

Competing Christian Narratives on the Qur'an

C. Jonn Block

What I have prepared here for Bridging the Divide is an adaptation of two sections from my recently published work.¹ This paper is divided into four sections. I will begin with a review of some notable recent ecumenical Christian scholarship of the Qur'an. Secondly, I will present introductions to two polemical texts from Christian-Muslim dialogue history that were manufactured in order to steer Qur'anic interpretations in dialogue. Thirdly, I will make some brief comments on the recent trend of rational antagonism in Qur'anic historical study. Finally, I will present some of the Qur'anic exegetical issues I have been challenged to face as a result of my years of work in the historical discipline. If you are limited for time, start on page 15 with Expanding the Qur'anic Bridge.

The Christianization of the Qur'an

The 'Christianization of the Qur'an' can admittedly transmit several meanings. Here it is exclusive of the use of Christian hermeneutics to disprove the Qur'an's validity. That is the realm of polemics, and may be exemplified by the work of Raouf and Carol Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur'an*.² What we speak of here is the use of Christian and secular (Western) hermeneutical principles to re-interpret the Qur'an in the context of its congruence with a Christian worldview, and/or its congruence with its own historical context, irrespective of how congruent or incongruent that re-interpretation is with traditional Islamic commentary.³ Goldziher, a Jewish ecumenist, for example,

¹ C. Jonn Block, *The Qur'an in Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Historical and Modern Interpretations*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, *Islamic Culture and Civilization* (London: Routledge, 2013).

² R. G. Ghattas and Carol Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur'an : Building Bridges in Muslim Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2009). Veiled as a bridge-building endeavour, this work is a commentary on the Qur'an, specifically designed to help the Christian reader of the Qur'an to identify proposed similarities and contradictions between the Qur'an and the Bible, and adds tips for the Christian on how to exploit both similarities and discrepancies for the efficient benefit of Christian evangelism.

³ Though as historians such as Sidney Griffith have argued, the Qur'an seems to some to present itself as inherently Christian. The Qur'an itself argues for its Christianization from the perspective of the Bible being its primary background for interpretation. Griffith highlights that, "even a cursory glance at the text of the Qur'an is sufficient to remind the most casual reader that it presumes in its audience a ready familiarity with the stories of the principal narrative figures of the Old and New Testaments." See Sidney H. Griffith, "The Bible and the 'People of the Book'," in *Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church: 40th Anniversary of Dei Verbum* (Rome: Catholic Biblical Federation, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 2005), 22. For a good dialogical inquiry on the compatibility of Muslim and Christian views of the role of prophethood in scripture see Paul L. Heck, *Common Ground : Islam, Christianity, and Religious Pluralism* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), Ch. 1.

parallels the “steep path” of Sura 90:11-12 to the narrow gate of Matthew 7:13, and the cry for social justice in Q90:12-18 to Isaiah 58:6-9.⁴ Even these materials build relationship between the texts.

The Qur’an itself directly acknowledges its Biblical subtext: “In matters of faith, He has laid down for you [people] the same commandment that He gave Noah, which We have revealed to you [Muhammad] and which We enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus: ‘Uphold the faith and do not divide into factions within it.’” (Q42:13), and “So if you [Prophet] are in doubt about what We have revealed to you, ask those who have been reading the scriptures before you. The Truth has come to you from your Lord, so be in no doubt and do not deny God’s signs—then you would become one of the losers.” (Q10:94-95).

For ecumenical voices, the inter-textual practice is very personal, and the re-interpretation sometimes more radical. Bassetti-Sani and Brian Arthur Brown provide several good examples. The lists of prophetic voices in the Qur’an take on Christian meaning, as they use Biblical hermeneutical principles in order to show Jesus as the focal point of key passages.⁵ For example:

Say [Muhammad], ‘We [Muslims] believe in God,
and in what has been sent down to us,
and to Abraham,
Ishmael, Isaac,
Jacob, and the Tribes.
We believe in what has been given to Moses,
Jesus,
and the prophets from their Lord.
We do not make a distinction between any of the [prophets].
It is to Him that we devote ourselves.

If anyone seeks a religion
other than [*islam*] complete devotion to God,
it will not be accepted from him:
he will be one of the losers in the Hereafter.
(Q3:84-85, arrangement his)⁶

Even though the text states very clearly that God does not distinguish between Abraham and Jesus, Bassetti-Sani sees more here through a Christian hermeneutical lens. He reads this as a structured

⁴ Ignaz Goldziher and others, *Mohammed and Islam*, Exploring the House of Islam : Perceptions of Islam in the Period of Western Ascendancy, 1800-1945, vol. 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 19.

⁵ Brian A. Brown, *Noah’s Other Son : Bridging the Gap between the Bible and the Qu’ran* (New York ; London: Continuum, 2008). Brown’s contribution will be discussed below.

⁶ Giulio Bassetti-Sani, *The Koran in the Light of Christ : A Christian Interpretation of the Sacred Book of Islam* (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 149.

symmetrical parallelism, common in Biblical passages. The passage places Jesus as the center of two outward reaching references to Islam, that of Abraham, and that about which the reader is learning here in the revelation given to Muhammad. In the center of the two 'Islams' stands Jesus, positioned between the law (Moses) and the prophets, as an allusion to the Transfiguration.⁷ On Mount Tabor, the Gospels relate that Moses and Elijah stood on either side of Jesus, representing the law and the prophets respectively.⁸

In another example from Bassetti-Sani, he reinterprets Sura 97 as a reference to the eve of the Incarnation itself.

We sent it down on the Night of Glory. What will explain to you what that Night of Glory is? The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months; on that night the angels and the Spirit descend again and again with their Lord's permission on every task; [there is] peace that night until the break of dawn. (Q97:1-5)

It is perhaps a blasphemous commentary from an Islamic interpretive perspective, but if the text is read in isolation from its traditional *tafsir*, there seems to be nothing in the text itself to prevent such an interpretation in light of Bassetti-Sani's understanding of the Qur'an as a revelation that upholds both the Incarnation and the Trinity.⁹ The traditional Islamic interpretation is that the Night of Glory is that night on which Muhammad received the first revelation. Bassetti-Sani argues that this interpretation is not rational, as the Qur'an was revealed over time, and the only 'Word of God' which was sent in a single night was that referred to in Q4:171, Jesus.

A third example presented by Bassetti-Sani is from Q2:87-91. He presents the passage as a correction of the Jews concerning Jesus' message. Noting that Jesus is expressly mentioned in v.87, Bassetti-Sani dismisses the traditional interpretation that this passage refers to the Jewish rejection of Muhammad. The last verse reads,

When it is said to them, 'Believe in God's revelations,' they reply, 'We believe in what was revealed to us,' but they do not believe in what came afterwards, though it is the truth confirming what they already have. Say [Muhammad], 'Why did you kill God's prophets in the past if you were true believers? (Q2:91).

⁷ Ibid., 149., cf. Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36. That Noah and Adam as prophets preceded Abraham is not a concern for Bassetti-Sani, who notes that in a similar passage Noah is listed after Abraham (Q6:83-86), indicating Abraham as a kind of founder of Islam, though others were guided before him.

⁸ Cf. Luke 9:18-36

⁹ Bassetti-Sani, 153-154. He does the same for Q44:1-4.

Jesus is given the Holy Spirit (v.87; cf. Matthew 3:16, 4:1, 12:8; Acts 4:27, 10:38 et al.), and his accusation in Luke 11:43 of the Jews pridefulness may be echoed here.¹⁰ In verse 91 of this passage, Bassetti-Sani identifies, “*the truth* confirming what they already have,” as Jesus, “The Truth,” of John 14:6. He proposes that in many cases, the term “the truth” (*al-ḥaqq*) in the Qur’an may be replaced with the name of Jesus and find its meaning unchanged or even enhanced. For instance, the “Day of Truth” in Q78:39 may be understood as the day when even according to Muslims the mystery of Jesus will be finally revealed.

Finally, Muhammad is directed to ask the Jews why they murder their prophets, at the end of this passage. For Bassetti-Sani, this is a direct parallel to Matthew 23:34 when Jesus makes the same accusation of the Jews, and an allusion to Stephen’s speech before his martyrdom in Acts 7.

Whether by a Christian or Muslim, historical critical or literary hermeneutics often yield interesting new possibilities for Qur’anic interpretation. For example, the case of circumcision in v.88 of Bassetti-Sani’s interpretation of Q2:87-91, contains a literary allusion to Romans 2:29 if it is interpreted critically. The Qur’an quotes the Jews as saying, “قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ” (*qulubunā ghulf*). The phrase is repeated precisely in Q4:155, where too it is quoted of the Jews. It should be kept in mind that this phrase in the original Kufic script would not have carried on it the diacritics to distinguish between غُلْفٌ and غُلُقٌ.¹¹ The distinction in meaning between the two words here is interesting. The former is defined by Haleem and Badawi as, “to cover, to wrap, to seal, to be uncircumcised; to be covered with vegetation,” where the second is defined, “to close, to shut, to lock, to bolt; to be impatient, to be dumbfounded.”¹² Yet in Haleem’s English Qur’an, the former term is given the latter’s meaning in translation in Q4:155, “Our minds are closed,” though neither “mind” nor “closed” occur overtly in the Arabic text here. The phrase is variously translated, “Our hearts are the wrappings,” by Yusuf Ali, “Our minds are made up,” by Rashad Khalifa, and both, “Our hearts are sealed,” (Q2:88) and “Our hearts are layered over,” (Q4:155) by The Monotheist Group.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 156-158.

¹¹ The Topkapi manuscript shows at two layers of diacritics, black and red. This particular word is difficult to make out, but seems to be marked with the single mark of a *fā* in black rather than the dual mark of a *qāf* in Q2:88. In Q4:155 the word is more clearly marked as a *fā*. Tayyar Altikulac, *Al-Mushaf Al-Sharif: Attributed to Uthman Bin Affan* (Istanbul, Turkey: Organization of the Islamic Conference Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 2007), 16, 127.

¹² El-Said M. Badawi and M. A. Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1, the near and Middle East, vol. 85 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 673.

¹³ Rashad Khalifa, *Quran : The Final Testament : Authorized English Version, with the Arabic Text*, Rev. 4. ed. (Capistrano Beach, CA: Islamic Productions, 2005), 13.; Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*, 11 ed.

The noun form of the verb *ghulf* is *ghulfa* (غُلْفَة) which is the male foreskin. The text of Q2:88 and 4:155 (*qulubunā ghulf*) presents itself literally as, “our hearts are wrapped in foreskin,” or simply, uncircumcised. The phrase in Arabic bears striking resemblance to Jeremiah 4:4, which commands the Jews to, “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart” (הַמְלִי לַיהוָה, (וְהָסְרוּ עֶרְלוֹת לְבַבְכֶם, אִישׁ יְהוּדָה).¹⁴ Paul uses the same imagery in Romans 2:29, “No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God’s Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.”

The use of circumcision in the Bible in spiritual metaphorical terms is very likely behind the context of the Qur’an here. It is not strictly inaccurate to translate “uncircumcised hearts” as “closed minds” from a dynamic translation perspective, however, this translation can only be validated in light of the biblical context behind the use of the metaphor. The English translators therefore indicate by their choice of phraseology, an understanding of and allegiance to the meaning of the “uncircumcised hearts” metaphor in its biblical presentation. It is unclear whether the translation of “uncircumcised hearts” as “closed minds” is meant to lead the English reader of the Qur’an toward the biblical meaning of the metaphor, or away from the similarity in phraseology between the texts.¹⁵ One may posit that the literal English translation of the Arabic text, “our hearts are uncircumcised” (*qulubunā ghulf*) would be clear at least to Christian readers of the English Qur’an, and so the use of varied phraseology in English may be intended to communicate faithfully the meaning of the text, without revealing its biblical literary subtext to non-specialist Christian readers of the English translations of the Qur’an.

Brian Arthur Brown is, like Bassetti-Sani, a contemporary complementarian interpreter. He presents the texts of the Qur’an and Bible as congruent, and presents his findings focused on the stories of characters shared between the texts. For example, in the story of Noah, the Biblical record presents him as having three sons, and a grandson named Canaan through his son Ham. The Qur’an, however, presents Noah as having a fourth son named Canaan who refused to board the ark and thus died in the

(Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2006), 41.; The Monotheist Group, *The Message: A Translation of the Glorious Qur’an* (USA: Bainbow Press, 2008), 8, 57.

¹⁴ Cf. Leviticus 26:41. Moses is said to have uncircumcised lips (Exodus 6:12, 30), and the Jews have uncircumcised ears (Jeremiah 6:10). There is a spiritual meaning to circumcision in the Bible that is distinguished from the physical, “‘A time is coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will punish all those who are circumcised in body but not in spirit...’” (Jeremiah 9:25).

¹⁵ Willful ignorance of the metaphorical significance of the “uncircumcised heart” in Judeo-Christian tradition is the accusation made by Gabriel Said Reynolds against modern interpreters and translators of the Qur’an. In his extended study of this Qur’anic reference, he comments that though the early *mufassirūn* may have not known of the metaphorical meaning, contemporary translators, “have no such excuse.” Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur’an and its Biblical Subtext*, ed. Andrew Rippin, Routledge Studies in the Quran (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010), 152.

flood. Brown discusses the Genesis 19:18-27 passage as uninterpretable without the Qur'anic material. He notes that without the Qur'an, Biblical interpreters would never know that Ham had named his son Canaan after his lost brother Canaan, who died in the flood. Further, it would not be known that it was this fourth son Canaan, and not Canaan the son of Ham who was the object of Noah's impassioned cry, "May Canaan be cursed! May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives" (Genesis 9:24). This curse has been used historically by Christians in the Biblical defence of slavery, but now may be shown in new light. Thus, "this episode provides an instance where knowledge of the Qur'an resolves a textual conundrum in the biblical text."¹⁶

The approach of the ecumenists toward the Qur'an departs from traditional missional approach, which Rashid Rida describes as: using the Qur'an to prove the accuracy of the Torah and the Gospel, then using the Torah and the Gospel as accurate, to disprove the Qur'an.¹⁷ Rather, we should perhaps be looking for harmony between the texts, though, as Ayoub notes, "Rida [himself] considers the books of the Old and New Testament to be a mixture of myth, legend, and history alone with the true biblical message as revealed by God. Thus, the Qur'an alone remains as the source concerning which there is no doubt..."¹⁸

Though it may not strictly be considered an exercise in dialogue, the inter-textual disciplines are revealing previously unacknowledged Christian sub-text in the Qur'anic revelations. This may add to our understanding of the Qur'an's own voice in the dialogue. This Biblical sub-text cannot be considered shocking from a Qur'anic standpoint, as the Qur'an states itself to be a continuation of the Christian tradition. However, these may be challenging to the Islamic view of the Qur'an as a pre-existent expression of God, and independent of textual and contextual influences. Two examples are pertinent here, and will be briefly introduced: *The Sleepers of Ephesus* and *The Alexander Legend*.¹⁹

The Sleepers of Ephesus is of pre-Islamic Christian origin, and is preserved both in the surah of the cave (*al-Kahf*) Q18:9-26 as the *Companions of the Cave*, and in pre-Islamic Syriac Christian texts. Sidney Griffith notes the story to be prefaced by a warning against the heresy of those who say, "God

¹⁶ Brown, 53. A brief review of the traditional presentations of the flood narrative by Christians, Muslims, and Jews may be found here: Jack P. Lewis, "Noah and the Flood: In Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 47, no. 4 (1984).

¹⁷ Rida summarized in Mahmoud Ayoub and Irfan A. Omar, *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue, Faith Meets Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 219.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁹ A good introduction to these works in the Qur'an is in A. F. L. Beeston, *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 209-211.

has offspring” and a reminder of the authority of the Qur’anic revelation (Q18:4, 9), and concluded with a reminder to Muhammad to, “follow what has been revealed to you of your Lord’s Scripture: there is no changing His words, nor can you find any refuge except with Him” (Q18:27). In Q18:10-20 God relates the story, and in Q18:21-26 God clarifies the details. In the latter half, God takes credit for the fact that the story is well known (v.21) and clarifies that God knows best the real details (v.26).²⁰

The earliest extant texts date from the Syriac recensions of the works of Jacob of Serugh (c.451-521).²¹ Read in the light of its pre-Islamic origins, Griffith notes that, “the Qur’an evokes the memory of the story, which it presumes is common knowledge among its audience or at least that the legend was known to Muhammad, with whom Allah actually speaks about it.”²² Phraseological echoes quickly highlight the relationship between the Qur’an and the Syriac recensions. Griffith notes the relationship clearly: “the youths (*al-fitya* // *ṭlāyê*) took shelter (*awā* // *bātw*) in the cave (v.10); they prayed for their Lord’s mercy and right guidance (v.10); Allāh shut their ears for a number of years (v.11); and finally Allāh roused them (v.12).” For each statement, Griffith provides the manuscript reference for the Syriac parallel.²³

The *Alexander Legend* is another example of the Qur’anic employ of Christian narratives.²⁴ Preserved in the Qur’an as the story of Dhū al-Qaranayn (*The Two-horned One*; Q18:83-102), the *Alexander Legend* was a propaganda piece reportedly written about 8/630, from the camp of Heraclius (r.610-20/641) which told of particular events of around 6/628-7/629, and began with the Huns’ destruction of Alexander’s wall.²⁵ Bladel shows that, “many of the correspondences between the Syriac and the Arabic stories are so obvious that they do not need special attention.”²⁶ The story was likely aimed at the Monophysites, which could possibly account for its transmission among the Arab Christians of Muhammad’s time. “There are many indicators that the Alexander Legend could easily have reached

²⁰ This is not the place to go into depth on this story. Only some brief information will be given here. The reader is directed to Sidney Griffith in Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur’an in its Historical Context*, ed. Andrew Rippin, Routledge Studies in the Quran (New York: Routledge, 2008), 116-131. See also Reynolds, *The Qur’an and its Biblical Subtext*, 167-185.

²¹ Reynolds, *The Qur’an in its Historical Context*, 120.

²² *Ibid.*, 125.

²³ *Ibid.*, 127, esp. nn. 77-80.

²⁴ The *Alexander Legend* is independent from and not to be confused with the *Alexander Romance*, often discussed together. See Bladel in *ibid.*, 175.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 188. Though the story was likely popularized very quickly, and contained in three seventh century apocalypses by different authors, there are no pre-Islamic sources as the story took place during the life of Muhammad. Bladel explores the possibility that the Qur’anic recension is the origin of the story, but concludes this as impossible.

²⁶ For example, the Syriac twice relates Alexander to have horns on his head, given to him by God (cf. Q18:83). Alexander travels to “near where the sun sets, in the direction of the place where the sun rises” (cf. Q18:86, 90). In Syriac he is given Egyptian “workers in brass and iron” (cf. Q18:96), and upon completion of the gates, Alexander foretells of great eschatological battles (cf. Q18:99). See *ibid.*, 180-181.

the community at Medina or Mecca and that, when it did, it would have been meaningful to them.”²⁷ This story as recorded in the Qur’an appears congruent with the Qur’anic focus on its contemporary political events and concerns. The story originates in the political camp of Heraclius, and finds its way into the Qur’anic narrative on political issues of Muhammad’s day.

The recent re-discovery of these two examples in the historical discipline is not strictly indicative of the Christianization of the Qur’an, but rather the Islamicization of Christian history as it is recorded in the formative Qur’an. The Qur’an, it appears, assumes its readership’s knowledge of Christian religious materials even outside of the Torah and *Injil*, in these cases, a sermon illustration and a political tract.

On the Texts Concerning *Bahīra* and Barnabas in Dialogue History

During the history of Christian-Muslim dialogue, two interesting texts were written to support competing narratives concerning the Qur’an. One was as an attempt at the Islamicization of the Bible in order to bolster the Islamic narrative concerning the Qur’an.²⁸ The *Gospel of Barnabas* is used even by contemporary commentators such as Muhammad Abū Zahrah and Ahmed Shalabi,²⁹ though Ayoub admits that it is a late work.³⁰ Ata ur-Rahim’s use of the text exemplifies its meaning to Muslim scholars.

Ata ur-Rahim’s polemical work defends the *Gospel of Barnabas*.³¹ He claims that, “The Gospel of Barnabas covers Jesus’ life more accurately than the other Gospels; and the *Qur’an* and the *Hadīth* further clarify the picture of who Jesus really was.”³² As Oddbjørn Leirvik summarizes, “In the Gospel of Barnabas, Jesus vehemently denies that he is the Son of God, and repeatedly foretells the coming of Muhammad. In consonance with dominant interpretations of the Qur’an, he is substituted on the cross by Judas.”³³ Ata ur-Rahim adds that the *Gospel of Barnabas* was a source text for Iranaeus, who was a unitarian Christian,³⁴ and that the *Gospel of Barnabas* was included in the *Codex Sinaiticus*.³⁵ These last two claims draw attention to the text.

²⁷ Ibid., 191.

²⁸ Lonsdale and Laura Ragg Ragg, *The Gospel of Barnabas* (Lexington, KY: Forgotten Books, 2008).

²⁹ Ayoub and Omar, 223. It is also rebutted by Moucary: C. G. Moucary, *The Prophet & the Messiah: An Arab Christian’s Perspective on Islam & Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 247-250.

³⁰ Ayoub and Omar, 173.

³¹ Muhammad Ata ur-Rahim, *Jesus Prophet of Islam*, Rev. ed. (Elmhurst NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an Inc., 2003), CH. 5.

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Oddbjørn Leirvik, "History as a Literary Weapon: The Gospel of Barnabas in Muslim-Christian Polemics," *Studia Theologica* 54, no. (2001): 4.

³⁴ Ata ur-Rahim, 78.

³⁵ Ibid., 141.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* in the *Codex Sinaiticus* is an entirely different work from the *Gospel of Barnabas*. The two do not resemble each other in style, content, meaning or details. It cannot be said that they are works of the same author. The *Gospel of Barnabas*, is, according to specialist Jan Joosten, "...originally an Italian text and that it may reasonably be assigned a fourteenth-century date."³⁶ Far from the Biblical languages of Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, the early Christian Syriac, or post-Islamic Arabic, this *Gospel of Barnabas* is of 14th century Italian origin.³⁷ Zahniser agrees, the *Gospel of Barnabas* is a "medieval forgery," which contradicts even the Qur'an itself.³⁸ Its appearance as a work of polemical fiction is reminiscent of the *Legend of Sergius Bahīrā*, of arguably equal creativity, likely equally intended for polemical function, and ultimately equally void of historical value.

The second literary piece crafted for the competition between narratives on the Qur'an was the *Legend of Sergius Bahīra* from the early 3rd/9th century, which for that period may be called a benchmark for dialogue on Muhammad's prophethood. The legend is a back projection of the historical events of the early history of Islam, through a Christian apocalyptic lens, with the story of Bahīra the monk woven in.³⁹ What is interesting about this piece is its novel attempt to explain the rise of Islam from a Christian perspective, even at this late date and by Christians under Islamic rule. It is an, "artfully conceived exercise in apocalypse and apologetic, carefully plotted and well-articulated."⁴⁰ *The Legend of Bahīrā* is

³⁶ Jan Joosten, "The Date and Provenance of the Gospel of Barnabas," *Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 1 (2010): 201.

³⁷ Joosten proposed the origin of the text from Italian in a previous article. Joosten's conclusions were challenged by Ulrich Schmid and August den Hollander. He defends his conclusions convincingly in the article cited here. The dating of the text in is the most interesting piece of information for us here. On the dating Joosten states: "The strongest evidence is the mention of the centennial jubilee in chapters 82 and 83. Since the Christian Jubilee was shortened in 1349 to 50 years (and later to 25), the notion of a centennial jubilee points to the first half of the fourteenth century." *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁸ A. H. Mathias Zahniser, *The Mission and Death of Jesus in Islam and Christianity*, Faith Meets Faith Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 86-94.

³⁹ Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It : A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, vol. 13 (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1997), 270-276; 476-479.; David Thomas and Barbara Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations : A Bibliographical History, Volume 1 (600-900)*, History of Christian-Muslim Relations (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009), 600-603. Hoyland dates the original text from the latter half of the reign of Ma'mūn (d.218/833), Hoyland, 276. There are three major versions of this legend. The East and West Syriac versions disagree on whether Bahīra was Nestorian or Jacobite, but they both focus heavily on the apocalyptic interpretation of Islam and the prophecies concerning its political end. These are focused on a Christian audience. The Arabic version (which is itself in both a long and short version), retooled for an Islamic audience, is less concerned with Bahīrā's Christology and the apocalypse, concentrating mostly on the Christian core of Islam and Bahīrā's influence on its foundation. On the development of the text see, "Muhammad and the Monk Bahīra: Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times" in Sidney H. Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic : Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), VII, 146-160. An English translation of all of the texts can be found in Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*, History of Christian-Muslim Relations (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009).

⁴⁰ Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic : Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period*, VII, 151.

derived from the content of Ibn Ishāq who tells of Muhammad's visit to a Christian Monk in Bostra that identifies him as a prophet at the age of twelve,⁴¹ which is then superimposed onto the history of the first seven Caliphs. Though the story is only highly developed in the 3rd/9th century, it was presumably known since John of Damascus referred to the unknown Arian monk.⁴² The story of Baḥīrā from Ibn Ishāq is retold thus in *The Legend of Baḥīrā*:

And one day, I was standing at the well ... when I saw them approaching towards me. And with them was an eloquent, astute young man with a sharp tongue, who behaved like a leader. He was bright, well mannered, and quick witted, and he had command over the camel drivers, and the tradesmen obeyed him as well. And I said to myself, while asking my Lord for guidance and protection: 'This man is bound to become the head of the Sons of Ishmael. He will become their king and he will have the power, because he is a young man perfectly fit for leadership. He is respected and has authority.' I said to him: 'Young man, what is your name?' And he said: 'Muhammad'.⁴³

This legend expands on the Islamic story of the monk Baḥīrā by detailing the ongoing relationship between the monk and Muhammad. Baḥīrā is portrayed as a monk with good intentions to reach the Arabs through a child he believed to be a prophet. He is an outcast who fled to Mecca from Syria later teaching Muhammad the Christian scriptures in exchange for Muhammad's pledge of respect for Christian clergy. Muhammad is concerned that he is illiterate, so Baḥīrā slowly composes for him a book called the *Furqān*.⁴⁴ He tells the young Muhammad to visit him at night, and to tell his followers that the wisdom he receives from the monk came from the angel Gabriel. In this way, the legend alleges that the Qur'an was in large part crafted by Baḥīrā through Muhammad.

The differences between the Bible and Baḥīrā's *Furqān* are explained differently in the Syriac and Arabic recensions. In Syriac, a Jew named Ka'b al-Aḥbār later influences Muhammad and changes the teachings of Baḥīrā, including, "changing the identity of the Paraclete from Christ to Muhammad."⁴⁵

⁴¹ Muhammad Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad : A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans., Alfred Guillaume (London ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 79-81. Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrat Al-Nabawiyah* (Egypt: Dar Al-Hadith, 2006), 136ff.; cf. Muḥammad bin Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh Al-Ṭabarī (Tarīkh Al-Umum Wa Al-Mulūk)*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Hayyah, 2008), Vol. 2, p.177ff., cf. David Bertina, *Christian Muslim Dialogues: The Religious Uses of a Literary Form in the Early Islamic Middle East*, ed. George Kiraz et al., Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 124-130.

⁴² As Hoyland noted, Theophanes (d.818) mentions the influence of an outcast Monk on Muhammad. See Hoyland, 479. Before that *The Disputation of the Monk of Bet Hale and the Arab Notable* (c.101/720) mentions Sargis Baḥīrā as a monk who influenced Muhammad (above), and John of Damascus labels the monk Arian (above). It is clear that though possibly the first notable written version of the story originates here, rumours of it had been present for more than a century already.

⁴³ From the long Arabic recension in Roggema, 449.

⁴⁴ In the Arabic recension. In Syriac it is called the *Qur'an* or simply *Sūrat al-Baqarah*. See Hoyland, 476-479.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 478. The Paraclete argument is addressed also in *The Religious Dialogue of Jerusalem*, though nothing innovative to the discussion is therein added. See N. A. Newman, *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue : A Collection*

In Arabic, the Arabs are portrayed as so simple-minded that Baḥīrā has no choice but to make a number of compromises, ending with Baḥīrā weeping in regret for his actions. The Arabic text is clear that Islam is to be understood as preordained by God, though it challenges the divine revelation of the Qur'an by suggesting that the material therein was in large part given to Muhammad by Baḥīrā.

The text affirms the divine origin of Islam as a temporary political kingdom, and an Arabicized (simplified) but, “misunderstood form of Christianity.”⁴⁶ It also notably upholds the status of Muhammad as a prophet. This is especially clear in the Arabic recension:

And on a certain day, while the teacher was outside his cell, he saw people from far away approaching the water well, and [Muhammad], still a small boy, was with them. And when [Baḥīrā] looked at him, he recognized him and he said to me: “A great and glorious person is with them. ... That one, who is approaching the well with the Ishmaelites, will acquire the standing of prophethood.”⁴⁷

In the latter part of the text, in the context of Muhammad's alleged rejection of the Trinity, Baḥīrā strips Muhammad of the prophetic title, citing Matthew 24:11.⁴⁸ A full study of the Syriac and Arabic texts is available now.⁴⁹ Barbara Roggema has also produced a paper ideal for insertion into this place in the study, focusing on the use of the Qur'an in the long Arabic recension.⁵⁰ Only a few key items will be highlighted here.

In case other Christian meanings need clarification after he is gone, Baḥīrā also includes along with Q5:82, 10:94, “So if you [Prophet] are in doubt about what We have revealed to you, ask those who have been reading the scriptures before you. The Truth has come to you from your Lord, so be in no doubt and do not deny God's signs.”⁵¹

A rather strange interpretation of Q43:81 is presented in this story. The surah reads, “Say [Prophet], ‘If the Lord of Mercy [truly] had offspring I would be the first to worship [them]’ (قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ (لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدٌ فَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْعَابِدِينَ). *The Legend* here tells that Muhammad wanted to say ‘first of the deniers’ in

of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries, 632-900 A.D. : Translations with Commentary (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993), 311-312.

⁴⁶ Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic : Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period*, VII, 148.

⁴⁷ From the short Arabic recension. Roggema, 393.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 417.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ The reader is directed there, however, a few findings from that study will be highlighted here to ease the flow of information for the reader. Barbara Roggema, “A Christian Reading of the Qur'an: The Legend of Sergius-Bahira and its Use of Qur'an and Sira,” in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁵¹ Cf. Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*, 469.

place of the end. Baḥīrā clarifies the surah again to him. This small exchange comes from the challenge of Islamic exegetes to deal with the verse. Some, such as Abū Ubayda in the *Kitāb al-Majāz* even suggest emendations to the Qur'an to deal with it.⁵² The Christian writer of *The Legend* is here holding the *mufassirūn* to their text.

Surah 112 is given by Baḥīrā in a moment of hopelessness, and God is “*al-ṣamad*” due to the Arabs continuously returning to their idolatry. *Al-ṣamad* in Baḥīrā’s interpretation means ‘massive’ and ‘lifeless,’ like a stone, though in reality the word is nearly impossible to translate. Ibn’Abbās gives the term five definitions, *Tafsīr al-Ṭustarī* gives two totally different definitions, and the *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* simply ignores it.

Having assimilated the Islamic story of Baḥīra into a manufactured Christian history of Islam, affirming Islam’s divine origin, and working toward Qur’anic understanding based on a reinterpretation of history and scripture, it may be said that there are two interpretations of this legend in Christian-Muslim dialogue. At its best it sits as a creative work of hope for both the failure of Islamic politics, and the ecumenism of the Islamic and Christian religions, at the ecumenical end of the spectrum: a story intended to present the possibility of Christian-Qur’anic congruence. At its worst it represents a diabolical polemic, a story fabricated to confuse the Muslim into believing an untrue history of the events which brought into existence their own scripture.

Rational Antagonism in the Historical Critical Study of the Qur’an

A new ultra-polemical voice has developed in recently as well, that of the radical revisionists. Particularly critical of traditional knowledge on the historical development of Islam and the Qur’an specifically, radical revisionists have recently dismissed nearly all traditional history in favour of a blank page approach to the development of the Qur’an. Gunther Lüling, for example, proposed an ur-Qur’an in a yet to be discovered pre-Islamic Christian liturgy.⁵³ Christoph Luxenberg proposed that the whole of the Arabic language, and the Qur’an as its centerpiece, developed from a Syro-Aramaic language which

⁵² Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the Qur'an: The Legend of Sergius-Bahira and its Use of Qur'an and Sira," 60.

⁵³ Gunter Lüling, *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation : The Rediscovery and Reliable Reconstruction of a Comprehensive Pre-Islamic Christian Hymnal Hidden in the Koran under Earliest Islamic Reinterpretations*, 1st ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003). Lüling has been criticised heavily for his methodology, which Fred M. Donner describes as, “capricious and guided by a desire to prove the hypothesis he is asserting.” Reynolds, *The Qur'an in its Historical Context*, 33. Cf. Böwering in *ibid.*, 74-77.

has been persistently misunderstood since its appearance in the Arabic script.⁵⁴ These works were preceded by scholars who began to question the basic sources of Islamic thought to the degree that the *hadīth* and *tafsīr* literature, and to a lesser degree the Qur'an itself, were dismissed altogether.⁵⁵ Though the work of these and other scholars in this genre serve their purpose in calling into question basic assumptions and catalyzing re-examination of known history, the majority of their work has been

⁵⁴ Christoph Luxenberg, *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran : A Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran*, 1st ed. (Berlin: H. Schiler, 2007). This work earned a particularly scathing review from renowned scholar François de Blois. See François de Blois, "Book Review: Die Syro-Aramäische Lesart Des Koran. Ein Beitrag Zur Entschlüsselung Der Koransprache," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2003): 92-97. Gerhard Böwering too concludes that, "Luxenberg's monograph is both narrowly philological in method and broadly speculative in its conclusions." Böwering in Reynolds, *The Qur'an in its Historical Context*, 77-79. Not all of Luxenberg's critics dismiss the totality of his work, however. Sidney Griffith notes that Luxenberg's conclusion that the maidens of Q44:54 and 52:20 are actually clear grapes in a Syro-Aramaic reading, holds some ground. Griffith writes that, "Whatever one might think of the verisimilitude of this interpretation, it is clear that it is certainly closer to St Ephraem [the Syrian]'s image of the grape clusters which the Syrian writer says will welcome the chaste into their bosom than to the vision of the embraces of houris as conventionally imagined." Thus Luxenberg's conclusion in this instance may indicate alliance with a common pre-Islamic Syrian view of paradise. See Griffith in *ibid.*, 113.; cf. Sidney H. Griffith, "Syriacisms in the 'Arabic Qur'an': Who Were 'Those Who Said 'Allah Is Third of Three' According to Al-Ma'ida 73?," in *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an, Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai.*, ed. M.M. Bar-Asher, B. Chiesa, and S. Hopkins (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi-Institute, 2007), 94-98.

⁵⁵ It is not necessary to review all of these authors here. An introduction and review of relevant contributors is provided by Ibn Warraq, himself a radical revisionist. See Ibn Warraq, "Studies on Muhammad and the Rise of Islam," in *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, ed. Ibn Warraq (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000). Names such as Ernest Renan, Joseph Schacht, Régis Blachère, John Wansborough, Henri Lammens, Patricia Crone, and Michael Cook may all be considered exemplary voices in this genre, all surveyed by Warraq. They are to be commended in general for their general commitment to history, but without appreciation for the subjectivity with which that history is recorded by ancient and classical authors, their reductionist approaches often over-react, producing total dismissal of otherwise potentially useful sources. Schacht proposes, for example, the absolute historical uselessness of *hadīth* by pitting its authority against itself, the stronger the *isnad* is in connection to the Prophet, the more suspect it is historically. *Ibid.*, 50. Cf. p. 361.

The merit of these authors is still being weighed. From a strictly objective historical perspective their works call to light the subjectivity of traditional historical sources, revealing two needs. Firstly, the historian of Islam needs a wider base of historical source materials from which to draw than simply those pillars of *hadīth*, *tafsīr* and *sira* which act as three legs of a tripod, providing strength and material each to the other in the propping up of traditional Islamic exegesis of the Qur'an. Secondly, what these revisionists highlight is the need for non-reductionist historians, and in the case of this study and others on the Christian-Muslim dialogue in particular, true historians of religion rather than what we may call (extremist) *religious* historians. For indeed, were historians to dismiss out of hand all subjective and questionable sources, as outlined in the Introduction to Part I here, we may 'know' very little of the pre-enlightenment world. Revisionistic works are to be applauded for the often helpful questions they raise of assumptions made in the study of the history of religions, but caution is needed in wrestling with their findings, for neither are these historians wholly objective observers of the historical sources which they critique.

C. H. Becker's critique of Henri Lammens' polemical historicism exemplifies this caution. Commenting on Lammens, Becker writes, "Admittedly, the greater part of the Hadith is tendentious invention, colored by the later image of Islam's golden period, and so historically useless. But there are also very numerous Hadith which exploit ancient items of news in dealing with later problems. They form the basis for a truly historical picture of the origins of Islam, and only historical instinct can sort them out from the whole. In consequence, the results achieved can always only be subjective. When the sceptic Lammens reaches very considerable positive results, we are in danger of taking this outcome of his scepticism as objective truth. ... I am concerned to show that Lammens's results are purely subjective." C. H. Becker, "Matters of Fundamental Importance for Research into the Life of Muhammad," in *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, ed. Ibn Warraq (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), 331. Three of the works of Lammens which Becker critiques can be found in the same volume.

summarily dismissed.⁵⁶ In these cases, reductionistic views of what is in the mind of these historians provable of history, have been presented in isolation, or even active exclusion, of what is in a non-reductionist view probable, and in any case often in discord with others in their same category of radical revisionism.

Syed Hossein Nasr suggests that,

The rationalist and agnostic methods of higher criticism applied by certain scholars to the text of the Qur'an ... is as painful and as much a blasphemy to Muslims as it would be to believing Christians if some Muslim archaeologists claimed to have discovered some physical remains of Christ and were using DNA analysis to determine whether he was born miraculously or the son of Joseph.⁵⁷

Nasr's parallel is appropriate, and provides an interesting point of reference for distinguishing, "rationalist and agnostic methods of higher criticism," from those methods which produce blasphemy and pain. It is not, however, appropriate for Nasr to oppose rationalism and Islamic studies, as this would necessarily show Islam to be irrational.

To answer Nasr's hypothetical case, from a historical-critical perspective, the search for the bones and DNA of Christ should in theory be of no threat to the Christian whatsoever, as it is the position of the Christian that proper archaeological science will necessarily vindicate the truth of the Christian narrative, or perhaps cause Christians to re-evaluate the narrative against rational proofs. Thus, the Islamic archaeologist searching for the body of Christ should in theory, with each turn of the shovel void of evidence, become a greater ally of the Christian traditional narrative. It is in the manufacture of a body and potential falsification of DNA results, that there is threat of abuse by the polemical archaeologist.⁵⁸ In this case, however, the approach of the falsifying archaeologist cannot be said to be either rationalist or agnostic, as Nasr claims. Rationalism may not be said to be un-Islamic.

If the Qur'an is truly from God, for example, then the Muslim has no more to fear from true agnostic rational criticism of the Qur'an than a Christian has to fear of a truly scientific archaeologist pursuing the body of Christ.⁵⁹ It is in the abuses of these sciences, and therefore the voiding of the

⁵⁶ A good introduction to the impact of the works of these and other radical revisionist authors on the field of Qur'anic studies has been written by Gabriel Said Reynolds in his Introduction to *The Qur'an in Its Historical Context*. See Reynolds, *The Qur'an in its Historical Context*, 8-17.

⁵⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr and William C. Chittick, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, The Library of Perennial Philosophy (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007), 58.

⁵⁸ As in the literary cases of the legendary texts of the *Gospel of Barnabas* and the *Legend of Sergius Bahirā*.

⁵⁹ This may be said to be the impetus behind the now famous project by Maurice Bucaille, *The Quran and Modern Science*. In 1978 Dr. Bucaille, a French surgeon, produced a survey of the Qur'an's alignment to known

scientist as rationalist, that the conclusions reached by irrational scientists may cause pain through blasphemy, as may be exemplified by some radical revisionists indicated above. Nevertheless, Nasr's hypothesis cautions the Christian, the Muslim, and the atheist alike, to handle with care the religious 'sacraments' of others, protecting to their own pain the right of the religious other to have their 'sacraments' explored rationally.⁶⁰ In theory then, if the ultimate claim of the Qur'an is true, then true rational agnostic criticism should be incapable of producing either pain or blasphemy. It is thus the methodology which needs to be measured when the results seem incongruous.

Returning to the thoughts of Kenneth Cragg, hyper-focus on the particular incongruences between the two main texts may become a distraction from the greater parlance, that of the exploration of unity in theme. As he describes, "Anathemata are endless in their ingenuity, inventive in their subtlety and – all too often – vehement in their prejudice. They are more exhaustive than a selective care can hope to satisfy and we linger then in 'wandering mazes lost'."⁶¹ The responsible dialogician then is to focus on the greater themes of the texts, the most important of which to Cragg is the vice-regency of the earth. On the responsible stewardship of the planet, Christians and Muslims cannot find any distance between their texts.

Expanding the Qur'anic Bridge

With a stronger understanding of dialogue history, contemporary dialogicians may be better equipped to explore potential harmonies between Christian and Islamic concepts which are informed by or founded upon the Qur'anic revelations. The role of the Qur'an in interfaith dialogue may be said to be utilitarian. Whether interpreted by a Christian, Muslim, secularist, dialogician or historian, the Qur'an

scientific principles. For example, Q21:30 "...We made every living thing from water" is said to prove evolution. The findings are generally forced and somewhat unoriginal, as especially in this case, the claim that life began with water was also made in the Hindu *Veda*, and by the Greek philosophers Thales and Aristotle. What is perhaps most interesting about the project is its clear polemical tone toward the Bible. It is interesting that in this case Muslims chose atheist scientists as allies against other theists, and the other theists responded in kind. Christian medical doctor William Campbell authored a monumental reply to Bucaille in *The Quran and the Bible in the Light of History Science* (1986). Also an extended polemic against the Qur'an, Campbell too aligns with science against his theist counterpart. A full comparison of the texts is outside the scope of this study. However, it should be noted that secular science has been fought over by both Muslims and Christians as an ally in the Christian-Muslim debates, and its use as a weapon in dialogue has been more or less equally the project of both Christian and Muslim polemicists. See Maurice Bucaille, *The Qur'an and Modern Science*, 1st ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Academy of Science, 1978).; cf. William F. Campbell, *The Quran and the Bible : In the Light of History and Science* (Upper Darby, PA: Middle East Resources, 1986).; Muhammed A. Asadi, *Islam & Christianity: Conflict or Conciliation?* (Lincoln, NE: Writers Club Press, 2001), Ch. 6.; Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians Face to Face* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 55-57.

⁶⁰ What is meant by 'sacraments' here is not limited to specific formal ordinances such as the Eucharist or the *hajj* but rather anything that the religious other would themselves hold sacred including rites, shrines, scriptures, and other artefacts of strong religious meaning.

⁶¹ Kenneth Cragg, *A Christian-Muslim Inter-Text Now : From Anathemata to Theme* (London: Melisende, 2008), 217.

may be made to defend pluralism and polemicism, war and peace, if its own voice in context is ignored. Those with the patience and humility to listen to the Qur'an's own historical voice, may find that it is of flexible and strong enough material to bridge the Christian-Muslim divide. Dialogicians are encouraged allow more light to shine on its flexibility, in order to truly admire its strength.

Ecumenism as Humble Orthodoxy

Humans may continue to debate the meanings of the *mutashābihāt* (unclear) words of scripture, but they may not, as worshippers of a God who has revealed himself in mysterious ways, assign his regret to his mode of communication, nor may they hold their systematic theologies based on his ambiguous revelations to be wholly holy. Therefore, if intentional ambiguity is inherent in the revelation, humble orthodoxy may be the most appropriate response. In any case, both Muslims and Christians are perhaps beginning to acknowledge that their respective scriptures may be the incomplete revelations they seem to present themselves to be:

Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written. John 21:25

If all the trees on earth were pens and all the seas, with seven more seas besides, [were ink,] still God's words would not run out: God is almighty and all wise. Q31:27

The Word, therefore, according to The Word, is perhaps only partly spoken. It is the re-orientation of dialogicians from both religious traditions from a post-spoken hermeneutic to a dialogical inquiry of what appears to be only partly revealed, that they find the humble orthodoxy that allows mutuality in spite of apparent contradiction.

In David Bertaina's recent study of the early Christian-Muslim dialogue he makes the bold claim that there are only two ends to dialogue. The pre-modern end was the prevailing of one's beliefs over the other. The modern parses between this and a second end: "the teleological end of modern liberal dialogue is not persuasion, but the dialogue itself. ... [Dialogue] functions as a therapy meant to redeem religious groups from their commitments to objective truth and persuasion."⁶² Bertaina has accurately described modern pluralistic tones, however, dialogue itself is not the goal of true ecumenists who actively mould their own truth claims to accommodate those of the religious other. There is a true and

⁶² Bertaina, 2-3.

dialogical commitment to the mutual pursuit of an objective truth that neither in the dialogue fully represents.

The Historical Dialogue

The evidence to support the following conclusions is all presented in my book, and only here summarised for my fellow Christian scholars to review the outcomes of my excavation. As I present in my full study from which this paper is derived, the Qur'an itself is quite likely an ecumenical voice in Christian-Muslim dialogue. It appears soteriologically inclusive and yet revisionistic, correcting excesses in theology where it identifies them in its Christian interlocutors. Over the first century of Christian commentary on Islam, this congeniality declines incrementally in the voices of Qur'anic interpreters and Christian observers alike. Islam begins in the eyes of Christian sources as the fulfillment of the promises of God to Hagar and Abraham concerning Ishmael, then slowly becomes the hand of God's wrath against sinful Christians. Finally, Islam is described as a tolerated evil that God has allowed, to punish his Church.

When the polemics of John of Damascus are introduced a century after Muhammad's death, the commentary on Islam from Christians seems to divide into two. Firstly, there are those like Sebeos, Theodore Abū Qurrah, Abū Rā'īṭa, and Ammār al-Baṣrī who take a critical and sometimes very harsh approach to a Christian theology of Islam, often employing arguments presumably introduced by John, such as Muhammad as a 'false prophet'. Secondly are the ecumenical voices, amplified by *On the Unified Trinity*, which is quickly published in reply to John of Damascus, and whose inclusivism is echoed by *The Chronicle of 741* and Timothy I in his debate with Caliph Maḥdī, in the bridges of the 'veil of God', and the *ṣifāt* Allah. The extant voices of Islam too, whether the accommodating and affirming voice of Ibn al-Layth, or the harsh and condemning voice of Abū' Isā al-Warrāq, do not find agreement among themselves on what to do with Christianity from an Islamic perspective.

And the Qur'an, our focal point, seems only rarely allowed to speak for itself in the historical dialogue, as the *mufasssīrūn* on both sides often ignore the very *asbāb al-nuzūl* in favour of commentary extrapolations that sometimes align to the contemporary context of the commentators over the internal coherence of the Qur'an, or its voice in its own historical and often Biblical context. It is to Timothy I and *On the Unified Trinity* a trinitarian document, proof of the prophethood of Muhammad, and to John of Damascus and his followers, a book of 'ludicrous doctrines'. Even the syncretising texts of the Christian *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā* and the Muslim 'Alī al-Ṭabarī become counterpart attempts to explain the

existence of the religion of the other in the existence of the Qur'an. What is discernable from the first three centuries of dialogue that remains recorded is that ecumenism never fully dies, yet polemics and eventually apologetics become increasingly dominant tones, and the Qur'an seems still at times waiting its turn to speak for itself.

In America, Terry Jones and Rick Warren may be considered living counterparts to John of Damascus and Timothy I, respectively. In Academia, these may be Gairdner and Cragg. Though as it was in the first three centuries, it is now as well, that the ecumenists appear to show more respect for the Qur'an's own voice than do the polemicists. Ayoub and Bassetti-Sani are working hard to reconcile the Qur'an and the Bible, sometimes at the cost of their own held truths, and others are joining them on this quest. It is hoped that the historians of religion, Thomas, Goddard, Daniel, Shahîd and others, will offer more clarity than confusion to the task of the dialogician.

The Qur'an does appear to allow for some interpretive flexibility, however, in its historical context it does not seem to favour interpretations which reject the event of the crucifixion, allow for the deification of Mary, or deny the servanthood of Jesus to God, any more than those which justify the events of September 11, 2001 on the basis of the lesser *jihād*. The Qur'an is very likely corrective of all of these positions, Muslim and Christian, and historical inquiry is slowly providing the Qur'an a place for its own voice.

Now, far from a syncretistic project, the true ecumenism of Islam and Christianity is being explored by representatives willing to question their subjective commentaries in light of the possibility of God's objective revelation to the religious other. Historians of the religions of Christianity and Islam in dialogue, are able to report new and exciting possibilities. Thus it is possible that what Christians wrestle with in the plurality in unity of God as Trinity, seems to be sufficiently similar to that with which Muslims wrestle in the Divine Names, that they are perhaps one and the same theological problem. It is possible that as the Qur'an diligently promotes unitarian monotheism, it also allows for trinitarianism as it allows for Divine Attributes, while sternly warning its readers to avoid any semblance of tritheism. Muslims have entertained the possibility that the Qur'an concedes that Jesus was indeed crucified, and Christians have likewise entertained the possibility that as the Qur'an makes clear, the Jews cannot be blamed for his death. Nevertheless, the scriptures agree that he is alive. And it is possible to consider now that that same Jesus experiences ontologically something of the Sufi concept of Unity of Being with God that Muslims and Christians have both struggled to explain in their religious experience.

Muslims have entertained that the Gospel is uncorrupted, and Christians have entertained that the Qur'an is inspired by God. It is possible, dialogically speaking, that even though he was not likely the Paraclete of John, Muhammad was very possibly the seal of the prophets of Yahweh, just as Jesus is indeed a servant of Allah. It is very possible that war, rather than being a religious imperative, has been a distraction, from mutually supportive relationship as a religious imperative. It is possible, as their representatives have shown, that Muslims and Christians may live together democratically, under a mutually worshipful and fruitful social ethic. And it is possible, that all of these possibilities as explored, are simultaneously true. As these possibilities are recognized and entertained, perhaps a humble orthodoxy will growingly govern those who call themselves 'Muslim' and 'Christian', to accept the ambiguity in their respective scriptures as a divinely intended quality of revelation, out of the deepest respect for their mutually agreed upon transcendent and omnipotent One True God.

Perichoresis

Perichoresis is a term extending from the early developmental period of Christianity. In trinitarian terms, Perichoresis is the one nature in more than one hypostasis. Its meaning is that of a community of being, where the life of each of the Persons of the Trinity is interpenetrated by the others. There is such interpenetration between them that it is impossible to distinguish between one and the other. The term's intended use was to describe the indescribable mystery in the relationship between God and Christ, and Christ and the Church, exemplified in Jesus' words in John 17:20-21, "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me." The conception of 'unity of Being' by Sufi scholar Ibn 'Arabī carries a similar tone and is indicative of the term's appropriate use here.⁶³ This term may be used of Christianity and Islam as two expressions of faith in a religion of a single ineffable nature.

With the resurgence of ecumenism leading to a deepening divide between Inclusionists and Exclusionists whether Muslim or Christian, a perichoretic expression of Christian-Muslim faith is beginning to emerge. This is exemplified by case studies presented by Volf: Ann Redding, a former Episcopal priest

⁶³ Ibn 'Arabī is sometimes categorized as a Neoplatonist or Theosophist, but is more accurately described as a Mystical Rationalist: "the God that one experiences ultimately in rationalistic mysticism is not above and beyond Being but is identical to thought and being-thought-itself; there is an absolute transparency between the knower, the known, and the knowledge itself." Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor, *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 227. See also Ayoub and Omar; Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah: Ḍabataḥu Wa-Ṣaḥḥaḥahu Wa-Waḍa'a Fahārisahu Aḥmad Shams Al-Dīn*, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1999).

who claims to be 100% Christian and 100% Muslim; and Ibrahim, an Islamic scholar and *hafiz* who follows Jesus as a Muslim.⁶⁴

With the arbitrary rejection or acceptance of the designations “Christian” and “Muslim” by people of faith, accompanying the amalgamation of expressions of faith and works of obedience traditionally associated with Islam and Christianity, it is becoming increasingly challenging for objective observers to distinguish where Christianity ends and Islam begins, or vice-versa. Thus we see in the mainstream media critiques of ecumenists like Rick Warren as syncretists, alleged creators of a ‘heresy’ dubbed ‘Chrislam’.⁶⁵ Volf quotes a section of Warren’s prayer from the inauguration ceremony for US President Barack Obama, January 20, 2009. It deserves repetition here:

Almighty God, our Father, everything we see and everything we can’t see exists because of you alone. It all comes from you. It all belongs to you. It all exists for your glory! History is your story. The Scripture tells us, “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One!” And you are the compassionate and merciful one toward everyone you have made.⁶⁶

In response to this prayer, his involvement in the *Yale Response to A Common Word*, and his partnership with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), critics often accuse Warren of syncretism. This may be due to a general lack of knowledge of the potential closeness of the theologies of Islam and Christianity. Theologically, there may be decreasing distinction between the concepts of unity in plurality in God described as Trinity, or God described in his Most Beautiful Names. The manner in which these concepts are described by representatives of the two religious traditions has tremendous overlap.

⁶⁴ Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 195-196.

⁶⁵ Rick Warren is Lead Pastor of the Southern Baptist Saddleback Church in Orange County, California, with a weekly attendance of approximately 20,000 people, the author of *The Purpose Driven Life* which has sold more than 30 million copies, and one of the signatories of the *Yale Response to the Common Word* document discussed above. In a report on its July 4th, 2009 Independence Day celebrations, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) website relates that, “Warren’s presence wasn’t the only thing contributing to the evangelical-like atmosphere of the assembly hall. The sound system, giant video screens, and slick mass production values recalled America’s Protestant mega-Churches. Warren’s presence created a lot of interest but the real buzz among the convention crowd was reserved for superstar converts to Islam like Sheikh Hamza Yusuf--perhaps Warren’s equivalent in the American Muslim community--and Yusuf Islam.” See Frankie Martin, “Celebrating July 4th with Rick Warren and 45,000 Muslims”, Islamic Society of North America <http://www.isna.net/Interfaith/articles/News/CELEBRATING-JULY-4TH-WITH-RICK-WARREN-AND-45000-MUSLIMS.aspx> (accessed June 16 2011).

‘Chrislam’ can be found on several polemical Christian blogs now, often connected with Rick Warren. See the following blogs for example: Anonymous, “Chrislam Starts to Spread in America,” in *Now the End Begins*, ed. Geoffrey Grider (Now the End Begins, 2011).; Anonymous, “American Churches to Embrace Chrislam on June 26, 2011,” in *Now the End Begins*, ed. Geoffrey Grider (Now the End Begins, 2011).; Jim West, “Chrislam: The Inevitable Result of Political Correctness,” in *Zwinglius Redivivus*, ed. Jim West (Wordpress.com, 2010).; D. L. Adams, “Chrislam’ - Core Values without a Core,” in *Big Peace*, ed. Peter Schweizer (Breitbart.com, 2011).

⁶⁶ Volf, 5. The first Biblical quote is from Deuteronomy 6:4, “Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.” The sentence following contains an allusion to Psalm 145:8-9, “The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.” The phraseology of the last sentence quoted of Warren is an unmistakable employment of ‘*al-rahmān al-rahīm*’, a most common phrase of Muslims.

The mutual challenge of Nasr and Rahner, for example, is the explanation of plurality within God while maintaining monotheism. They agree that one God is all that is outside of creation, and that all of creation comes from one God, and yet as soon as theologians open their mouths to add any description to God whether in terms of Person or Attribute, the description appears to be immediately deficient. Muslim and Christian theologians thus face a similar limitation that only silence from both can truly honour, what Rahner calls, “the ultimately forbidden goal,” of rendering logically and intelligently the mystery of God.⁶⁷ Thus in silence under the recognition of the ultimate truth of monotheism, Muslims and Christians stand with a single perichoretic theology, for whatever else might be spoken about God out loud by either, betrays the transcendence of God in the theology of both.

Qur’anic Christianity

Historically, it seems that the Qur’an may have been able to sort through the Christological debates with a surgical precision unknown until now. It may be that the Qur’an corrects the adoptionism of the Nestorians in Q19:35, the Arian Docetism and Jewish arrogance in Q4:155-158, the eating restrictions and Mariolatry of the Nazoraeans in Q5:5 and 5:116, the *muḥarraḥ* apocryphal 4 *Ezra* text in Q9:30, and the tritheism of the Philoponians in 4:171 and 5:73, simultaneously,⁶⁸ all while guarding and defending the Christianity of Muhammad’s family-in-law in Mecca (Monophysite),⁶⁹ that of the learned Christian scholar Waraqa ibn Nawfal, for whom there seems no critique given at all, but praise and inclusion? Indeed, this would be a remarkable revelation. And yet, this is a perfectly reasonable conclusion from a non-reductionist historical perspective which considers the best of probability in the history of meanings. Furthermore, it must be conceded that of all things known of Christianity on the Arabian Peninsula at the time of Muhammad, that it may be said to have been neither catholic nor orthodox, is perhaps the truest, in the strictest senses of both terms.

When historians ask to whom the Qur’an responds when it speaks of Christians, Occam’s razor calls for a ‘both-and’ rather than an ‘either-or’ approach. Chasing the idea that there is one Christian sect out there that will justify each of the Qur’anic critiques of Christianity arguably requires much more effort in assumption than to accept that the Qur’an in fact responds to several of the Christian sects

⁶⁷ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans., Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 2010), 81.

⁶⁸ I have made the cases for each of these historical observations in my completed study, see Block.

⁶⁹ Shahīd has presented strong evidence for the influence of Ethiopia on the Christianity of Mecca, which would indicate Monophysitism as the dominant doctrine. This may also explain why *’Isā*, *ḥawāriyyūn*, and *injīl* appear for Jesus, disciples, and Gospels in the Qur’an. The terms are likely of Ethiopic Christian origin. See Irfan Shahīd, "Islam and Oriens Christianus: Makka 610-622 Ad," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark Swanson, and David Thomas (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006), 12-17.

historically highly likely to exist at the time. If a Christian sect can be shown independent of the Qur'an to have existed on the Arabian Peninsula at the time of Muhammad, it is reasonable to suggest that its proponents were involved in Christological debates in which the voices of Muhammad, and the Qur'an, became increasingly authoritative. Thus there are very likely no "Qur'anic Christians," *per se*, that can be categorized by simple identification with a single doctrinal creed. There is, however, quite likely a Qur'anic Christianity to which it calls all Christians. The question is now, of all of the kinds of Christians most probably criticised by the Qur'an, to which branch(es) does it not respond in some way, and to what degree do the varied critiques of varied Christian doctrines disqualify whole branches of Christianity from its catholic 'common word' project? As the Qur'an appears to trim off the excess in the theologies of its Christian readers without rejecting Christianity categorically, to what Christian orthodoxy does it in fact steer them?

References

- Adams, D. L. "'Chrislam' - Core Values without a Core." In *Big Peace*, edited by Peter Schweizer, 2011: Breitbart.com, 2011.
- Adamson, Peter, and Richard C. Taylor. *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad bin Jarīr *Tarīkh Al-Ṭabarī (Tarīkh Al-'Umum Wa Al-Mulūk)*. 10 vols. Beirut: Dar al-Hayyah, 2008.
- Ali, Abdullah Yusuf. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. 11 ed. Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2006.
- Altikulac, Tayyar. *Al-Mushaf Al-Sharif: Attributed to Uthman Bin Affan*. Istanbul, Turkey: Organization of the Islamic Conference Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 2007.
- Anonymous. "American Churches to Embrace Chrislam on June 26, 2011." In *Now the End Begins*, edited by Geoffrey Grider, 2011: Now the End Begins, 2011.
- Anonymous. "Chrislam Starts to Spread in America." In *Now the End Begins*, edited by Geoffrey Grider, 2011: Now the End Begins, 2011.
- Asadi, Muhammed A. *Islam & Christianity: Conflict or Conciliation?* Lincoln, NE: Writers Club Press, 2001.
- Ata ur-Rahim, Muhammad. *Jesus Prophet of Islam*. Rev. ed. Elmhurst NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an Inc., 2003.
- Ayoub, Mahmoud, and Irfan A. Omar. *A Muslim View of Christianity : Essays on Dialogue Faith Meets Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007.
- Badawi, El-Said M., and M. A. Abdel Haleem. *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*. Vol. 85 Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1, the near and Middle East. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Basetti-Sani, Giulio. *The Koran in the Light of Christ : A Christian Interpretation of the Sacred Book of Islam*. Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977.
- Becker, C. H. "Matters of Fundamental Importance for Research into the Life of Muhammad." In *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, edited by Ibn Warraq. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000.

- Beeston, A. F. L. *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Bertaina, David. *Christian Muslim Dialogues: The Religious Uses of a Literary Form in the Early Islamic Middle East* Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies, Edited by George Kiraz, Istvan Perczel, Lorenzo Perrone and Samuel Rubenson. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011.
- Block, C. Jonn. *The Qur'an in Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Historical and Modern Interpretations* Islamic Culture and Civilization, Edited by Ian Richard Netton. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Brown, Brian A. *Noah's Other Son : Bridging the Gap between the Bible and the Qu'ran*. New York ; London: Continuum, 2008.
- Bucaille, Maurice. *The Qur'an and Modern Science*. 1st ed. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Academy of Science, 1978.
- Campbell, William F. *The Quran and the Bible : In the Light of History and Science*. Upper Darby, PA: Middle East Resources, 1986.
- Cragg, Kenneth. *A Christian-Muslim Inter-Text Now : From Anathemata to Theme*. London: Melisende, 2008.
- de Blois, François. "Book Review: Die Syro-Aramäische Lesart Des Koran. Ein Beitrag Zur Entschlüsselung Der Koransprache." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2003): 92-97.
- Ghattas, R. G., and Carol Ghattas. *A Christian Guide to the Qur'an : Building Bridges in Muslim Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2009.
- Goldziher, Ignaz, Kate Chambers Seelye, Morris Jastrow, and Douglas Pratt. *Mohammed and Islam*. Vol. 2 Exploring the House of Islam : Perceptions of Islam in the Period of Western Ascendancy, 1800-1945. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009.
- Griffith, Sidney H. *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic : Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* Variorum Collected Studies Series. Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002.
- Griffith, Sidney H. "The Bible and the 'People of the Book'." In *Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church: 40th Anniversary of Dei Verbum*, 22-30. Rome: Catholic Biblical Federation, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 2005.

- Griffith, Sidney H. "Syriacisms in the 'Arabic Qur'an': Who Were 'Those Who Said 'Allah Is Third of Three' According to Al-Ma'ida 73?" In *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'ān, Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai.*, edited by M.M. Bar-Asher, B. Chiesa and S. Hopkins, 83-110. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi-Institute, 2007.
- Heck, Paul L. *Common Ground : Islam, Christianity, and Religious Pluralism*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009.
- Hoyland, Robert G. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It : A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Vol. 13 Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1997.
- Ibn al-'Arabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkīyah: Ḍabataḥu Wa-Ṣaḥḥaḥahu Wa-Waḍā'a Fahārisahu Aḥmad Shams Al-Dīn*. 9 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1999.
- Ibn Hishām, Abd al-Malik. *Al-Sīrat Al-Nabawiyah*. Egypt: Dar Al-Hadith, 2006.
- Ibn Ishāq, Muhammad. *The Life of Muhammad : A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*. Translated by Alfred Guillaume. London ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.
- Joosten, Jan. "The Date and Provenance of the Gospel of Barnabas." *Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 1 (2010): 200-215.
- Khalifa, Rashad. *Quran : The Final Testament : Authorized English Version, with the Arabic Text*. Rev. 4. ed. Capistrano Beach, CA: Islamic Productions, 2005.
- Leirvik, Oddbjørn. "History as a Literary Weapon: The Gospel of Barnabas in Muslim-Christian Polemics." *Studia Theologica* 54 (2001): 4-26.
- Lewis, Jack P. "Noah and the Flood: In Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Tradition." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 47, no. 4 (1984): 224-239.
- Lüling, Gunter. *A Challenge to Islam for Reformation : The Rediscovery and Reliable Reconstruction of a Comprehensive Pre-Islamic Christian Hymnal Hidden in the Koran under Earliest Islamic Reinterpretations*. 1st ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003.
- Luxenberg, Christoph. *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran : A Contribution to the Decoding of the Language of the Koran*. 1st ed. Berlin: H. Schiler, 2007.

Martin, Frankie, "Celebrating July 4th with Rick Warren and 45,000 Muslims", Islamic Society of North America <http://www.isna.net/Interfaith/articles/News/CELEBRATING-JULY-4TH-WITH-RICK-WARREN-AND-45000-MUSLIMS.aspx> (accessed June 16 2011).

Moucarry, C. G. *The Prophet & the Messiah : An Arab Christian's Perspective on Islam & Christianity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, and William C. Chittick. *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr* The Library of Perennial Philosophy. Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2007.

Newman, N. A. *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue : A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries, 632-900 A.D. : Translations with Commentary*. Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993.

Ragg, Lonsdale and Laura Ragg. *The Gospel of Barnabas*. Lexington, KY: Forgotten Books, 2008.

Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. Translated by Joseph Donceel. New York: Crossroad, 2010.

Reynolds, Gabriel Said. *The Qur'an in its Historical Context* Routledge Studies in the Quran, Edited by Andrew Rippin. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Reynolds, Gabriel Said. *The Qur'an and its Biblical Subtext* Routledge Studies in the Quran, Edited by Andrew Rippin. London ; New York: Routledge, 2010.

Roggema, Barbara. "A Christian Reading of the Qur'an: The Legend of Sergius-Bahira and its Use of Qur'an and Sira." In *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, edited by David Thomas. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Roggema, Barbara. *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* History of Christian-Muslim Relations. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009.

Shahīd, Irfan. "Islam and Oriens Christianus: Makka 610-622 Ad." In *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, edited by Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark Swanson and David Thomas, 9-32. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006.

The Monotheist Group. *The Message: A Translation of the Glorious Qur'an*. USA: Bainbow Press, 2008.

Thomas, David, and Barbara Roggema. *Christian-Muslim Relations : A Bibliographical History, Volume 1 (600-900)* History of Christian-Muslim Relations. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009.

Volf, Miroslav. *Allah: A Christian Response*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

Warraq, Ibn. "Studies on Muhammad and the Rise of Islam." In *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, edited by Ibn Warraq, 554 s. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000.

West, Jim. "Chrislam: The Inevitable Result of Political Correctness." In *Zwinglius Redivivus*, edited by Jim West, 2011: Wordpress.com, 2010.

Zahniser, A. H. Mathias. *The Mission and Death of Jesus in Islam and Christianity* Faith Meets Faith Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008.

Zebiri, Kate. *Muslims and Christians Face to Face*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2003.