the material is found in the first six surahs, which are a polemic mainly against Jews and Christians. This polemic is meant to show that the Jews and Christians are in error by ignoring the clear signs God has sent to correct them in their religion. This message is seen clearly in 4:171: "commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of God aught but the truth." These

admonitions are to show Jews, Christians and pagans that Muhammad is an Apostle of God, and that the revelation he is given is also from God.

It is in this context where many of the statements about Jesus are found. The Qur'anic representation of Jesus is that he was an Apostle of God (i.e., a prophet and messenger) to the Children of Israel, to confirm the Law and make lawful for them things that were once unlawful. To fulfill this mission, Jesus was given "Clear Signs" and strengthened with the holy spirit so that the Children of Israel would recognize that he was from God. These signs included his miraculous birth, the healing of lepers and those born blind, the raising of the dead, the making of a living bird from clay, speaking as an infant, salvation from his enemies (and the cross), the revelation of the Gospel and the prediction of the advent of Muhammad. Jesus' prophethood and message was the same as that of every prophet and messenger.

This affirmation that Jesus was an apostle is put in clear contradistinction to any belief that he was a god. "Christ the son of Mary was no more than an Apostle; [like] many Apostles that passed before him," say one verse in the Qur'an. To call Jesus the Son of God is to commit a serious blasphemy, one that cannot be forgiven. God is ultimate is power and authority, and to attribute another being (one that he created even) is to demean God. It is beneath God to have a wife, son or partner.

To say that Jesus is not a God is not making Jesus an impotent person. Rather, the Qur'an sees Jesus as a humble servant of God, seeking to do whatever God wills. This honour is seen in the titles attributed to Jesus, such as Spirit and Word of God, and the miracles God performed through him. Jesus' mother recurs with some frequency in the Qur'an, where she receives ample praise. Any reflection

on the Qur'anic understanding of Jesus is incomplete without reference to his mother Mary. Mary is highly honoured and respected in the Qur'an, and is one of the few women in Islamic scriptures who is said to have been chosen by God for a special purpose. She herself is a miracle of God, and is the vessel chosen to bear a great prophet.

One can say that balance is the central thought of the Jesus of the Qur'an. One should not demean him by saying that he was not an apostle of God – and should recognize that he was a very special and unusual prophet. Nor, however, should one make more of Jesus than being an apostle of God. Those who fall on either extreme – Jesus was merely a man, Jesus was God – should be worried that they have fallen off the straight path. They are in danger of hellfire.

3.0 The Jesus of the Hadith

Jesus is an important eschatological character in the hadith attributed to Muhammad. His sayings present an interesting view on the Islamic view of Jesus – a view that is complementary to that of the Qur'an. For some reason, the material on Jesus in the hadith has often been ignored or glossed over by the scholars writing about the Islamic Jesus. For these scholars, the examination of Jesus in the Qur'an is the well-traveled path they all choose primarily to focus upon. What then are the *hadith*? Fredrick Denny speaks about how the life of Muhammad, his actions and thoughts, were paramount for the early Muslim believer.³³⁴ Muhammad's life was an example to believers of how one should act in the presence of God. Because of that believers sought to emulate the Prophet in all ways of life. His deeds, habitual

³³⁴ Frederick Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Macmillian, 1994), 158-159.

practices, and teachings not recorded in the Qur'an soon came to acquire special importance, and were transmitted from generation to generation. Although Muhammad's humanity was reinforced as strongly as Jesus', this "seal of the prophets" had all of his life closely scrutinized. At first these hadith were oral, but soon within the history of Islam they were collected, examined, evaluated (i.e., did a particular saying *really* go back to Muhammad's lips?), and grouped by certain scholars of the faith. While the Qur'an is the primary source of faith for Muslims, the hadith form a complementary source of elaboration for the Muslim.

When the hadith were being collected, collectors found about six hundred thousand hadith. These were examined and sifted till the most authentic ones (i.e., the ones most likely to be from and about Muhammad) were put in their collections. Due to the size and number of hadith collections that can be examined, I will be focusing upon the two most popular hadith collections: Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. I will gather these hadith in different thematic groups.

3.1 A Survey of the Material on Jesus in Sahih al-Bukhari³³⁵

Muhammad bin Ismail bin Al-Mughirah Al-Bukhari, or Imam Bukhari, was born in the year 194 A.H. (ca. 826 C.E.), in West Turkistan.³³⁶ Imam Bukhari was a devout and diligent scholar, traveling throughout the Islamic world before collecting any hadith. Sifting through more than 300,000 hadith, Bukhari settled on a compilation of 7,275 hadith. After his death in 256 A.H. (ca. 888 C.E.), Bukhari's collection gained so much respect that "it has been unanimously agreed that Imam

³³⁵ Muhammad Mushsin Khan (trans.), *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari – Volumes 1 to 9* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997). Note that references to this print edition are different than those in many Internet concordances.

Bukhari's work is the most authentic of all the other works in *hadith* literature put together."³³⁷ Mention of Jesus is found in forty different hadith of Bukhari's collection. Half of these references are found in the fourth volume of the collection, while the next largest number of references is found in the sixth volume.

3.1.1 *Belief*

Belief in the one God, Allah, and the association of no partners with Allah is paramount for the belief statements in Bukhari. For instance, in Bukhari's fourth volume, there is an admonition from Muhammad stating: "if anyone testifies that *La ilaha illallah*' [there is no God, but God], Who has no partners, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger, and that Jesus is Allah's slave and His Messenger and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a *Ruh* created by Him...Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds are few" (4:60:3435). One finds that it is essential to accept Jesus as God's true messenger to be admitted into Paradise. Moreover, to Jesus are attributed similar titles as found in the Qur'an: God's Messenger, God's Word, and a Spirit created by God. In another hadith, Muhammad, giving a commentary on surah 17:57 ("Those whom they call upon desire for themselves means of access to their Lord Allah"), states that "those who are called upon" include Jesus, Ezra, angels, etc (6:65:4712). Even Jesus himself desired to find access to God, as all humanity does. He was not God.

There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet. This is a necessary belief statement for those who wish to receive blessings from God. If those among the People of the Book can testify to these words, then their reward is

³³⁶ Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari – Volume 1*, 18.

great. If they do not testify to the words, however, it is a grave thing. For example, in the first volume of Bukhari one finds Muhammad remarking that if one of the People of the Book believes in the prophet Jesus or Moses and then believes in the Prophet Muhammad, that person will have a double reward from God (1:3:97). This is repeated in 4:60:3446. After warning believers not to worship him as Christians worship Jesus, Muhammad adds for “if a man believes in Jesus and he believes in me, he will get a double reward.” To believe in Jesus, therefore, adds to a Muslim’s faith, but to believe in him as God will bring damnation.

In 7:68:5285, Muhammad is recorded as saying that a Muslim man cannot marry a woman who claims that Jesus is Lord, unless she believes in God alone. Muhammad says, “I do not know of a greater [or worst] thing, as regards to ascribing partners in worship...to Allah, than that a lady should say that Jesus is her Lord although he is just a slave from the slaves of Allah.” For “none is more patient than Allah against the harmful and annoying words He hears: they ascribe a son to Him; yet he bestows upon them health and provision” (9:97:7378). Here Jesus is again affirmed to be solely a servant of God, not a divine Lord. Since he was a servant, in line with God’s other servants, it would be wise for the followers of Jesus to accept Muhammad.

Muhammad even attributes this clear affirmation of monotheistic belief to Jesus in a brief account where Jesus witnesses a man stealing (4:60:3444). Here, when Jesus asks the man if he stole anything, the man replies “No, by Allah, except Whom there is no other God. *La ilaha illallah.*” Jesus replies, “I believe in Allah and deny my eyes.” This suggests that to believe in Jesus as a divine being immediately

³³⁷ Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari* – Volume 1, 18-19.

puts a person on the outside of God's good graces, and denies even the belief of Jesus himself.

3.1.2 Esteem of Jesus and Mary in the Sayings of Muhammad

As noted by the polemicists and scholars in the last two chapters, Jesus is highly venerated in the Islamic faith. In some ways, he is more highly regarded than other Islamic prophets before Muhammad, save perhaps Abraham and Moses. This is evident in the well-repeated narrative of Muhammad's Night Journey to Jerusalem, first found at the beginning of the book eight where Muhammad is taught how to perform proper ablutions before prayer or *salat* (1:8:349). The angel Jibril (Gabriel) introduces Muhammad to the prophets Adam, Abraham, Moses, Idris and Jesus. Jesus welcomes Muhammad by saying, "Welcome! O pious brother and pious Prophet."

Additional descriptions within the story are added in other parallel accounts of this Night Journey. In 4:59:3207, 59:3239 and 60:3342, Muhammad notes that he met Jesus and Yahya (John) at "the second heaven," where they welcomed him with the same words uttered before: "You are welcome O brother and Prophet." Then in 4:60:3342, 60:3430 and 5:63:3887 Muhammad adds that it was at the "second heaven" where he was greeted by the cousins Jesus and John.

Muhammad's honouring of Jesus is seen in particular sayings where Muhammad identified his closeness with Jesus. For instance, in 4:60:3442 Muhammad is recorded as saying, "I am the nearest of all the people to the son of Mary, and all the Prophets are paternal brothers, and there has been no Prophet

between me and him [Jesus].³³⁸ In the following hadith Muhammad adds that “their mothers are different, but their religion is one” (4:60:3443). This seems to acknowledge that there was some differences between the two, but that they communicated essentially the same message and faith. Muhammad, however, warns believers not to “exaggerate in praising me as the Christians praised the son of Mary, for I am only a slave. So call me the slave of Allah and His Messenger” (4:60:3445).

Finally, Muhammad shows his esteem for Jesus by saying that Satan touches all offspring of Adam save Mary and Jesus (4:59:3286). This same saying is found again in 4:60:3431, where Muhammad this time only speaks of Jesus alone being free from the touch of Satan: “When any human being is born, Satan touches him at both sides of the body with his two fingers, except Jesus, the son of Mary, whom Satan tried to touch but failed, so he touched the placenta-cover instead.” This idea is difficult to understand, and may be paralleled in Christian affirmations about the sinless nature of Jesus and Mary. Nevertheless, what can be asserted is that Mary and Jesus are unlike any human beings, in that they were free from Satan’s impression right from the time of birth.³³⁹

3.1.3 *Physical Description of Jesus*

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 colour and of lank hair.” This physical description of Jesus is

³³⁸ Though Muhammad was likely not speaking of closeness chronologically alone, in the fifth volume, Bukhari notes the narration by Salman, who states that the interval of time between Jesus and Muhammad was six hundred years (5:63:3948).

found again in 4:60:3394, 3437, where the addition 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 addition: “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 colour, the best one can see among brown colour, 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...[but] a man of brown complexion” (4:60:3441). What is important about this fixation on the physical descriptions 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 Bukhari’s collection. This representation is not discussed in any of the scholarly or polemical representations of Jesus.³⁴⁰ Here we find a disjunction between polemicists’ and academics’ representations of Jesus and the representation found in the sources they use.

3.1.5 *Jesus and the End of Days*

Another area of difference between polemicists, academics and the hadith, is found in a reference to the Islamic eschaton. This occurs with some frequency in

³³⁹ Additionally we find Muhammad’s high regard for Mary, and thus by extension for Jesus, can also be seen in his referring to her as the best of all women in her time, along with Muhammad’s wives Khadija and Aishah in their time (4:60:3432, 3433; cf. 5:63:3815).

³⁴⁰ A possible reason for the absence of these physical descriptions in the polemical and academic materials may be the Islamic admonition against representational art.

Bukhari's third volume, repeated (with minor variance) in two different books of that volume. In book thirty-four, the Prophet Muhammad was recorded to have said:

By Him [Allah], in Whose Hands my soul is, surely the son of Mary Jesus will shortly descend amongst you people and will judge mankind justly by the Law of the Qur'an and will break the cross and kill the pigs and abolish the *Jizya*. Then there will be abundance of money and nobody will accept charitable gifts. (3:34:2222)

In 3:46:2476, the same words are repeated, differing only in that the beginning of the saying states: "the Hour will not be established...". This suggests that the final days will not begin until the return of Jesus. Bukhari later has Muhammad admonishing his hearers by saying, "how will you be when the son of Mary descends amongst you, and he will judge people by the law of the Qur'an and not by the law of the Gospel?" (4:60:3449). The Jesus of the hadith is one who will return at some future date to set up an Islamic rule. This rule will be one of peace, justice and prosperity, where all people will live together under Islamic law.

The events of the eschaton conclude the focus on Jesus in the sixtieth chapter of the fourth volume. Here Bukhari refers to a saying of Muhammad where he speaks of the moment of resurrection when Muslim men will stand "barefooted, naked and circumcised" (4:60:3447). On that day, some of the companions will be separated to the right and the left, based on those who deserted Islam after his death. Muhammad will say the same words uttered by Jesus in surah 5:117, 118: "...And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them, but when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are the witness to all things." Following this saying is a discussion on the second advent of Jesus, where Bukhari attributes to Muhammad the saying that was found in 3:34:2222 and 2476 above. Here Muhammad adds: "Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it, and a

single prostration to Allah will be better than the whole world and whatever is in it” (4:60:3448).

In the sixth volume and sixty-third chapter of Bukhari’s collection, Muhammad elaborates on several Qur’anic verses, some that deal with Jesus. The first reference to Jesus is a commentary on surah 2:31, about the Day of Resurrection (6:65:4476). Here Muhammad states that on that Day believers will ask for someone to intercede on their behalf before God. They will turn to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, all of whom will say: “I am not fit for this undertaking.” When Jesus answers this request, he will affirm his inability to be an intercessor, but will add, “go to Muhammad the slave of Allah, whose past and future sins were forgiven by Allah.” Jesus here admits his inability to perform intercession before God, and shows his submission to the greater prophet Muhammad.

This narrative is common. It is raised a number of other times through the Bukhari collection, though language varies between accounts: 6:65:4581, 4712; 8:81:6565; 9:97:7410, 7440, and 7510. In one place, it is further elaborated when Muhammad asserts that he will be “the chief of all the people” on that Day (6:65:4712, a commentary on surah 17:1). Muhammad affirms that all men (in history) will be gathered together on a plain (barefoot, naked and uncircumcised). The sun will move closer to them, causing distress for those gathered there. The people will then look for someone to intercede on their behalf before God. Some will first turn to Adam, then to Noah, then to Abraham, and then to Moses. All these prophets will say that they cannot intercede because God is angry with them for the errors that they had committed in their lives (i.e., Adam disobeyed God, Noah spoke against his nation, Abraham told three lies, and Moses committed

murder). Then people will turn to Jesus and say, "O Jesus! You are Allah's Messenger and His Word which He sent to Mary, and a *Ruh* created by Him and you talked to the people while still young in the cradle. Please intercede for us with your Lord." Jesus will say that God has become angrier than he has ever been or ever will be and "Jesus will not mention any sin, but will say, 'Myself! Myself! Myself! Go to someone else; go to Muhammad.'" Muhammad's intercession will be permitted, and the believers in the crowd will be permitted to enter paradise.

Muhammad's statement on the division of people to the right and left on the Day of the Resurrection will also apply to all of humanity. Jesus is questioned by God as to whether or not he asked people to take his mother and him as gods aside from Allah (6:65:4625, 4626; a commentary on surah 5:117 and 118). Again speaking about the Day of Resurrection, Muhammad is quoted as saying that people will be gathered on that Day, barefoot, naked and uncircumcised, and some will be divided from that group to the left and taken to Hell. At that time Muhammad will quote the words of Jesus found in surah 5:117 and 118: "For God belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between. He createth what He pleaseth. For God hath power over all things...and unto Him is the final goal of all."

Muhammad states that, on the Day of the Resurrection, a call will go out to every nation to follow what they used to worship (6:65:4581, commentary on surah 4:40). Those who worshipped "idols and other deities will fall in Hell Fire, till there will remain none but those who were righteous pious ones and some of the people of the Scriptures." The Jews will then be called upon and asked: "what did you used to worship?" They will respond that they used to worship Ezra, the son of Allah. Christians will then be asked the same question, and will respond "we used to

worship Jesus, the son of Allah.” Both Jews and Christians will receive the same response, “You are liars, for Allah has never taken anyone as a wife or a son.” Then both will be thrown into the Hellfire. This will then leave only those who worship Allah alone. This narrative is repeated again in 9:97:7439, where “the people of the Cross” are associated with the first draft of idol worshippers. The remnant of Jews and Christians will see a mirage of Hell before them, then will be asked the question. Christians will state that they worship the “Masih” (Messiah), and God will respond “You are liars, for Allah has neither a wife nor a son.”

3.1.5 *Conclusion*

For Bukhari’s representation of Jesus, a key theme is that Jesus is a very special human prophet and messenger. In grouping the sayings of Muhammad found in Bukhari, immediately the issue of belief arises. One must believe in God alone, associating no partners with God. This theme runs through the other groupings. The narratives of Jesus on the Day of Resurrection show that he will have no power to affect anyone’s salvation, nor will those who worship him see that salvation. Additionally the sayings referring to the physical description of Jesus reinforce his humanity. Physical descriptions of Jesus are not found in the New Testament nor the Qur’an, but are significant to Bukhari and reinforce the humanity of Jesus.

Though the idea of Jesus’ humanity is key for Bukhari, the esteem that Muhammad gives to Jesus shows that he is one human who is greatly honoured by God. Jesus is close to Muhammad, the seal of the Prophets, and he is free from the touch of Satan; clearly he was no ordinary human being. This is bolstered by the

place Jesus holds in Muhammad's Night Journey – though there are prophets who hold their place in the higher heavens, and there are also prophets who are not even present in these places. There is then something unique or special about this man, one that leads those who follow Muhammad to honour him along with the Prophet himself.

3.2 A Survey of the Material on Jesus in Sahih Muslim

The hadith collection by Abul-Hussain 'Asakiruddin Muslim bin Hajjaj Al-Qushairi An-Naisaburi, or Imam Muslim (c. 206-261 A.H. [d. 875 C.E.]) contains many parallel accounts to the representation of Jesus found in Bukhari.³⁴¹ Imam Muslim, however, includes new information about Jesus in Islamic eschatology from the sayings of Muhammad. The sayings of Muhammad on the person of Jesus in this collection can be grouped into four areas: Muhammad and Jesus, Jesus and the Night Journey (physical description), Jesus and the Last Hour, and Jesus and the Day of Resurrection.

3.2.1 Muhammad and Jesus

As seen in Bukhari, Muslim collects a number of sayings attributed to Muhammad speaking about the relationship between the two prophets. According to this collection, there is no doubt that Muhammad revered Jesus very highly. For example, in book thirty Muslim collects three sayings of Muhammad 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).³⁴² 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.”

The honour of Jesus by Muhammad is seen in two other hadiths as well. The first speaks of the relationship between birth and religion. The mother of every person gives him birth according to his true nature. It is subsequently his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian. Had his parents been Muslim he would have also remained a Muslim. Every person to whom his mother gives birth has two aspects of life; when his mother gives birth Satan strikes him but it was not the case with Mary and her son (33:6429).

The second hadith is a Bukhari paralleled account of Jesus witnessing someone committing a theft. Jesus said to the person, “You committed theft. He said: Nay. By Him besides Whom there is no god I have not committed theft. Thereupon Jesus said: I affirm my faith in Allah, it is my own self that deceived me” (30:5840). A relatively small number of hadith, therefore, reinforce the belief that Jesus and Muhammad were close in prophethood and in person.

3.2.2 Jesus and the Night Journey (physical descriptions)

The honour placed upon Jesus in the sayings of Muhammad is also found in Muhammad’s statements on his Night Journey to the heavens. Paralleled in the

³⁴¹ Al-Hafiz Zakiuddin Abdul-Azim Al-Mundhiri, *The Translation of the Meanings of Summarized Sahih Muslim: Arabic – English – Volume 1* (Riyadh: Daryssalam, 2000), 10-11.

Bukhari collection, this narrative accounts for seven of the twenty-nine sayings of Muhammad mentioning Jesus in Muslim. In book one, saying 313, one finds the first account of the Night Journey. Here Muhammad recounts that at his house in Mecca the roof was opened and Gabriel entered the house, opening Muhammad's chest and washing it with Zamzam water. Gabriel then empties a golden basin of wisdom and faith into Muhammad's chest, thereby closing it back up again. Gabriel then takes Muhammad by the hand and leads him to the first heaven, where Muhammad meets Adam. As Muhammad reaches each level of heaven he meets one 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) mentioned that he found in the heavens Adam, Idris, 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 Idris... Then I passed by Moses... Then I passed by Jesus and he said: 'Welcome to the righteous apostles and righteous brother'... Then I went to Abraham.

A later account has Muhammad meeting Jesus in the second heaven, John and Joseph in the third heaven, Idris in the fourth, Harun in the fifth, Moses in the sixth, and Abraham in the seventh (1:314).

Among a number of these narratives of the Night Journey, Muhammad gives a physical description of Jesus. In 1:316, Muhammad states that "Jesus was a well-built person having curly hair." In the immediately following hadith, Muhammad adds that he saw "Jesus son of Mary as a medium-statured man with white and red complexion and crisp hair" (1:317). In 1:322 Muhammad adds that Jesus had a "red complexion as if he had just come out of the bath." Moreover, in two different

³⁴² All quotations from Sahih Muslim.

hadith, Muhammad compares Jesus to a companion by the name of 'Urwa B. Masu'd al-Thqafi (1:321 and 328).

In a different vision of Jesus at the Ka'bah, Muhammad gives another physical description of Jesus: "I saw near the Ka'bah a man of fair complexion with straight hair, placing his hands on two persons. Water was flowing from his head or it was trickling from his head. I asked: Who is he? They said: He is Jesus son of Mary or al-Masih son of Mary" (1:325).

Along with the honour Jesus received by Muhammad in the first section, again the level of heaven Jesus meets Muhammad at in the Night Journey also shows the degree of respect that Jesus is awarded. Other prophets, such as Moses and Abraham, however, are awarded more respect in the level of heaven they occupy. Additionally, again, the focus on a physical description of Jesus, although reflecting different traditions, is characteristic to the hadith and is an important discussion missed by scholars of Islam.

3.2.3 Jesus and the Last Hour

Jesus' involvement in the Islamic eschatology is key in the hadith collections. A discussion on Jesus' involvement on the Day of the Resurrection has been noted in Bukhari, 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 is recorded as giving ten signs of the Last Hour, including land slides in the East, West and Arabia, smoke, the Dajjal, 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 in this saying does not say which particular sign (e.g., one or ten) the Second Advent of Jesus was to be, a later hadith, 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-Dajjal, 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-Dajjal. 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-Dajjal. Jesus will be key to this unilateral action by God, being the instrument of God's justice.

In another account, at the height of al-Dajjal's power, he will call people to the wrong religion. Many will follow, but some will live in drought and famine to reject him.

And it would be at this very time Allah would send Christ, son of Mary, and he will descend at the white minaret in the eastern side of Damascus wearing two garments lightly dyed with saffron and placing his hands on the wings of two Angels. When he would lower his head, there would fall beads of perspiration from his head, and when he would raise it up, beads like pearls would scatter from it... He would then search for him (al-Dajjal) until he would catch hold of him at the gate of Ludd and would kill him. Then a people whom Allah had protected would come to Jesus, son of Mary, and he would wipe their faces and would inform them of their ranks in Paradise. (41:7015)

Thereafter Jesus and these people will go to Tur, where Gog and Magog will attack them with a vast number of people. They will attack the believers until the believers pray for God's help. God sends insects that kill all of them. Jesus and his companions will return, and upon smelling the dead will pray again. From this God will send birds that will carry away the bodies.

Following this, another hadith comments that Jesus will set up a peaceful rule for seven years (41:7023). Muhammad asks, "What would you do when the son of Mary would descend amongst you and would lead you as one amongst you... He would lead you according to the Book of your Lord and the Sunnah of your Apostle" (1:292). Jesus then will rule as a Muslim with Islamic law, during this time of peace. Another account states that Jesus will also "pronounce Talbiya for Hajj or for Umra or for both simultaneously as a Qiran in the valley of Rauha" (7:2877).

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-Dajjal and establish an Islamic rule over the earth, which includes leading Hajj and Umra. These hadith 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.

3.2.4 *The Day of the Resurrection*

The accounts of the eschaton in Muslim's collection do not end with the events of Jesus' second return. As found in Bukhari, 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 Allah 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, a servant whose former and later sins have been forgiven.” Muhammad 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 Allah and thou conversed with people in the cradle, thou art His Word which He sent down upon Mary, and thou art the Spirit from Him, so intercede for us with they 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 hi. He simple said: I am concerned with myself...you go to someone else: better go to Muhammad.

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

Another account about the Day of the Resurrection, which is also found in Bukhari, is when all people hear a proclaimer (Mu'adhadin) call them to follow the one whom they used to worship (1:352). Those who worship idols immediately will

be sent to hellfire, leaving those who worshipped God. The Jews will be asked whom they worshipped, and they will respond with: "We worshipped 'Uzair, son of Allah." They will be called liars because "Allah never had a spouse or a son," and will be thrown into the Fire. Christians will be asked the same thing, and they will respond: "We worshipped Jesus, son of Allah." They too will be called liars because God has no wife or son, and will then be thrown into the Fire. This will then leave only those who worship Allah.

So as with the events on the Last Hour, Jesus will play a role in the Day of the Resurrection. It seems, though, that his role will be significantly reduced, as Muhammad's role increases in the plan of God final salvation. One should note the Qur'anic titles attributed to Jesus (Spirit and Word of God) and the Qur'anic account of Jesus speaking as an infant found in this hadith. This event and these titles play a key role in the questioning of Jesus to intercede. Believers are convinced that Jesus will be able to intercede for them because he is a word and spirit from God, able to speak in the cradle. The role Jesus will play, however, is very little since he must be concerned with his own salvation. Moreover, those who worshipped him as son of God will not be saved.

3.2.4 *Conclusion*

The representation of Jesus found in Imam Muslim is one that is very similar to Bukhari's representation. One finds that two particular events are important for Muslim's representation of Jesus: the Day of Resurrection and the Last Hour. The events on the Day of Resurrection are paralleled in Bukhari, though contain different language and editing construction. However, what is unique to Muslim is the

discussion of the Last Hour, and the events that Jesus plays in them as a sign of that event. Jesus is God's instrument for the defeating of evil in the world. God works unilaterally with Jesus and the remnant of Muslims to defeat al-Dajjal, thereby setting up an Islamic rule under Jesus. The eschatological focus of the workings of Jesus in Muslim can lead one to say that Muslim's representation of Jesus is an eschatological one, as was Bukhari's.

Yet one should not discount the small material that does speak about past events, particularly Muhammad's Night Journey. A notable percentage of sayings address the physical description of Jesus found on Muhammad's Night Journey. As with Bukhari, these descriptions do not have much credence among those who write and speak about Islam, even about Jesus in Islam, though they do make up for a conspicuous amount of material on Jesus in both hadith collections.

The events of the Night Journey also show the respect Muhammad had for Jesus. Though meeting him only in the second heaven (or the fifth according to another hadith), Jesus is significant enough even to take a place in Muhammad's journey to the heavens. Muhammad's honour of Jesus is seen also in that the three brief hadith assert that Muhammad and Jesus are the closest Prophets. Noteworthy too is the one hadith where Muhammad is reported to say that Jesus was untouched by Satan.

Jesus, therefore, is seen in a very human way. The repetition of his physical characteristics and the reaffirmation of his being subject to God in his actions on the Last Hour subjugate any divine notion about the man. In fact, these hadith insist that those who worship Jesus as divine will be cast into hellfire on judgement day. Muslim's sayings of Muhammad present an eschatological Jesus. These sayings

reaffirm the Islamic denial of Jesus' divinity and maintains the Islamic idea that his is solely a prophet and messenger. Conversely, they also bring him closer to Muhammad.

3.3 Conclusion

In surveying the hadith collections of Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim, two particular ideas come to the forefront of the hadith representation of Jesus: the focus on the physical description and the eschatological work of Jesus. The description of Jesus' physical features is characteristic of both collections. These physical descriptions make up a good portion of Muslim and are a significant minority in Bukhari. Jesus is perceived by Muhammad as a man of medium build, broad shoulders, red or white complexion, and either dark curly or long straight hair. This is a particular "Islamic" representation of Jesus. Throughout the past two thousand centuries, Jesus has been depicted in vastly different ways in Christian art. He has been portrayed as a young Greek child sitting in the arms of the Virgin Mary, and as a European, dark haired and rail thin man hanging on a Roman cross. Yet there is more uniformity in an Islamic depiction based on the hadith collections.

Likewise the eschatological focus on the Islamic representation of Jesus plays a significant role in both hadith collections. The second advent of Jesus and the place of Jesus on the Day of Resurrection are central notions in the hadith material on Jesus. As with Christian depictions of the eschaton, the apocalyptic warrior Jesus figure looms large over God's definite plans for the culmination of human history. The presence of Jesus on the Day of the Resurrection shows his importance in Islamic salvation history, while his influence decreases.

Outside of these two key themes, several important other affirmations about Jesus emerge in the Hadith collections. These include that Muhammad saw the prophethood of Jesus as intimately related to his own. Jesus is further honoured by Muhammad in these collections. For instance Muhammad states that Jesus and Mary were untouched by Satan at their births. This may imply that both Jesus and Mary had a sinless nature, though Islam does not accept original sin. Additionally, along with the Qur'an, it is noteworthy to acknowledge the importance of Mary in these collections. Mary is seen as equal to the dearest wives of the Prophet Muhammad, and her name is found always in tandem with her son Prophet Jesus. However, despite the high reverence Jesus receives, the saying attributed to Muhammad clearly affirms that deifying Jesus in any way is a grave mistake. In his view, Jesus affirmed his belief in one God, and one who does the same will be blessed.

*Chapter Five - Summary, Insights and Questions for
Further Study*

1.0 Summary

An Islamic parable recounts a tale of three caravans beginning a journey together. As the journey becomes longer, the caravans come across an oasis. At that time one of the caravans stops and proceeds no further. The other two caravans continue the journey where, once again, after a long period of travel, they come across a second oasis whereby another caravan decides to stop. The third caravan continues past the second oasis and finally comes to the destination, where the travelers are rewarded with the greatest oasis of the three.

In the proper context, this parable notes how the three major monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, proceeded along the straight path of faith. Judaism and Christianity only traveled a portion of the faith journey, whereby Islam completed the journey in its fullness. Yet this parable can also relate to the movement of this thesis. 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.

In the second chapter, I researched the vast amount of material produced by two popular Muslim polemicists: Ahmed Deedat and Jamal Badawi. In order better to survey their material, I subdivided the data into presentations of debate and lecture. The debate material was found in public dialogue with Christian polemicists, while the lecture material was found from public presentations aimed primarily

towards educating the Islamic community. Within each of these categories, I found that there were both negative and positive affirmations about the person of Jesus. Negative affirmations are those statements that developed from a deconstruction of an opposing assertion (i.e., Jesus is not like this...). For example, Deedat affirms the humanity of Jesus by revising the narrative account of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection found in the New Testament. Deedat reinterprets and accentuates particular narratives found within the text to affirm the Islamic notion that Jesus did not die on the cross, but was saved from death by God. Positive affirmations are those statements where Deedat and Badawi make assertions about the Islamic Jesus from their own tradition, normally taking material from the Islamic scriptures (i.e., Jesus is like this...). We find, for example, Badawi listing fourteen points from the Qur'an about Jesus. These included Jesus' virgin birth from Mary, Qur'anic titles of Jesus, performing miracles and his prophetic mission.

After examining the material of these two polemicists, I found that their representations of Jesus were very similar. Each polemicist made similar affirmations, despite differences in presentation, style, format and interpretation of the crucifixion event. 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*. Both polemicists spend the bulk of their public debate and lecture time on this single affirmation, especially in effort to deconstruct Christian representation of Jesus. 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, Deedat and Badawi point to the office and mission given to him and the titles attributed to him in the Qur'an. Jesus, therefore, has an unparalleled level of regard among the affirmations of these polemicists.

The third was the affirmation that *Jesus had a particular message and mission*. Here Deedat and Badawi 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 these polemicists 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 these polemicists becomes an important first 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 Western world, therefore making their teachings an important area of investigation.

The third chapter turned to another area of public presentation on the Islamic Jesus. This is the area of academic publications by scholars of World Religions and Islam. This chapter sought to find what sort of representations of the Islamic Jesus could be found among those who work and are trained in the academic study of religion. To discover any distinctive representations of Jesus, I decided to survey a considerable number of introductions to Islam, texts that explain the beliefs and practices of Muslims. As noted in the chapter, several criteria were employed to restrict the number of texts examined, thereby providing thirty-eight different introductions to Islam.

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. I 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 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.

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. This chapter noted two particular miracles recounted in the Qur'an significant to Jesus' mission: the miracles of food and creation, which have debatable origins; the Last Supper of the New Testament and a miracle narrative of non-canonical Christian gospel.

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.

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, the seal of the prophets, under the name Ahmad. The name of Ahmad is found in the Torah and in the Gospel, and is a pseudonym for Muhammad. The name "Ahmad" 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.

The third chapter concluded with a division into three groups of all the scholars' introductions to Islam. Each group was representative of the amount of material dedicated to Jesus in the respective introduction. These include introductions with a little amount of material, a moderate amount and a significant amount of material on the Islamic understanding of Jesus. I concluded this chapter by deducing some possible reasons for such differences. Two possible reasons were faith affiliation and historical time period of the writing. Faith affiliation is the assumption that one's religious presuppositions, to either Christianity or Islam, or neither, affected the amount of material dedicated to Jesus. The historical time period of the text questions whether or not the effects of globalization in the last twenty years create the need for a greater empathy when writing on the religious "other."

The fourth chapter completed the journey of this thesis with an examination of the key Islamic texts: the Qur'an and hadith. Here in this chapter I isolated all the Qur'anic passages dealing with Jesus, placing each reference in context of the passage where it occurs. This highlighted the importance of the person Mary, the birth narratives, and the polemic against the People of the Book in the Qur'anic narratives. The most qualitatively significant material about Jesus was found in the birth and infancy narratives of surahs 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 Qur'an, the fourth chapter continued its investigation of the Islamic texts by exploring the hadith collections of Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim. Within these large collections of sayings, deeds and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, I found that there were two key ideas particular to the hadith. The first unique aspect of the hadith 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 hadith representation of Jesus is the focus on his eschatological work. As seen in Imam Muslim's collection, Jesus' eschatological work begins with the rise of al-Dajjal. 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 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. 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.

This examination of the Islamic scriptures flushed out some interesting insights to the way they are used by the intellectuals examined in the second and third chapters. The following section will deal with these and other insights, and raise some important questions for future study.

2.0 Insights and Questions for Further Study

The idea of perspective has been a crucial question for me in this thesis. I discovered that, whether it was a polemicist, or an academic, or the Qur'an, 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'anic 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 among Muslim theologians and the quest for the historical Muhammad 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.”³⁴³ 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.³⁴⁴ 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 Qur’an, such as speaking as an infant and the creation of a bird from clay. We have seen that Badawi deals with these questions when pressed,

³⁴³ M. Darrol Bryant, “Can there be Muslim-Christian Dialogue Concerning Jesus/Isa?” In M. Darrol Bryant and S. A. Ali (eds.), *Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Promise and Problems* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1998), 162.

claiming that the parallel within non-canonical Christian writings (e.g., *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*) shows a historical nature to the Islamic representation of Jesus. Other Islamic scholars like, Muhib. Opeloye and Abdullah Yusuf Ali, also assert that these parallel accounts of the Qur'anic narratives in these non- canonical gospels demonstrate some evidence of historicity.³⁴⁵

Academic questions of historical origin and derivation, thirdly, cause one to wonder whether or not such historically earlier materials influenced the Qur'anic statements. Ovey Mohammad states that Christianity was too divided, often along cultural lines in Arabia, and therefore Muhammad'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: "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."³⁴⁶ Thus adoption and adaptation of earlier Jesus traditions also needs to be further examined.

Fourth, not only did questions about origins of the Islamic ideas about Jesus arise in my research, but the question of whether or not Islamic sources could be used for discovering any information about the historical Jesus. The absence of any reference to early Islamic writings and traditions as sources on Jesus in contemporary Jesus research is obvious. Though these traditions may be historically and geographically removed from Nazareth and Jerusalem, they may have roots in oral

³⁴⁴ M. Darrol Bryant, "Can there be Muslim-Christian Dialogue," 173.

³⁴⁵ Muhib. O. Opeloye, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Scriptural Theme to Promote Muslims-Christian Dialogue." In M. Darrol Bryant and S. A. Ali (eds.), *Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Promise and Problems* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1998), 135.

traditions about Jesus that occur earlier than the seventh century of the Common Era. Kate Zebiri, in surveying historical Muslim and Christian literature on each other, notes that only a couple of Muslim scholars seek to study the historical Jesus question by using Islamic sources (i.e., the Qur'an, the hadith and other Islamic traditions). This is along with their use of more traditional sources of historical Jesus research, including examining early Christian writing supporting the Islamic representation of Jesus.³⁴⁷ Though these scholars' conclusions seem to determine that the Islamic representation of Jesus is more accurate than the modern reconstructed Christian historical Jesus, the question of using Islamic sources for such research can be probed further.

Fifth, 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 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 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

³⁴⁶ Ovey N. Mohammad, *Muslim-Christian Relations: Past – Present – Future* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 62.

³⁴⁷ Zebiri makes reference to the work of 'Ata ur-Rahim, among others, who makes a particular effort to affirm Islamic sources as valid sources in historical Jesus research. Though she notes that the conclusions of these scholars reflect their Islamic faith by concluding that all the reliable

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.³⁴⁸ It would be wise to establish Christian-Muslim dialogue on the person of Jesus.

Additionally, sixth, 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 Qur’anic statements on Jesus are really infancy narratives with a “prolonged sequel.”³⁴⁹ Mary factors importantly within these nativity narratives, and is always included in Qur’anic and hadith references to Jesus as the “son of Mary.” The reverence for Mary in Islam and by the Prophet Muhammad 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 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 put his hands on the picture of Jesus and Mary and said, “Wash out all except what is below my hands.”³⁵⁰

The historicity of this narrative is in question, but nevertheless it shows how even the earliest Muslims noted the high regard Muhammad had for Mary. This being so,

sources for the historical Jesus show an Islamic representation as being more authentic. See Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 60-61.

³⁴⁸ William Phipps, *Muhammad and Jesus: A Comparison of the Prophets and Their Teachings* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 2.

³⁴⁹ Kenneth Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 26.

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 hadith, 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.

Second, it is important to note the use of the hadith collections by these scholars. Ahmed Deedat and two-thirds of the academics examined make no reference at all to the hadith. Badawi and the one third of scholars who make reference to the hadith do so only briefly, seemingly downplaying its importance. I have even noted that the scholars who do make a reference to the affirmations from the hadith do not actually refer to the particular hadith collections as their source. Rather, they note that these affirmations come from Sufi, Sunni or Shi'ia traditions. What this absence implies can be debated: either ignorance or editing.

³⁵⁰ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995), 66.

What is also discovered here is that those academics who do implicitly refer to the hadith ignore some key affirmations about Jesus, such as the physical description given by Imams Bukhari and Muslim, and the idea of closeness. Badawi, however, does speak of these two notions in debate. Instead, however, the references scholars do make to the hadith sayings focus on either one of the two eschatological events of Jesus: his second advent and his role on the Day of Judgment. This absence of the eschatological events, believed to be prophesied by the Prophet Muhammad, could be paralleled to the ignorance of the eschatological Jesus found in scholars of the Christian Origins. Contemporary research value has been in examining the historical Jesus, as juxtaposed to the “Christ of Faith.” The Christ of Faith includes the eschatological Jesus found in New Testament books like Revelation. The Jesus of Islam also includes the eschatological representation found in the hadith, and needs further examination. Its absence makes little sense, therefore, since there is seems to be little interest by academics to discover the “historical” Jesus of Islam in scholarship.

Deedat and Badawi’s methodology for creating a representation of Jesus extends past the use of the Qur’an and the hadith. They both employ an examination of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. In fact, I would dare say that these are the primary sources in their polemical methodology, even more than the Qur’an and hadith. Both negative and positive affirmations for the Islamic Jesus are based in the Jewish and Christian canons. Badawi makes use of the Hebrew Scriptures in trying to deconstruct Christian interpretations of the “Messianic” passages found in places such as the Psalms and Isaiah. Both polemicists also recount the words from Job that say no one born of a woman can be righteous (Job

15:14). The New Testament, understandably, becomes the crucial strategic foundation for Deedat and Badawi's efforts. Deedat exhausts considerable amount of energy and time with the passion narratives of the New Testament gospels, while Badawi focuses more on reinterpreting the sayings attributed to Jesus and the claims made by others in the Gospels about Jesus (e.g., John 14:13).

Badawi by far has the most comprehensive methodology for developing a representation of Jesus from negative affirmations. In debate Badawi makes references to other non-canonical writings, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* along with contemporary writings of scholars, such as John Hick and other biblical commentators and historical theologians in his examination of the theological theme of unitarianism in Christian historical thought. As such, on one end of the spectrum, Badawi would incorporate all five of the above-mentioned sources in his methodology. Many academics only incorporate one source, the Qur'an, in their representation of Jesus in Islam. This may be indicative of the reasons for each scholar's work, Badawi being more polemical in his method, and the academics being more exploratory.

An eighth insight or question deals with the breadth of this study. In this thesis I have concentrated upon scholars in the Western world and upon English translations of the Arabic Islamic scriptures. A study on Islamic representations of Jesus can be expanded much further. The religion of Islam covers much of the world, and the majority of research over the past fourteen centuries has been in languages other than English – particularly Arabic and Urdu. There is a wealth of information on the scholarly Islamic representations of Jesus in these languages that can be explored further.

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 so do field research with Muslim believers from many different cultural societies. Even the Western focus of this thesis could be broadened by doing field research among North American Muslims, to grasp what sort of representations of Jesus are found in the practitioners of a living religious tradition.

3.0 Conclusion

This examination of the Islamic Jesus has only scratched the surface of what a broader study of Islamic representations of Jesus could become. As with any study, more questions arise than are answered. Nevertheless, what has been researched here has been valuable. For the young North American university student, the first encounter with the Islamic religious tradition and the Islamic representation of Jesus will often be through the public discourses of polemicists, the pages of an introduction to Islam, and/or the Islamic scriptures. The representation of Jesus found in these different public forums becomes one that will influence a person's understanding of that religious idea throughout their lives. If the representation is shallow or merely echoes the same ideas as every other representation, then the student may not fully understand or sympathize with that representation.

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 adds:

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.³⁵¹

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,³⁵² it becomes fruitful for an academic of religion to understand how the ultimate concern of Christians and Muslims are played out through the person of Jesus, a figure of great magnitude in both traditions.

³⁵¹ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 11.

³⁵² See Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

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