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A STUDY OF THE QURANIC REFERENCES TO 'ISĀ
IN THE LIGHT OF TAFSĪR AND HADĪTH

A THESIS

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VITA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although we shall draw aside to explore the very interesting contributions of the commentators and of the traditionists, we must keep in mind that the source from which these have drawn their inspiration is the Qur'ān. To the Muslim, Allah reveals Himself primarily in a holy Book.

A. The Qur'ān a Miracle

The Koran is Muhammad's evidentiary miracle. Its inimitability has been accepted dogma since the 4/10th century. The uniqueness, ī'jāz, of the Book is seen variously in its prophesying of future events, the information about otherwise unknown incidents of the past, the fact that nobody rivaled it despite the Prophet's challenge, and the unprecedentedness and surpassing excellence of its style.¹

Since the Qur'ān is viewed as a miracle, there is logically no part of it without this miraculous quality. From cover to cover, every single syllable is contributory to total inspiration and, in turn, cannot be exempted from that total inspiration. Its inimitability is not limited to the actual words or to predictive or historical revelation, but extends to its eloquence and style.

Muslims see the Qur'ān, then, as unique among scriptures, totally inspired, inimitable and the greatest miracle ever wrought. It is

1. G.E. Grunebaum, Islam; Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition, London, 1961, p. 86.

unique among all scriptures in that Muḥammad's miracle is "the fact of Revelation, the Book itself, a miracle superior to those of his predecessors in that it is permanent while theirs were passing."² Although the Qur'ān may be considered to express its theological and philosophical concepts in terms of symbolic action or description, Nasafī (d. 1142) insists that Scripture is to be understood in its literal meaning. Leaving this for the inner sense is heresy. Taftazānī (d. 1389) considers disintegration of the Law to be the purpose of looking for the inner meaning; but he approves the conviction of those who, while accepting the literal, believe in a second, analogical sense of the text compatible with its outward reading. But the soundest methodological principles could not suppress allegorical, numerological, or simply partisan ta'wīl of the ever more venerated Book, to whose authority everybody made pretense to cling. At various times, passages from the Qur'ān have been looked on by Muslim apologists as the refutation of the Christian dogma of the Trinity and incarnation. In Rāzī, the number of such occurrences is too great to be cited in detail. But when we come to examine these passages more closely, we discover that their statement of the Christian dogmas they propose to refute is far from accurate. What they are refuting is not orthodox Christian belief at all but heretical views which the Church herself repudiates.

Perhaps it is necessary to state succinctly that we are not approaching this study from the point of view of "comparative re-

2. Grunebaum, Muhammadan Festivals, New York, 1951, p. 68.

ligion."³ Rather, our approach to this study of 'Īsā is that of accepting the Qur'ān for what it claims to be and for what its adherents claim it to be. For the purpose of this work, we are not concerned with the manner in which it was inspired, nor with the means by which it was recorded. We are not attempting to discover how the mechanism of inspiration operated in its human recipient, that extraordinary Arabian Prophet. We are not arguing the validity of this or that verse in the text: we do accept the textus receptus⁴ as the basis of our investigation. With this text in hand, however, some outline of the development of its interpretation by Muslim exegetes will be useful. It is obvious that a high value must be placed upon the memories of those who walked and talked with Muḥammad.

B. Hadīth and Tafsīr

It was not long after the Qur'ān began to be revealed that questions arose over the meaning of particular verses. During the Prophet's lifetime, his followers would ask for more clarity on the application of specific words or phrases to their political, military or social circumstances. When Muḥammad addressed himself to these problems, his Companions would carefully note his exact answers and

3. Were we to do so, Islām would immediately emerge as "biblical" a religion as any, with strong historical confirmation of the integral accuracy of its scriptures. Cf. R.C. Zaehner, The Comparison of Religions, Boston, 1962, p. 196.

4. The Cairo edition of the Qur'ān, A.D. 1342.

seek to retain them in their memories. The next generation of Muslims, those who had had no direct contact with the Apostle but had talked with his Companions, were called the Tābi'ūn. The Tābi'ūn were the source from which emanated the body of traditions known as the Hadīth literature.⁵

As a consequence of the vast number of traditions, many of which were conflicting and contradictory in nature, a science of tradition was gradually evolved. Traditions were classified according as they were strong, weak or unreliable. Certain of the Companions, about ten in number, became recognized as having more accurate memories than others; likewise, certain Tābi'ūn came to be depended upon more than others who were their contemporaries. Biographical studies abounded and the investigation of "chains" of reference to a reliable source was carefully undertaken.

Although originally included in the Hadīth literature, exegesis (the explanation of the Qur'ān) soon developed independently, becoming a science in itself known as Tafsīr. It was natural that a certain tension would result from this dichotomy. It is reflected in the following quotations: "Professor Ishaq Husaini says that the traditions 'do not, by any means, stand on the same footing as the Qur'ān...; the authentic traditions are like a handful of grain in a heap of chaff.'" ⁶ "A Leb-

5. The generation following the Tābi'ūn, "followers," served also as a source of Hadīth and were referred to as Tābi'ū al-Tābi'īn, "the followers of the followers."

6. Edward Parrinder, Jesus in the Qur'ān, New York, 1965, p. 13.

anese writer on pre-Islamic Arabia and the life of the Prophet, Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, takes the Qur'ān as the only source and sure witness⁷ and encourages a critical attitude to tradition."

Tafsīr never developed the same exact judgment and classification of transmitters as did legal hadīth. Nor did it make the same demands of the perfection of the isnāds. It is significant that the great bulk of isnāds in the Tafsīr of the orthodox Ṭabarī are not traced back to Companions or the Prophet. They stop at authorities about 100 A.H.⁸

Imām Shāfi'ī discloses that there were some who rejected tradition solely because it was tradition, and others who rejected it when it could not be regarded as an explanation of the Qur'ān. The Imām also says that these people who criticized hadīth did not accept the distinctions of abrogated and abrogating, and of general and particular and were in error.⁹

A modern appraisal of this situation is shown in the following quotation from Rahman,

Whereas the vast majority of Muslims still uphold the view that the Hadith genuinely represents the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, Western Islamists are generally sceptical; some indeed have recommended a wholesale rejection of the Hadith as an index not only of the Prophetic example but also of the religious attitudes and practices of the Companions. We shall subsequently note the existence of a small group of

7. Idem.

8. Harris Birkeland, The Lord Guideth, Oslo, 1956, p. 9.

9. John Windrow Sweetman, Islam and Christian Theology, London, 1945, Part One, Vol. I, p. 153.

contemporary Muslims who also seek to reject the Hadith, but not on the grounds of any scholarly study of the development of this discipline.¹⁰

Tafsir began to examine the meanings of words philologically, studying the roots and cultural usages both by Arabs and non-Arabs in the use of the Arabic language, and the influence of foreign vocabulary during the early rapid expansion of Islām. As Muslims came into increasing contact with Jewish and Christian history and legends, commentators found parallels and illustrations with revealed material in the Qur'ān. A. Yūsuf 'Alī is of the opinion that they overreacted in finding sources for Quranic material in the Jewish and Christian authorities.

The increasing knowledge of history and of Jewish and Christian legends enabled the Commentators to illustrate the Text of the Holy Book with reference to these. Sometimes the amount of Jewish stuff (some of it absurd), which found its way into the Commentaries, was out of all proportion to its importance and relevance, and gave rise to the legend, which has been exploited by polemical Christian and Jewish writers, that Islam was built up on an imperfect knowledge of Christianity and Judaism, or that it accepts as true the illustrative legends from the Talmud or the Midrash or various fantastic schools of Christianity.¹¹

C. Interpretation of the Qur'ān

Muslims are naturally and logically very cautious in handling the "speech" of Allah. A long period of time elapsed before the

10. Fazlur Rahman, Islam, New York, 1966, p. 43.

11. A. Yūsuf 'Alī, The Holy Qur'ān, Lahore, 1938, pp. ix, x.

orthodox could appreciate the value in distinguishing between earlier and later revelation, difference of style and the relationship of the revelation to the occasions in which it came. What Gibb expresses in the following quotation is increasingly less true today:

To Muslims the Koran is the very Speech of God, revealed word for word to His Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. For them there can be no question of earlier and later styles, phraseology, or doctrine; but the western student, recognizing in it the handiwork of Muhammad the man, finds much of its interest in the way it reveals the gradual development of a fascinating personality and the stages by which his early teaching expanded into a new religion.¹²

Nevertheless, the Qur'ān remains the speech of Allah, even when a modern attitude is able to appreciate that speech more fully and to evaluate its contemporary application more completely by understanding its chronological order. It is not difficult, therefore, to understand the supreme importance of the part played by the Qur'ān, and particularly by some Quranic suras and verses, in the life of the Muslim; they are not only utterances which transmit thoughts, but also as it were beings, powers, talismans. The soul of the Muslim is woven with sacred formulae, and it is in them that he takes his rest, in them that he lives, and in them that he dies.¹³

Tafsīr achieved full recognition about A.H.200.

The contradictory sayings of our sources cannot be harmonized so that tafsīr was condemned only when it was

12. H.A.R.Gibb, Arabic Literature, Oxford, 1963, p. 34.

13. F. Schuon, "Understanding the Qur'ān," Islamic Quarterly, Vol. V, 1959, p. 20.

not based on ʿilm, viz., reliable knowledge in the form of traditions. Tafsīr has the same significance in all passages denoting every kind of interpretation of the Koran, and it was really rejected by certain circles in early Islam.¹⁴

The fact is that the first Muslim generation regarded Tafsīr as legitimate. It was near the end of the first century that the real opposition against all Tafsīr appeared. The slogan became, "Hadīth against rā'y." Birkeland says, "Only when about 200 A.H. Tafsīr submitted to the rules laid down by critical traditionists for sound traditions in the field of jurisprudence was it gradually recognized by all orthodox circles."¹⁵ Abū ʿUbayda, probably of Mesopotamian Jewish origin, is credited with producing the first collected work on the exegesis of the Qur'ān.¹⁶

D. The Commentaries

A sacred text, with its apparent contradictions and obscurities, is not unlike a mosaic or, in some cases, an anagram; but one has only to consult the orthodox commentaries to learn what intention lies behind this or that affirmation and in what connexion it is valid or what the implications are which make it possible to put together seemingly unconnected passages. The commentaries spring from the oral tradition which accompanied the Revelation itself, or else they spring through inspiration from the same supernatural source; their function is thus not only to make explicit what was only implicit and to leave no room for doubt as to the connexion or meaning in which this or that is to

14. Harris Birkeland, Old Muslim Opposition Against Interpretation of the Koran, Oslo, 1955, p. 28.

15. Ibid., p. 42.

16. Gibb, op. cit., p. 55.

be understood, but also to explain the various symbolisms which are often piled up simultaneously one above another. In a word, the commentaries are providentially part of the tradition, as it were the sap of its continuity, even if they are not written down until fairly late....¹⁷

Commentators, however, are deeply influenced by the period in which they live and are susceptible to the trends and movements of their historical eras. As indicated in the quotation above, they appeared rather late on the scene. In the earliest days, the text was accompanied by oral glosses on points of language or interpretation. These glosses increased greatly in number and complexity during the first three centuries, following the rise of legal and theological schools, sectarian controversy, popular tradition, etc. Then Ṭabarī produced the first collection and critical study of the Qur'ān, characterized by the scholarly piety it exhibited. He was followed two centuries later by Zamakhsharī whose work reflected a certain "rational" trend. He gives the Muṭazilite perspective in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. Rāzī is the next commentator of repute. His method consists of adopting from Ṭabarī all that is pertinent to correct exegesis and wherever possible he refutes the Muṭazilites. Bayḍāwī is the "seal of the commentators." He is orthodox to the last diacritical mark, brief in the extreme and terminal as far as any further serious

17. Schuon, op. cit., p.14.

discussion in theology is concerned in the Muslim world. A somewhat more detailed discussion of each of these commentators seems in order.

Jabarī (d.310/923)

Jabarī was born at Amul in Tabaristan in 839 A.D. He just missed Ibn Ḥanbal at Baghdad, and he studied at Baṣra, Kūfa (towns of Iraq), and Fuṣṭāṭ (Old Cairo). For forty years, he wrote forty sheets a day, including among his works the most ancient written record of Arab history. Huart says that he "combined the study of jurisprudence with that of Koranic exegesis."¹⁸ He acquired all possible learning of history, philology and theology. Essentially a traditionist, he founded a school of law which barely survived him. His Universal History attained early fame.

Yet by the unanimous judgment of all impartial men, there existed no earlier or later work which even approached Jabarī's commentary in universality of material, positive knowledge, and independence of judgment, and in the eastern Muslim world orthodox scientific Koran study gradually submitted to his authority.¹⁹

The most important of the commentaries of the traditional school, bases his monumental work of thirty volumes on the documents on Koranic exegesis of the first three centuries of Islamism's existence which were extant when he wrote. Being a skillful grammarian and lexicographer and having a thorough

18. Clement Imbault Huart, A History of Arabic Literature, New York, 1903, p. 241.

19. Gibb, op. cit., pp. 80,81.

acquaintance with the theological, legalistic and historical treatises, founded on the Koran, his work is exhaustive.²⁰

Zamakhsharī (d.538/1144)

Though a follower of the Mu'tazilite school, Zamkhsharī is respected even by the orthodox and is ranked by Ibn Khaldūn far above any of the other commentators. A skilled casuist and a philologist of excellent ability (he was of the philological school of theology), he offers interpretations that should be termed rational rather than rationalistic, striving to "gloss over Koranic tendencies to anthropomorphism, determinism, the intervention of the jinn in human affairs and similar doctrines rejected by his school."²¹ He wrote a handbook of Arabic grammar (Al-Mufaṣṣal) and a collection of moral apophthegms in polished rhymed prose called, "The Golden Necklace," but he is famous chiefly for his commentary on the Qur'ān. Very sensitive to public opinion, he carried with him a written statement to show that his leg had not been amputated for any crime! Because of his long sojourn at Mecca, he received the epithet, īār Allāh, "Neighbor of Allah." He began his commentary with the words, "Praise be to Allah, who created the Koran!" Orthodoxy changed this to read "revealed," instead of "created." The following quotations point up the importance of his work on the Qur'ān:

20. Thomas O'Shaughnessy, The Koranic Concept of the Word of God, Rome, 1948, pp. 23,24.

21. Ibid., p. 27.

Similar arguments make a consultation of the Mu'tazilite commentary of az-Zamakhsharī absolutely necessary, a commentary recognized even by strictly orthodox scholars. His excellent linguistic remarks and rational exegesis cannot be overlooked by a European scholar of the 20th century. He knew the Arabic language, and he was not so bound by traditionalism as were the circles quoted by aṭ-Ṭabarī.²²

Though Zamakhsharī held the Mu'tazilite heresy, his commentary, entitled The Unveiler, obtained so wide a vogue that a century later its sting was drawn in an expurgated edition by al-Baidawī and in this form it remains to this day the most popular commentary.²³

RĀZĪ (d.606/1209)

The son of a preacher, Rāzī was born at Rai near Teheran. He was the first to introduce systematic arrangement in writing, writing which for him ranged from philosophy and theology to talismans and astrology. Rāzī, by means of his Shāfi'ite commentary, Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb, "The Keys of the Unseen World," led a great many disciples of the anthropomorphist sect, the Karrāmīya, back to the orthodox faith.²⁴ One of the great values of Rāzī's commentary lies in the expression of the ijmā' of his time concerning several questions of exegesis. Such information is most valuable, since it reveals the exegetical tendencies. In addition, Rāzī has as his chief aim the

22. Birkeland, The Lord Guideth, p. 11.

23. Gibb, op. cit., p. 123

24. Huart, op. cit., pp. 320,321.

refutation of the interpretation of the Mu'tazilites, especially as it
 25
 appears in the Kashshāf of Zamakhsharī. However, critically,

The exponent of the intellectual sciences, especially the Imam Fakhr ad-Din, fills his [commentary] with sayings of the Muslim and Greek philosophers, deducing one thing from another until the reader is lost in amazement at the incongruity of the final doctrine with the original verse, so that a learned theologian said of it, "It contains everything but the commentary."²⁶

Bayḍāwī (d.685/1286)

Zamakhsharī's work is the basis for the commentary of Bayḍāwī whose work is the most popular of all the exegetical studies on the Qur'ān. Strictly orthodox in its interpretations, it was intended by its author, who is considered almost a saint by the Sunnites, to provide a doctrinally correct substitute for the work of Zamakhsharī and to surpass it in accuracy of grammatical interpretation and the study of variant readings. It is one of the texts today taught in advanced schools for the study of the Qur'ān and has provided the theological
 27
 basis for Muslim piety in the interpretation of its holy book. Birkeland again underlines the value of Bayḍāwī's work in portraying for us the ijmā' (consensus of Muslim thought) of his era:

25. Birkeland, The Lord Guideth, p. 10.

26. Gibb, op. cit., p. 123.

27. O'Shaughnessy, op. cit., p. 28.

His information must always be taken into consideration. For he covers the development of the stabilization of Muslim ijmā' during the 13th century. In other words, he may be able to furnish us with other sources than ar-Rāzī to state this ijmā'; within tafsīr. In reality every earnest discussion had finished when Baidawi wrote.²⁸

Huart judges Bayḍāwī's work to be "insufficient," because its treatment of the subject matter is too brief and indeed it has been a good deal criticized, even in the East.²⁹ A modern writer comments, "Questions of theology are mingled with views of philosophy in the books of later writers, such as you find in the works of al-Baiḍāwī,³⁰ al-ʿAqūḍ, and others."

With the exception of Zamakhsharī, the above commentators are those who have been consulted in this study of the Quranic ʿĪsā. The reason for this selection is to have all the materials acceptable to Muslim orthodoxy at our disposal.

E. Modern Interpretation of the Qur'ān

The ijmā' stabilized on certain interpretations or possibilities, gives all Muslim commentaries a tiresome, uniform appearance. After aṭ-Ṭabarī, az-Zamakhsharī, and ar-Rāzī nothing essentially new has entered orthodox tafsīr. The modern commentary of al-Alusi has collected some old material not available to us, but it is mostly of no great value. It is absolutely superfluous to consult other

28. Birkeland, The Lord Guideth, p. 11.

29. Huart, op. cit., p. 262.

30. Charles Adams, Islam and Modernism in Egypt, London, 1933, p. 124.

commentaries than those mentioned, to obtain exhaustive information of the history of Muslim tafsir.³¹

Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad 'Abduh, and a host of other modern leaders in the world of Islām, have found that it is impossible to work for reform within their national states on the basis of a fixed interpretation of scripture. They wish to remain orthodox in their theological position and to interpret the Qur'ān in terms of their age and culture. This kind of "private" interpretation is known as ijtihād. It cannot be practiced without violating orthodox sanction. Nolin writes of Husayn of Egypt,

Dr. Husayn is keenly aware of the modern world of Islam and its estrangement from the traditional, conservative leaders of Islam.

However, in saying this, the author does not mean to question the revelatory nature of the Qur'ān; nor does he mean to question the value of the historic Qur'ānic commentators. He spoke with great warmth, for example, of the veritable mine of valuable material in the commentary of al-Jabarī, all of it indispensable for understanding the Arabic text of the Qur'ān. His only qualification here is that al-Jabarī and others must not be permitted to assume an almost revelatory status, in and of themselves. Modern Muslims must be free to study the Qur'ān and its commentators on their own, and then, on the basis of that study, to explain it in terms relevant to the world in which they live.³²

Shāh Wālī-Ullāh of Delhi forms the bridge between medieval and modern Islām in India. In his view, ijtihād is an exhaustive endeavor to

31. Birkeland, The Lord Guideth, p. 136.

32. Kenneth Nolin, "The Story of Adam," Muslim World, Vol. LIV, 1964, p. 5.

understand the derivative principles of religious law. They can be derived from four sources: the Qur'ān; the sunna; the consensus of Muslims, the ijmā'; and by the application of the principle of analogy, ³³ qiyās. Salem writes,

A limited form of ijtihād has always existed. But what the contemporary reformers are actually exercising is an unlimited form of ijtihād. Through ijtihād they return to the Qur'ān, or the sunnah of Muhammad and of his companions, or to the practice of a great Muslim leader or scholar, and find in their saying or doings the ground for new legal precepts.³⁴

Through ijtihād one is freed from certain obsolete interpretations of the sharī'a, i.e., the Muslim law. In reading the Qur'ān, the modernist, especially one who is educated in western institutions, discovers in it the very guidelines which he seeks. Muslim reformers distinguish the purely religious injunctions ('ibādāt) of the Qur'ān from the temporal injunctions pertaining to human and mundane relations (mu'amalāt). The former, they explain, are not subject to change. In liberalizing the sharī'a, the reformers emphasize the multiplicity of its sources.

The more abundant the sources the easier it is for the modernist to choose the one most appropriate to contemporary conditions. The multiplicity of

33. Ahmad Aziz, "Political and Religious Ideas of Shāh Wāli-ullāh of Delhi," Muslim World, Vol. LII, 1962, p. 24.

34. Elie Salem, "Arab Reformers and the Reinterpretation of Islam," Muslim World, Vol. LV, 1965, pp. 315, 316.

sources provides a multiplicity of choices and broadens the area of interpretation.³⁵

To the modern mind, this is the logical path to follow and it has the virtue of appearing to cling to the traditional while finding answers to the present and future. Obviously, the meaning deduced from the Qur'ān is influenced by time and by the psychological mood of the era in which the interpreter lives. Contemporary reformers, for whom national interest is paramount, see the Qur'ān in a new light. In no way, they insist, can the Qur'ān be an obstacle to the national interest.

A contemporary reformer gives practical precedence to the maṣlahah over Qur'ān and ijmā'c. If in certain instances the Qur'ān, hadīth or ijmā'c contradicts the interest of the Muslims, then they may follow their maṣlahah and temporarily waive, but not annul the scriptural injunctions. To Khallāf, maṣlahah is a more valid source of the sharī'ah than ijmā'c, and takes precedence over others. The purpose of the sharī'ah, says Khallāf, is the promotion of the maṣlahah of the people. Where the maṣlahah is, there is God's law. The maṣlahah, however, must be public, not individual.³⁶

Probably the movement for a complete rethinking of the Qur'ān for the modern age is more prevalent even than the expressions of it in published writing would indicate, silence being often due to the virtual control of the conservative group within Islām.

37

35. Ibid., p. 312.

36. Salem, op. cit., p.316.

37. Nolin, op. cit., p. 6.

F. Āyāt Mutashābihāt

There are certain verses in the Qur'ān described as āyāt mutashābihāt (S.7/5). These are verses which are equivocal, symbolical or ambiguous. Abott defines these:

The symbolical verses, i.e., ayat-i-mutashabihat, are those which deal with realities beyond the ken of human perception. Since these realities do not come within the purview of human experience and observation directly (and for this reason no human language possesses words specifically coined for the expression of those realities), it is inevitable that words invented by human beings for perceptible things have to be used for those realities.³⁸

Rāzī gives his understanding of these verses in these terms:

If an expression admits of two (alternative) meanings, and in relation to one of the two it is preponderant, while in relation to the other it is outweighed (by the first), and then if we make it bear the more weighty meaning, and not the outweighed meaning, then that expression is muhkam. And if we make it bear the outweighed meaning and not the outweighing one, then that expression is mutashābih.³⁹

On the whole, Rāzī maintains that when there is some decisive argument showing that the outward meaning of an expression is not intended, it is not proper to try to interpret that expression at all, for he says that metaphorical meanings of an expression can always be many and preference of one over the other is bound to be conjectural, for it is

38. F. K. Abott, "Maulānā Maudūdī on Quranic Interpretation," Muslim World, Vol. XLVIII, 1958, p. 12.

39. Daud Rahbar, God of Justice; A Study in the Ethical Doctrines of the Qur'ān, Leiden, 1960, p. 201.

always based on linguistic arguments which should never be relied on in matters of religion.

If the occasion of their revelation could be ascertained, these verses would be clear in meaning. Guillaume says,

I have heard a scholar above suspicion mentioning that these verses were sent down about the people of Najran when they came to the apostle to ask him about Jesus, Son of Mary.⁴⁰

Guillaume is referring here only to the one passage containing this type of verse. Another significant statement about this issue is found in Rahbar's dissertation:

The first important question on this verse [S.3.7/5] is: What situation called for this revelation? One thing is certain. Some individual or individuals must have interpreted some of the verses of the Qur'ān as they were not intended to be interpreted. It is quite possible that the verse may have been revealed as referring to some particular disputations in which the opponents of the believers put misinterpretations on some particular and very limited number of verses. Whether it were the envoys of Najran or some other people we cannot say. If the verse speaks with particular reference to some particular disputations and particular verses misinterpreted in their course, then the task of finding out those verses becomes a hopeless one.⁴¹

Any speculations on the muhkam and the mutashābih of the Qur'ān are therefore possible only hypothetically, i.e., by first assuming that the verse speaks not of a particular incident of misinterpretation, but speaks of the contents of the Qur'ān as a whole....Professor Nöldeke suggests that some of the obscurity in many passages might have

40. Alfred Guillaume, New Light on the Life of Muhammad, Cambridge, 1934, p. 257.

41. Rahbar, op. cit., p. 205.

been caused by their misplacement in the existing recension. Commentators are often found exerting themselves hard in trying to establish undisturbed flow of sequence between two adjacent verses which, according to Professor Noldeke, might have been completely independent from each other and revealed at a long interval between them.⁴²

Ṭabarī gives the following distinctions between the muhkamāt and the mutashābihāt:

muhkamāt

1. Contain unabrogated ordinances
2. Verses of different meaning (from Mujāhid)
3. Only one interpretation possible
4. Sound versions of stories (from Ibn Zayd)

mutashābihāt

1. Contain abrogated ordinances
2. Verses of similar meaning
3. More than one interpretation (from Ibn al-Zubayr)
4. Variant versions⁴³

These verses become important from at least two viewpoints, one of which concerns us here. We have already indicated that contemporary Muslims will probably not be offended by our assigning this or that portion of the Qur'ān to earlier and later periods of Muḥammad's ministry. They may, however, take exception to an apparent licence in interpreting the Qur'ān from a private viewpoint. We urge them, in these instances, to consider the question of the āyāt muta-shābihāt which are open to speculation. While we would not make an

42. Ibid., p. 216.

43. Idem.

TABLE I

FREQUENCY OF PROPHETIC AND APOSTOLIC ASSOCIATION

Series	Mecca III	Medina
Nūḥ/Ibrāhīm-Mūsā-ʿĪsā	42.13/11	
Zakarīya-Yahyā-ʿĪsā-Ilyās-Ishāq-Yaqūb/Nūḥ/Dāwūd-Sulaymān-Ayyūb-Yūsuf-Mūsā-Hārūn	6.85	
Ibrāhīm-Ismaʿīl-Ishāq-Yaqūb-Tribes/Mūsā-ʿĪsā/Prophets		2.136/130 3.84/78
Mūsā/Apostles/ʿĪsā		2.87/81
Adam/ʿĪsā		3.59/52
Nūḥ-Ibrāhīm/Apostles/ʿĪsā		57.26,27
Nūḥ-Prophets/Ibrāhīm-Ismaʿīl-Ishāq-Yaqūb-Tribes-ʿĪsā-Ayyūb-Yūnus-Hārūn-Sulaymān/Dāwūd-Apostles/Mūsā		4.163/161, 164/162
Prophets/Nūḥ-Ibrāhīm-Mūsā-ʿĪsā		33.7
Dāwūd-ʿĪsā		5.78/82

entire doctrine stand upon them as a foundation, a theoretical understanding of the person of ʿĪsā may be achieved by attributing to the āyāt mutashābihāt an interpretation which is sound in all other respects, in that it does not fundamentally contradict the orthodox exegesis of any muhkam verses.

Table I gives us in chronological order the references where ʿĪsā appears in series with other apostles and/or prophets. Bijlefeld is probably correct in the distinction he draws between "prophets" and "apostles," holding that the former are specifically seen as belonging to the descendants of Ibrāhīm--and often associated with Scripture--while the apostles are those invested with a special authority with regard to their own communities to whom they have been sent.⁴⁴

In S.19.30/31, ʿĪsā clearly associates his having received a scripture with his being made a prophet. In our Table, we see ʿĪsā listed with Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm and Mūsā two times; with Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm, once; with Nūḥ and Mūsā and others, once; with Ibrāhīm, Mūsā and others, once; with Mūsā, once; with Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā and others, once. These are the four great prophets whom Muḥammad frequently evokes before his hearers, and Table II shows the periods when appeal was made to them and their examples the most often. It is noteworthy that almost fifty per cent of his appeal to Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm and Mūsā falls in the second

44. Willem A. Bijlefeld, "A Prophet and More Than a Prophet," Muslim World, Vol. LIX, 1969.

TABLE II

APPROXIMATE VERSE COVERAGE BY PERIODS OF THE FOUR GREAT PROPHETS

NŪḤ	IBRĀHĪM (LŪṬ)	MŪSĀ (PHAROAH)	ʿĪSĀ
MECCA A I			
2	18	20	0
MECCA A II			
79	127	227	27
MECCA A III			
44	56	195	2
MEDINA B			
7	57	123	65

period at Mecca while two-thirds of his appeal to 'Īsā falls in Medina, the last period.

It is clearly indicated by these time periods and the material revealed in each that questions with regard to 'Īsā are particularly discussed in Medinan suras. If we do not feel that from the orthodox viewpoint such factors as the political climate of Medina or Muḥammad's increasing historical knowledge played a dominant role in the selection of revealed truth, then the person of 'Īsā stands out the more brilliantly for its singular presentation. Keeping in mind all that the traditionists have passed on to us and all that their successors the commentators have contributed in their interpreting of the Qur'ān, we shall go back to the ultimate source itself, viz., the textus receptus of the Qur'ān. In our analysis and conclusions, we shall be rewarded as we see the person of 'Īsā emerge in a novel form. The view of 'Īsā presented here will be found fully established upon sound Quranic exegesis.

CHAPTER II

THE 'ISĀ OF THE QUR'ĀN

A. His Birth

Of the two "birth passages,"¹ the Meccan account is more elemental and less developed in depth than the Medinan one. In the former we are introduced to the scene of Maryam seeking solitude and immediately presented with "Our spirit."² 'Alī has allowed himself some freedom in translating the Arabic rūh as "angel,"³ instead of "spirit" which is the common rendering of the Arabic. In the Medinan account, the angels have eulogized Maryam herself and thus have given a basis for selection as the mother of 'Īsā.⁴ Further revelation in Medina explains Muḥammad's knowledge about the birth of 'Īsā,⁵ a question about which discussion may have arisen after the Meccan account had gone forth.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, incidentally, finds in the emphasis on 'Īsā and Maryam a parallel to another couple, Adam and Eve. As, in that case,

1. S.19/16-23,29/30-35/36 and 3.42/37-47/42,59/52. However, Blachère and others have demonstrated that 19.35/36-41/40 properly belongs in the Medinan period. Appendix C gives these accounts in parallel arrangement, where similarities and contrasts may be noted.

2. S.19.17.

3. A. Yūsuf 'Alī, op. cit., p. 771.

4. S.3.42/37,43/38.

5. S.3.58/51,60/53.

the female was brought into being from a male without the mediation of a mother, so there had to be a male born of a female without the mediation of a father, completing the cycle.⁶

There is clearly an identification between the "spirit" in the Meccan account and the "angel" in the Medinan one; the spirit-angel has the task of "bestowing" (Mecca) and "announcing" (Medina) the arrival of a son. In both accounts, the means of conception is implicitly spiritual in nature.⁷ One translator renders S.66.12: "Maryam, daughter of 'Imrān, who protected her condition of virginity so that We breathed into it [her sexuality] of Our Spirit."⁸ The Qur'ān firmly refutes any suggestion of unchastity by Maryam or any divine coupling with a woman such as might suggest ancient classical or Arabian myths of the ways of the gods.⁹ Allah did not appear to Maryam on this occasion but sent an angelic representative whose mission went beyond the giving of a verbal message alone.

Ibn al-'Arabī suggests that Maryam's first reaction toward the spirit-angel was one of instant resistance and that if she had received

6. Henry Corbin, L'Imagination Créatrice dans le Soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabī, Paris, 1958, pp. 123,124.

7. This view is confirmed by S.21.91 and 66.12.

8. Henri Michaud, Jésus Selon Le Coran, Neuchâtel, 1960, p. 21, S.66.12, "Marie, fille de 'Imrān, qui protégeait son sexe en sorte que Nous soufflâmes en lui de Notre Esprit." His comment, "Nous avons ici la précision que c'est par le sexe de Marie que pénétre une partie de l'Esprit en vue de la conception."

9. Parrinder, op. cit., p. 69.

the inbreathing while pervaded by the presence of Allah (in whom she had sought refuge), ʿĪsā would have been born the kind of totally righteous person whom no one can bear, conformable to the state of his mother at the time of his conception in her. Due to the moisture in the breath of the spirit-angel and the combining of this with Maryam's own sexual aspiration, ʿĪsā was conceived in conformity with natural law operative throughout the universe.¹⁰

The spirit's mediation is underlined in the Meccan account in two ways: (1) he appears as a "man perfected," as though this characterizing of his manlike appearance bears important significance for the matter at hand; (2) he has an act to perform, i.e., the "bestowing" of a son upon Maryam. The question naturally arises as to how a spirit bestows a son.¹¹ S.21.91 and 66.12 speak of the inbreathing of the spirit into her body. From the contextual evidence, there is a close approximation to the marital relationship as it is commonly known.¹²

10. Muḥyi-d-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, Fuṣūḥ Al-Ḥikam; La Sagesse des Prophètes, Paris, 1955, pp. 110-112.

11. The root radicals whb, always with the notion of "bestow," occur 25 times, 24 of which refer to Allah or His activity. Refs. to Allah, in 1st pers. plural: 19.49/50,50/51,53/54; 38.30/29,43/42; 21.72,90; 29.27/26; 6.84. Refs. to Allah in nominal form: 38.9/8,35/34; 3.8/6. Refs. to Ibrāhīm's descendants: 37.100/98; 19.49/50; 21.72; 14.39/41; 29.27/26; 6.84. Refs. to prayer requests: 37.100/98; 26.83; 19.5; 38.35/34; 25.74; 3.8/6,38/33. Refs. with regard to rahma: 19.50/51,53/54; 38.9/8; 3.8/6. Refs. with regard to hukm: 26.21/20,83. Refs. to bestowal of children: 37.100/98; 19.5,19,49/50,50/51; 38.30/29,43/42; 21.72,90; 14.39/41; 29.27/26; 42.49/48; 6.84; 3.38/33.

12. Three elements: (1) the "man"; (2) the "bestowing"; (3) the "inbreathing."

As Ibn al-ʿArabī attributes a material substance to the inbreathing, so Corbin likewise sees "a subtle substance" in what is transmitted and draws a parallel with Adam's creation.¹³ Gerock pursues the thought to its logical conclusion:

So we can conclude from this with fair certainty, that the angel Gabriel, or the spirit...became in a natural way the father of Jesus, by being clothed through the divine omnipotence with a human body.¹⁴

It is correct to say that from a Muslim understanding, any conception that takes place apart from human involvement must of necessity constitute virgin conception, and the Quranic text--from this viewpoint--presents sufficient evidence to consider the birth of ʿIsā a miraculous virgin birth.¹⁵

13. Corbin, *op. cit.*, p. 220: "En outre, nafs et rūh (anima et spiritus) sont l'un et l'autre une substance subtile, diaphane, d'où transmission du rūh au corps au moyen d'une insufflation (par le Créateur même, dans le cas d'Adam; par l'ange, dans le cas de Jésus)."

14. C. F. Gerock, Versuch einer Darstellung der Christologie des Koran, Hamburg, 1839, p. 37: "So kennen wir daraus mit ziemlicher gewissheit schliessen, der Engel Gabriel, oder der Geist..., sey auf naturlichem Wege der Vater Jesu geworden, indem et durch die gottliche Allmacht mit einem menschlichen Korper bekleidet wurde."

15. Note the Ahmadiyya's treatment of the virgin birth in Humphrey Fisher, Ahmadiyyah, London, 1963, p. 65: "The Lahoris deny the Virgin Birth; the Qadianis conceal their acceptance of it by pseudo-scientific belittling, calling it 'an illustration of parthenogenesis which is normally seen in the lower animals, as a result of some pathological stimulus, a secondary or degenerate sexual reproduction.'" Cf. Wensinck's material on the Muslim conception of the miraculous, *op. cit.*, pp. 296-298.

In the fuller account at Medina, three factors are emphasized:
¹⁶
 (1) the worthiness of Maryam ; (2) the explanation of Muḥammad's know-
 ledge with regard to the events surrounding the birth of ʿĪsā;
 (3) ʿĪsā's titles, qualities and ministry. Common to both accounts is
 the fact of ʿĪsā's creation by divine fiat.

B. His Unique Titles

By "titles" we mean those expressions which point to this
 person and to him alone. Therefore, we include his name "ʿĪsā," as
 well as his title, "Masīḥ."¹⁷ Masīḥ has a functional connotation, but
 it is used primarily as a title for ʿĪsā. Functional words such as
 "apostle," "prophet," "sign," etc., do not refer uniquely to ʿĪsā and
 are therefore placed in a different descriptive category.

ʿĪsā

The name, ʿĪsā, is the simplest title used in the Qurʾān of
¹⁸
 this personage. Pautz believes that the form used is derived from
 the Jewish caricaturization of Jesus when they called him Esau.¹⁹

16. Yūsuf ʿAlī says, "Mary was no ordinary girl," op. cit.,
 p. 132, n.377.

17. Cf. infra, p. 75, for a discussion of this title.

18. Cf. Table III, p. 30, for the references to all the titles,
 arranged chronologically.

19. Otto Pautz, Mohammed's Lehre von der Offenbarung, Leipzig,
 1898, p. 191.

TABLE III
THE FREQUENCY OF TITLES

TITLE	MECCA		MEDINA	
	II	III		
‘Īsā	43.63	42.13/11 6.85	2,136/130	
			3,52/45	
			3,55/48	
			3,59/52	
			3,84/78	
			4,163/161	
Son of Maryam	43.57 23.50/52			
‘Īsā, Son of Maryam	19.34/35		2,87/81	5,46/50
			2,253/254	5,78/82
			61.6	5,110/109
			61.14	5,112
			57.27	5,114
			33.7	5,116
Masīḥ, Son of Maryam			9.31	
			5,17/19	
			5,72/76	
			5,75/79	
Masīḥ, ‘Īsā, Son of Maryam			3,45/40	
			4,157/156	
			4,171/169	
Masīḥ			4,172/170	
			9.30	
			5,72/76	

Without vowels, 'Īsā is written, 'sy. Arabic speaking Christians use a name for 'Īsā of which the radicals are ys²⁰. There is general agreement that the name, 'Īsā, is derived from the Syriac, Yeshu, the meaning of which is "savior."

There is a simple breakdown of these contexts into three clear divisions of material content. In five references,²¹ the name 'Īsā occurs in a series of proper names of precedent prophets or apostles. In the remaining four references,²² direct quotation is involved. Two of these verses, S.43.63 and 3.52/45, begin with a descriptive adverbial clause of time followed by a quotation of 'Īsā's words spoken in a public confrontation. The remaining two references are quotations of the words of Allah dealing with two of the major events in 'Īsā's life: his birth and his eschatological end, inclusive of his apparent crucifixion or death.

The absence of any longer title in these contexts is reasonable. In the listing of several names, the inclusion of a title for one person would require the inclusion of titles for all the others. Such would make the listing less forceful while its absence does not in any

20. Michaud, *op. cit.*, p. 15, n.2: "Ne pourrait-on pas rappeler à ce propos qu'en Mésopotamie certains noms divins étaient écrits d'une manière et prononcés à l'envers, par exemple, En-Zu, lu Zu-En, voir Editions Dhorme, 'Les Religions de Babylonie et d'Assyrie,' Paris, 1945, 83."

21. S.42.13/11; 6.85; 2.136/130; 3.84/78; 4.163/161.

22. S.43.63; 3.52/45,55/48,59/52.

way betoken dishonor. The second class of contexts treats purely descriptive material and identification of the persons involved is all that seems to matter. In the third class, Allah receives the primary emphasis in the two events that are underlined; titling ʿĪsā with more than his name would take away from Allah's sublime sovereignty which is indicated. The division of occurrences of "ʿĪsā" into Meccan and Medinan periods is without significance here, due to the very nature of the contexts, though the fact that ʿĪsā is not mentioned during the first Meccan period should be kept in mind.

Son of Maryam and Other Titles

The usual Christian understanding or interpretation of the titles, "Son of Maryam," and "ʿĪsā, Son of Maryam," has been that these constituted a negation of the parallel title given to the Jesus of the New Testament, "Son of God." Thus Jones says,

And yet the most common title given to Christ in the Qur'ān is ʿĪsā ibn Maryam, Jesus, the son of Mary; as though Muhammad would popularize this name by way of protest against all that is implied in the phrase familiar to Christians, "Jesus, Son of God."²³

Nusslié clings to the same idea.

As to the expression "son of Mary," it is in evident opposition to the evangelical formula, "son of God," which Muhammad repulsed with horror, as a terrible blasphemy.²⁴

23. Bevan Jones, The People of the Mosque, London, 1932, p. 69.

24. Henri Nusslié, Dialogue avec l'Islam, Paris, 1949, p. 18: "Quant à l'expression 'fils de Marie,' elle s'oppose évidemment à la formule évangélique 'fils de Dieu,' que Mahomet repoussait avec horreur, comme un affreux blasphème."

However, such an interpretation is not at all necessary. It can be just as well reasoned that Muhammad was in favor of the title, "ʿĪsā, Son of Maryam," in preference to the title, "ʿĪsā, Son of man." This, of course, brings us to observe that the Qurʾān's use of this title emphasizes the humanity of ʿĪsā and emphasizes the importance of Maryam his mother. Bishop opts for this latter emphasis, "At all events he took over a phrase from current terminology, and used mostly in honor of the Virgin Mary rather than of her son."²⁵

It may be true that the expression was being used elsewhere in honor of Maryam. If the Qurʾān were using it with the same intention, it failed altogether to elaborate upon Maryam as an exalted personage. Apart from the occurrence of her name in the titles applied to ʿĪsā, she plays no prominent part in his life and ministry after her important role surrounding his conception and birth. The author believes with Michaud that "Son of Maryam" occurs with the purpose of emphasizing the humanity of his person.²⁶ The term "humanity" is used by the author in the sense of "creaturehood," and this will be examined in detail in a later chapter.²⁷ Finally, we should not eliminate, of course, the possibility that "Son of Maryam" is used to identify that particular ʿĪsā of whom one was speaking.

25. Eric Bishop, "The Son of Mary," Muslim World, Vol. XXIV, 1934, p. 237.

26. Michaud, op. cit., p. 14: "...dans l'intention, à l'exemple du Coran, d'insister sur l'humanité du personnage."

27. Cf. infra, Chapter V, "Analysis and Conclusions."

Jomier rightly observes that "the title of 'Masīḥ,' is seen above all as a title of honor by Muslims.²⁸ The honor so indicated, however, should not be considered as exceeding that bestowed upon other prophets or apostles. Snouck Hurgronje is correct in saying, "Only Jesus was the Messiah; but this title did not exceed in value different titles of other prophets, and Muḥammad's special epithets were of a higher order."²⁹

The idea of honor aside, there is some confusion among Arab scholars as to the exact meaning and extent of this title, "Masīḥ." Nusselé observes that Arab exegesis makes this Hebrew word derive from a root expressing the notion of travel and, applied to 'Īsā, it evokes the itinerant character of his ministry.³⁰ In his Arabic dictionary, Fairuzadi gives the title masīḥ under its Arabic root masaha, to "anoint," explaining that this name was given to 'Īsā because he was frequently traveling and stayed seldom in any one place.³¹ For those who seek an exhaustive list of meanings for the word, however, he gives

28. Jacques Jomier, Bible et Coran, Paris, 1958, pp. 112,113.

29. Snouck Hurgronje, Mohammedanism, New York, 1916, p. 66.

30. Nusselé, op. cit., pp. 18,19: "C'est le mot hébreu Messie (Christ) bien entendu, mais l'exégèse arabe le fait dériver d'une racine exprimant la notion de voyage,...évoque simplement le caractère itinérant de son ministère, lequel peut bien avoir enflammé l'imagination d'un Bedouin tel que Mahomet."

31. Fairuzadi, Kamoos, Vol. I, p. 156.

at least fifty explanations in his book, Mashārik Al-Anwār; a summary of many of these is noted below.

In conclusion, when the title, "Son of Maryam," is prefaced with "ʿIsā," the majority of these occurrences seem to be connected to incidents in the life of ʿIsā as one of Allah's prophets. Where "Son of Maryam" is prefaced by "Masīḥ," Muhammad is seen declaiming against belief in the deity of ʿIsā. The full title, "Masīḥ, ʿIsā, Son of Maryam," occurs only in passages dealing with his birth or his crucifixion.

32. Michaud, *op. cit.*, pp. 48,49: "Un premier groupe d'explications fait prévenir masīḥ du verbe arabe masaha qui a pour sens: frotter avec la main, oindre. Le thème faʿīl sur lequel est formé masīḥ peut avoir deux sens: un sens passif et un sens actif. Au sens passif, Jésus est masīḥ, Messie: 1. parce qu'il a été oint au moyen de bénédictions et d'honneurs. En effet en sourate 19.32, Jésus dit de Dieu: 'Il m'a béni'; 2. parce qu'il a été oint, c'est-à-dire couvert, à sa naissance, par l'aile de Gabriel pour le préserver de la morsure de Satan. N'avons-nous pas rencontré une tradition selon laquelle Jésus et Marie avaient été protégés du contact de Satan à leur naissance? 3. parce qu'il a été oint en Adam, comme l'ont été tous les hommes, mais que mis à part des générations pour être jeté en Marie, il est l'oint par excellence. En effet, Dieu, 'lorsqu'il oignit (passa la main sur) les reins d'Adam pour faire comparaître tous les descendants de celui-ci au jour du serment pré-temporel de fidélité au Dieu unique..., ne remit pas Jésus avec tous les autres dans les reins d'Adam et le laissa en dehors des générations issues de ce dernier jusqu'au jour où Il le mit directement en Marie.' Cette explication s'appuie sur l'interprétation traditionnelle de sourate 7.171: Au sens actif, Jésus est masīḥ, Messie: 1. parce qu'il oignait les yeux des aveugles-nés pour leur rendre la vue (d'après sourate 3.43); 2. parce qu'il frottait de la main (oignait) les malades pour les guérir; 3. parce qu'il utilisait pour oindre une huile bénite au moyen de laquelle s'oignaient déjà les prophètes. Une autre explication fait venir masīḥ du verbe arabe saha qui a pour sens: voyager, aller en pèlerinage, pérégriner. Jésus devient, selon l'islam postérieur, 'le modèle des pèlerins,' l'imam des errants,' l'exemple enfin des mystiques."

33. Bishop treats this more fully in his article, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

C. Descriptive Epithets

We are considering here those words indicative both of 'Isā's character and/or of his functions. Table IV shows the frequency of their occurrence; some demand more comment than others while some are best treated in combination. In connection with this study, Hamidullah's observation is worthy of our attention:

It seems to me that the Qur'ān condescends to use certain terms being employed at the time (by the Christians, for example), but gives to them a new sense, a new appeal in conformity with pure monotheism.³⁴

'Isā is spoken of as "mercy," rahma, "blessed," mubārak,
³⁵
 "parable," mathal, and "sign," āya. It is certainly not difficult to understand why 'Isā and his mother are seen as a sign from Allah. Associated with this idea of sign which is closely related to the notion of 'Isā's virgin birth, is the idea of knowledge, with its eschatological connotation. There has been confusion over the transla-

34. Muhammad Hamidullah, Le Prophète de l'Islam, Paris, 1959, Vol. I, p. 424.

35. Āya is used in seven ways: (1) a desire for a sign, 20.133; 26.154; 19.10/11; 21.5; 10.20/21; 7.106/103; 6.37; 13.7/8,27; 2.118/112; 3.41/36; (2) judgment as a sign, 51.37; 54.15; 26.67,103,121,139,158,174, 190,197; 15.77; 36.41; 25.37/39; 27.52/53; 11.103/105; 29.15/14,35/34; 34.15/14; 2.248/249; 3.13/11; (3) a sign in nature, 26.8/7; 36.33,37; 17.12/13; 16.11,13,65/67,67/69,69/71; 12.105; 29.44/43; 34.9; (4) signs performed by individuals, 79.20; 20.22/23,47/49; 43.48/47; 3.49/43,50/44; 5.114; (6) signs are in Allah's power, 26.4/3; 40.78; 6.35,37,109; 13.38; 2.211/207; 48.20; (7) individuals as signs, 19.21; 23.50/52; 21.91 (these refer to 'Isā, or 'Isā and Maryam); 11.64/67; 10.92; 7.73/71; 2.259/261 (these individuals are signs of judgment).

TABLE IV
THE FREQUENCY OF DESCRIPTIVE EPITHETS

Descriptive Epithet	MECCA II	MEDINA
Mercy	19.21	
Blessed	19.31/32	
Parable	43.57 43.59	
Sign	19.21 23.50/52 21.91	
Statement of Truth	19.34/35	
Prophet	19.30/31	
With Evidences	43.63	2.87/81 2.253/254
Servant	19.30/31 43.59	4.172/170
Word		3.45/40 4.171/169
Spirit		4.171/169
Spirit of Holiness		2.87/81 2.253/254 5.110/109
Illustrious		3.45/40
Right-doer		3.41
Near to Allah		3.45/40
Apostle		3.49/43 3.53/46 61.6 4.157/156 4.171/169 5.75/79

tion of S.43.61: "It is knowledge for the Hour; so do not doubt concerning it, but follow me. This is a right path." Hamiduallah admits that "there is no agreement on what that implies exactly." ³⁶ Some have translated, "He is a sign of the Hour..." ³⁷ However, the form which is used in the Arabic textus receptus is ʿilman and it can best be rendered as "These facts about ʿĪsā are truly knowledge for the Hour." The fact that the original text was unpointed led to a canonical variant: "ʿĪsā is truly a signal [ʿalam] for the Hour." In the recension of ʿUbayy, ʿilm has been replaced by dhikr, leading to, "ʿĪsā is truly a reminder for the Hour." It is sufficient to examine the identical form as it occurs elsewhere to become convinced that it should read, "knowledge for the Hour," and may be a reference to the Qurʿān, or ʿĪsā, or indicating that all the Qurʿān has been saying about ʿĪsā ³⁸ constitutes knowledge in view of the Hour of Judgment.

36. Hamiduallah, op. cit., p. 428.

37. Rodwell translates this in 43.61 as "sign," but in his footnote says that literally, it reads, "knowledge for the Hour," p. 139, n.2. Blachère translates this as "sign," giving the variant reading in his note, ʿalam, as preferable to the standard orthodox text, p. 523. So also A. Yūsuf ʿAlī, "sign," p. 1337, n.4662.

38. The form occurs with reference to Allah Himself, usually as embracing all within His knowledge: 20.98,110/109; 27.15,40; 18.65/64; 40.7; 7.89/87; 6.80,148/149; 65.12. There is a set of references which may possibly be linked to ʿĪsā. Lūṭ is given illumination (ḥukm) and knowledge, 21.74; Yūsuf, the same in 12.22; Mūsā, 28.14/13; Dāwud and Sulaymān, 21.79. In 43.63, ʿĪsā comes with Wisdom (from the related derivative, ḥikma) and in 43.61, "knowledge for the Hour" is spoken of, thus giving us a parallel concept to that mentioned with the other prophets. Notwithstanding this last possibility, I see no more in this reference in 43.61, with respect to ʿĪsā, than in 3.60/53 ("the truth

Statement of Truth, Qawl al-Haqq

Zaehner argues that the traditional translation of qawl as
 39
 "statement" need not be the only possibility and suggests the following parallel arrangement of 5.19.34/35 with 3.59/52,60/53:

3.59/52,60/53
 In the eyes of God the likeness of Jesus is as the likeness of Adam (whom) He created from dust and said to him, "be," and he is; it (sc. the likeness of Jesus is) the Truth from thy Lord; so be not of those who dispute.

19.34/35
 That is Jesus, son of Mary (as) the Word of Truth wherein they are in dispute. It is not for God to take to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and it is.

There are three points of similarity: (1) the verb used for governing "truth" in each verse is drawn from the same root radicals qwl; (2) 'Īsā is intimately connected with the "truth" in each instance; (3) the amr of Allah is related to the creation of 'Īsā. A possible fourth parallel is the disputing about 'Īsā's relationship to Allah.

It is not difficult to refute Zaehner since he has obviously distorted, not only the meaning of the passage, but also the literal wording with his own invented inserts. (1) He fails to note that the function of qāl and qawl differs radically; (2) it is most probable that "truth" does not refer to 'Īsā, but to the Quranic statement about him; (3) amr cannot be arbitrarily construed as referring to the creation of 'Īsā.

from your Lord") or 19.34/35 ("the expression of truth"). What the Qur'ān is saying here is that the story of 'Īsā is further knowledge in regard to the Hour of Judgment for which men shall be held responsible.

39. Zaehner, op. cit., pp.207-209.

Zaehner seems to be, unfortunately, under strong compulsion to find an "eternal Word" in Islām (which he believes to find in the amr), or Logos, with which he seeks to equate Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos, or Word of God, in Christianity. Hughes supports this position. We will treat the entire question of the amr of Allah in our final chapter. For the present, to equate the "statement" of S.3.60/53 with the "word" of 19.34/35, is a serious error. Instead of "statement of Truth," we read "expression of Truth," perhaps, with more understanding. It is intended in both verses to underline the creaturehood of ʿĪsā; in the first with reference to Adam and in the second with reference to Maryam.

Prophet, nabī

We simply note here that ʿĪsā as a prophet was given a Scripture to deliver, and that he is so designated only in the second period at Mecca. More will be said later concerning his apostleship and his relation to both the prophets and the apostles.

Servant, ʿabd

ʿAbd is a term indicative of the distance separating the unique Allah from all the rest of His creation. No matter to what height the

40. Thomas Hughes, A Dictionary of Islam, London, 1895, p. 256: "The passage is translated by Rodwell, as well as by Persian commentators, 'this is a statement of the truth'; but according to Bezwari, the words Qaul-ul-Haqq may be taken as a title of Jesus Christ, i.e., the Word of Truth."

41. Cf. Toshihiko Izutsu, God and Man in the Koran, Tokyo, 1964, p. 154.

42. Cf. infra, Chapter V, "Analysis and Conclusions."

Qur'ān seems to elevate 'Īsā, "it is nevertheless a matter of a servant for whom Allah deployed His greatest miracles at his birth as at his exit from this world."⁴³ There is little to be observed in the Qur'ān from the distribution of this singular form, ʿabd.⁴⁴

Word, Kalima, and Spirit, Rūh

What we have to say here are to be understood as preliminary remarks, intended to lay a foundation at this point. The purport of this initial presentation will be increasingly perceived as our study reaches its climax in Chapter V.

This "word" is connected to the amr of Allah. Hamidullah hints that this may be so when he says, "The verb or the word of Allah does not seem to have other significance than the will, the commandment of Allah."⁴⁵ Many Christians have read their own doctrine of the Logos into the Quranic passages, without any justification. The fact is, there is no conceivable connection between these two diametrically different concepts. A typical erroneous view is that of Ledit:

It is sufficient to say that it is not a question of a reality outside of Allah, but rather emanating

43. Charles Ledit, Mahomet, Israel, et le Christ, Paris, 1956, p. 145: "Il s'agit toutefois d'un serviteur pour lequel Dieu a déployé ses plus grands miracles à son entrée comme à sa sortie de ce monde."

44. The Qur'ān seldom refers to specific individuals as servants: 'Īsā, three times; Muḥammad, once; Sulaymān, once; Ayyūb, once; Nūḥ, once. Emphasis is evidently laid upon 'Īsā's creature status.

45. Hamidullah, op. cit., p. 424: "Le verbe ou la parole de Dieu ne semble avoir d'autre signification que la volonté, le commandement de Dieu."

directly from His ineffable Being, as the word is formed in our soul before even being pronounced.⁴⁶

The "word" may be understood to be a part of the amr by which authority and order ^ʿĪsā was conceived in Maryam, and not be ^ʿĪsā himself. This, certainly, would be much easier to comprehend; such a word would indeed exist in Allah, or, better, in His amr or order, before being pronounced. The word, then, would be construed as the actualization in history of an eternal potentiality of the amr. We must agree with Lammens,

The sense he attached to the term "kalima," Verb, remains enigmatic. No doubt he simply meant to make clear that the Masīḥ had served as an organ, that of mediator of the divine revelation: that realistic interpretation agrees with his concept of the prophetic office.⁴⁷

Corbin, following the lead of Suhrawardī, equates "word," "spirit" and "spirit of holiness."

Suhrawardī shows, by having recourse to the exegesis of several Quranic verses, that "Word" and "Spirit" have a single significance. That Spirit is Gabriel, i.e.; the Holy Spirit who appeared to Maryam and who manifests himself in the person of Jesus.⁴⁸

46. Ledit, op. cit., p. 152: "C'est assez dire qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une réalité extérieure à Dieu, mais précédant au contraire directement de Son Être ineffable, comme la parole se forme en notre âme avant même d'être prononcée."

47. Henri Lammens, L'Islam, Beyrouth, 1926, p. 58: "Le sens qu'il attachait au vocable 'kalima', Verbe, demeure énigmatique. Sans doute voulait-il simplement donner à entendre que le Messie avait servi d'organe, d'intermédiaire à la révélation divine: cette interprétation réaliste cadre avec son concept du prophétisme."

48. Henri Corbin and P. Kraus, "Le bruissement de l'aile de Gabriel," Journal Asiatique, Vol. CCXXVII, 1935, p. 19.

There is strong difference of opinion as to what the Qur'ān means when it uses the term "spirit." Such diverse authorities as MacDonald and Hamiduallah agree that what the Qur'ān means by its use of the word "spirit" is angel. Thus MacDonald writes, "Further, the Qur'ān calls him the spirit of Allah--but spirit for Muhammad meant an angel--the Word of Allah and a Word from Allah."⁴⁹ "Angels," comments Hamiduallah,⁵⁰ "are frequently designated by the Qur'ān as spirit of Allah." For some reason, he goes on to say, "The spirit is nothing else but the order of Allah, the will of Allah." On the other hand, O'Shaughnessy very strongly asserts

It is clear from a study of the context in which rūh, always singular, occurs in the Koran that it is never found there as the equivalent of mal'ak, angel, nor of nafs, human soul, self, although it has the last two meanings in post-Koranic and modern Arabic.⁵¹

Spirit of Holiness, Rūh al-Qudus

While most scholars understand this title to refer to the angel Gabriel, Michaud is representative of a different point of view:

Examining the titles which the Qur'ān gives to 'Īsā son of Maryam, will allow us to take account of the abyss which separates from the most promising titles their content, in the Qur'ān and in Islām, to realize

49. Duncan Black MacDonald, Aspects of Islam, New York, 1911, p. 245.

50. Hamiduallah, op. cit., p. 428: "Les anges...sont fréquemment désignés par le Qur'ān comme esprit de Dieu."

51. Thomas O'Shaughnessy, The Development of the Meaning of Spirit in the Koran, Roma, 1953, p. 11.

that "strengthened" or "aided" by the holy spirit finally says nothing more than the help accorded by Allah to all believing creatures.⁵²

The fact that this phrase is only found in conjunction with 'Īsā, and not with any other prophet or apostle, must indicate some singular emphasis and not, as Michaud says, "help accorded by Allah to all believing creatures."

Illustrious, Wajih

There is some indication in S.3.45/40 that 'Īsā has a role to perform not only in this world, but also in the world to come. As we have already seen, something to do with the person of 'Īsā is "knowledge for the Hour." If he was illustrious in this world by reason of his birth and miracles, it is reasonable to expect that he shall be outstanding in the world to come, either for the same reasons or because of some yet undefined role which Allah intends he shall execute at that time.

Right-doer, Sālih

It has always been an outstanding feature of the Quranic presentation of 'Īsā that he appears on the scene, performs his ministry and mission and leaves, without having committed any transgression or

52. Michaud, op. cit., p. 38: "L'examen des titres que le Coran donne à Jésus fils de Marie, nous permettra de nous rendre compte de l'abîme qui sépare les titres les plus prometteurs de leur contenu dans le Coran et en islam, de nous rendre compte que 'fortifié' ou 'assisté' par l'esprit saint ne dit finalement rien de plus que l'aide accordée par Dieu à toutes les créatures croyantes."

sin. He is not, however, alone in this respect, for others are spoken of as being "of the right-doers." Jomier, therefore, is arguing from Qurenic silence when he writes,

For that purity is also a trait which the Qur'ān recognizes in 'Īsā. Although numerous prophets in the Qur'ān seek Allah's pardon or Allah announces to them the forgiveness of their faults, it is never a question of 'Īsā's sins in the Qur'ān. In addition, numerous ṣūfīs (Muslim mystics) have found in 'Īsā their great model.⁵³

On the other hand, on the basis of S.5.116, some are prepared to charge 'Īsā with being a theological sinner:

Jesus also was a Kafir, they went on to say, when he said (to God) "Thou knowest what is in my soul, but I do not know what is in Thy soul (nafs). Verily, Thou art the sole knower of the hidden world!" Because to think that God has a "soul" nafs is an act of kufr.⁵⁴

However, Dozy's conclusion is that

Muhammad, while modifying this dogma somewhat, recognized that 'Īsā and his mother were free from original sin, and it was a perpetual scandal for the believers to have to recognize such an advantage in the founder of Christianity over the founder of Islam.⁵⁵

53. Jomier, op. cit., p. 107: "Car cette pureté est aussi un trait que le Coran reconnaît à Jésus. Alors que dans le Coran de nombreux prophètes demandent pardon à Dieu ou que Dieu leur annonce le pardon de leurs fautes, il n'est pas question de péchés de Jésus dans le Coran. Aussi de nombreux soufis (mystiques musulmans) ont vu en Jésus un grand modèle."

54. Toshihiko Izutsu, The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology, Yokohama, 1965, p. 18.

55. R. Dozy, Essai sur l'Histoire de l'Islamisme, Paris, 1879, p. 130.

Near to Allah, Muqarrab

56

This term occurs eight times in the Qur'ān. The group of those "near to Allah" is composed if not exclusively, then generally, of angelic hosts. According to S.3.45/40, 'Īsā is assured a place among them. Notwithstanding Michaud's negative statements on this issue, we see this inclusion among the heavenly host as another indication of the high rank which the Qur'ān attributes to 'Īsā. Here is where the angels (4.172/170) and the Sābiqūn (56.11) are said to be. Those in this location will witness the 'Illiyūn (83.21) and drink from a spring (83.28). The reference to the dead in general (56.88/87) as being in this position is enigmatic. We note that 'Īsā is the only individual referred to by name as being among them.

Apostle, Rasūl

At this point, we take note that while 'Īsā is spoken of as a prophet in Mecca, he is clearly an apostle in Medinan passages and closely associated with the Scripture in both periods. The whole notion of 'Īsā's apostleship will be thoroughly explored in our final chapter.

56. A I, S.56.11,88/87; 83.21,28. A II, 26.42/41. A III, 7.114/111. B, 3.45/40; 4.172/170.

57. Michaud, op. cit., p. 77: "Jésus peut bien appartenir à une sorte de cour céleste dont Dieu s'entourne, cette proximité ne lui acquiert aucun droit à s'élever plus haut qu'une autre créature d'Allah, fut-elle angélique. La place que le Coran concède à Jésus parmi les anges à pour seul effet d'augmenter la cour de Dieu d'une créature supplémentaire."

D. His Miracles

Mohammad Abd Allah Draz defines miracles in this way:

In Islamic terminology a miracle is most often defined as a fact contrary to general rules, opposed to the normal course of events, with a cause which escapes human comprehension; and this fact is also a challenge to anyone who doubts it.⁵⁸

It is a generally accepted fact that 'Īsā is distinguished from other prophets and apostles by reason of the number and the quality of the miracles performed by him.⁵⁹ However, the Qur'ān, while affirming the performance of miracles by 'Īsā, nowhere records the actual, historical happening of miracles by him. This indefinite character as to the time-relatedness of his miracles, renders 'Īsā a less exalted personage than he would have otherwise appeared. Michaud observes that "in the Qur'ān, the miracles of 'Īsā are those of a robot acting by the power and for the glory of Allah."⁶⁰ As Sweetman says,

In the later theology the whole superstructure of the doctrine of prophethood rests on the belief in miracles and the assumption that by these prophethood can be proved. It will be noted that miracle plays a lesser part in the recognition of prophethood in the philosophers.⁶¹

58. Kenneth Morgan (ed.), Islam--The Straight Path, New York, 1958, pp. 18,19.

59. References: S.3.49/43; 5.110/109,112-115.

60. Michaud, op. cit., p.32: "Dans le Coran, les miracles de Jésus sont ceux d'un automate agissant par le pouvoir et pour la plus grande gloire d'Allah."

61. Sweetman, op. cit., p. 129.

Jomier relates the miracles of ʿĪsā to those performed by other prophets and apostles,

They [the commentators] note that each of the miraculous acts of the life of ʿĪsā taken alone is discovered in the life of other prophets... But however correct this remark is by the commentators, it is nonetheless true that ʿĪsā, even according to the Qurʿān, is the only prophet to have grouped in his own person so many miracles. And that of his return belongs to him alone.⁶²

His speaking in the cradle (S.19.30/31,31/32,32/33,33/34; 3.46/41; 5.110/109) was a fulfillment of the spirit's prophecy about him (3.46/41); and, since ʿĪsā was still an infant incapable of speech, this miracle must be attributed to Allah. In 3.49/43ff., ʿĪsā says what he is going to do as "signs" to the Children of Israel. These signs include the imparting of life to clay birds, the healing of lepers, the recovering of sight to those born blind, the quickening of the dead, the revealing of what food is consumed or stored. The actual performance of these signs is recorded in 5.110/109, in a general way, without particular instances being given. Muhammad ʿAlī, in his commentary, says that all normal children speak in the cradle. The creation of birds means, for him, ʿĪsā giving a new zeal to his disciples. The healing⁶³ is of the spiritually sick, and the spiritually dead are raised. With this interpretation, however, it is difficult indeed to perceive in what sense such acts constitute "signs," or "evidences."

62. Jomier, op. cit., pp. 108,109.

63. Fisher, op. cit., p. 66.

Jalil and Ibn al-ʿArabī connect the miracles of ʿĪsā with his virgin birth:

Having been conceived miraculously in the womb of a virgin, by the direct and creative order of Allah, he manifests the power of Allah in multiplied and astonishing miracles which were characteristic of his mission and person.⁶⁴

ʿĪsā resurrected the dead because he is the divine spirit. While the inbreathing of Maryam was the breath of Gabriel, the Verb came from Allah. In this respect, the resurrection of the dead is indeed an action of ʿĪsā, since it emanated from his breath, as he himself emanated from the form of his mother; on the other hand, the miracle was only operated by him in appearance since it is essentially a divine act.⁶⁵

It is commonly assumed that the sending down of the table prepared was a miracle. It is, of course, a miracle as a fact opposed to the normal course of events, but it is not directly attributable to ʿĪsā except in answer to his intercession on the part of the disciples. It cannot be said to be his miracle (S.5.114,115).

In summary, the Qurʾān definitely established that miracles occurred both at the birth of ʿĪsā and in his infancy, and in the course of his public ministry and in his intercession, without pinpointing the exact circumstances in which they occurred.

64. Mohammed Abd-El-Jalil, *Aspects intérieurs de l'islam*, Paris, 1949, p. 42: "Conçu miraculeusement dans le sein d'une vierge, Marie, par l'ordre direct et créateur de Dieu, né de cette mère 'fidèle' par excellence qui est 'élue et purifiée parmi toutes les femmes de l'univers', il manifeste la puissance de Dieu par des miracles multiples et étonnants qui furent caractéristiques de sa mission et de sa personne."

65. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *op. cit.*, pp. 112,113.

These were to be received by the Children of Israel as "evidences" or "signs" and, in consequence, they were to believe in Allah and follow the Injil brought to them by 'Īsā.

E. His Ministry and Message

It is not at all evident from the Qur'ān that the mission of 'Īsā was universal.

On the contrary, He is sent to the Jews only, and is not an apostle to the whole world, although His disciples afterward carry His message into other lands. Jesus Christ was God's messenger to the Jews who had fallen into error and unbelief. The miracles were intended to persuade them of the truth of His message, and to lead them to accept His revelation received from God, namely, the Injil or Gospel. The Koran does not indicate into what particular errors the Jews had fallen and in what respect they had left the true religion of Abraham (Islam), that is, the belief in one God. In one passage it is asserted that the Jews gave divine honours to Ezra, but whether this took place after the mission of Jesus Christ or before, is left uncertain.⁶⁶

Ameer adds a detail in explaining one of the errors into which the Jews had fallen, though it would be difficult to find a Quranic basis for his statement: "The Jews had turned the Levitical law, with all its minutiae, into a fetish: Jesus redeemed them from its bondage."⁶⁷

66. Samuel Zwemer, The Moslem Christ, London, 1912, p. 137. Cf. the references concerning the division of the Children of Israel, to whom 'Īsā came, into Jews and Christians, S.19,37/38; 23.52/54; 2.113/107,120/114; 3.67/60; 9.30; 5.18/21,51/56,82/85.

67. Syed Ameer 'Ali, The Spirit of Islam, London, 1961, p. 257.

From S.3.55/48 and 5.14/17, the mission of ʿĪsā may be understood to include the bringing of the Good News, i.e., the Injīl, confirming the Tawrāt, showing the Wisdom and Evidences of Allah, teaching prayer and almsgiving, and being a sign, a mercy, a parable, and a witness.

Yūsuf ʿAlī refers to the orientation of ʿĪsā's ministry and message when he says, "The mission of Jesus was to his own people, the Jews."⁶⁸ So, in brief, the Qur'ān does present ʿĪsā as "sent by God, to confirm the law of Moses, and to preach the Gospel to the people of Israel. He proclaimed his mission by many manifest signs."⁶⁹ Further, however, ʿĪsā serves to lend authority to the ministry and message of the apostle who would follow him.⁷⁰

Not all scholars believe that the mission of ʿĪsā was restricted to the Jews, or more correctly, to the Children of Israel.

However, all these privileges are purely personal. ʿĪsā son of Maryam is a man as others are. He had a mission similar to that of his predecessors, although his role goes beyond the people to whom he was sent and seems to have had to be accomplished only at the decisive hour of the history of humanity, at the end of time.⁷¹

68. Yūsuf ʿAlī, *op. cit.*, p. 1336, n.4659,4660, p. 1540, n.5436

69. Ahmad Galwash, The Religion of Islam, Cairo, 1958, Vol. I, p. 214.

70. Cf. infra, p.66, for a discussion on this point.

71. Jalil, op. cit., p. 43: "Cependant tous ces privilèges sont purement personnels. Jésus Fils de Marie est un homme comme les autres. Il a eu une mission semblable à celles de ses prédécesseurs, bien que son rôle dépasse le peuple auquel il a été 'envoyé' et semble ne devoir s'accomplir pleinement qu'à l'heure décisive de l'histoire de l'humanité, à la fin du temps."

Lammens sees nothing more than a call to return to the worship of Allah, as the message of ʿĪsā: "For the preaching of Christ would be limited to that of monotheism."⁷² Ameer ʿAlī enlarges upon this same thought,

It is not the "unique life of Jesus" which makes him, in the Moslem mind, one of the greatest landmarks in the history of religious development. It is the message he brought to humanity--the message the Almighty entrusts to His chosen ones only at intervals, to recall mankind from the worship of their passions, symbolised in the idols of their infancy.⁷³

ʿĪsā was on the one hand the prophet who brought the Injīl and on the other, he filled the official role of apostle to the Children of Israel. However, apart from the two elements in his possible message, prayer and almsgiving, we learn nothing more from the Qurʾān of a positive nature, concerning the content of his preaching or teaching. It is understood, of course, that he--in company with all other prophets and apostles--exhorted to belief in Allah as the unique One to be worshiped. In S.5.72/76, ʿĪsā urges, "O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." This is confirmed as being perhaps his primary message in 5.117: "I only told them what You ordered me to tell them, 'Adore Allah, my Lord and yours!'"

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that there is a universal value to the whole mission of ʿĪsā. Though not unique, the Quranic presentation of his person has thrust upon the consciousness of thinking

72. Lammens, op. cit., p. 58: "Car la prédication du Christ se serait bornée à celle du monothéisme."

73. Ameer ʿAlī, op. cit., p. 247.

Muslims down through the centuries that wider scope and broader application of his teaching.

He came but to show how man ought to live, how he ought to conduct himself vis-à-vis the world and existence. This is the meaning Jesus had of redemption. The sin from which he sought to redeem mankind was man's obsession with an insatiable and distracting pursuit of worldly existence, of lower value.... It is not the fact of Jesus' passion and crucifixion that constitutes redemption, but the moral truth it was his special distinction to bring, with divine grace, to man's consciousness.⁷⁴

This ethical or moral value to 'Isā's message is underlined by Ameer 'Alī,

He taught the sacredness of truth, justice, and purity, the blessedness of humility.... His messengership was essentially a link in the chain of man's spiritual development.... The Islamic belief is that his mission, like that of Mohammed, was to re-enunciate the eternal truths of God, and to recall humanity to the inevitable track of spiritual evolution.⁷⁵

Though this scholar is willing to go this far in attributing to 'Isā moral value of an absolute nature in his message, he concludes, "The work of Jesus was left unfinished. It was reserved for another Teacher ⁷⁶ to systematize the laws of morality."

So it is that the perfection of this moral message, as well as the ultimate call to return to the worship of Allah alone, are reserved

74. Isma'īl al-Farūqī, 'Urubah and Religion, Amsterdam, 1962, p. 67.

75. Ameer 'Alī, op. cit., pp. 254,257.

76. Ibid., p. 173.

for the ministry and apostleship of another teacher, Muḥammad, who becomes identified with his predecessors, Mūsā and ʿĪsā. "...He demanded in the name of Allah the same Islam that Moses, Jesus, and former prophets had demanded of their nations."⁷⁷ "It is the very identity of his message with that of his predecessors, like Moses and Jesus, that vouches for Muhammad's veracity."⁷⁸ It is, then, by examining the message of Muḥammad that we are authorized to read back into the ministry of ʿĪsā the content of his message, eliminating of course temporal and local historical notions. As far as the mission of ʿĪsā is concerned, and as to any uniqueness involved,

The mission of ʿĪsā contains nothing singular from a Muslim point of view. For them, it is only an ordinary prophetic mission; they do not attempt to define its particular character, and they do not sense the novelty of the preaching of Christ.⁷⁹

F. His "Death"

"The end of the life of Jesus on earth is as much involved in mystery as his birth."⁸⁰ This statement by Yūsuf ʿAlī is interesting

77. Hurgronje, op. cit., p. 44.

78. Gustave Grunebaum, Islam, London, 1961, p. 2.

79. Carré de Vaux, La Doctrine de l'Islam, Paris, 1909, pp. 100, 101: "La mission de Jésus n'a rien de bien particulier aux yeux des Musulmans. Ce n'est pour eux qu'une mission prophétique ordinaire; ils ne cherchent pas à en définir le caractère propre, et ils ne sentent pas la nouveauté de la prédication du Christ."

80. Yūsuf ʿAlī, op. cit., p. 230 n.663.

in two ways: First, he finds mystery surrounding the birth of 'Īsā. The principle of a virgin birth, however, is not initiated by the instrumentality of an angel-spirit, although the interaction of this unearthly being with the earthly Maryam is difficult to understand. It is more particularly the end of 'Īsā's life which is rightfully considered mysterious. Yūsuf 'Alī tacitly admits the "end" of that life.⁸¹

Massé rightly observes that "the death of Jesus Christ remains obscure in the Koran. While one passage in the Koran denies the crucifixion, another passage affirms it."⁸² Zwemer finds the Qur'ān self-contradictory: "Especially in relation to His death, the statements are contradictory, and cannot be reconciled without violence to the text."⁸³ Elder chooses to emphasize only the affirmation of the crucifixion,

There seems to be in the Koran evidence that the death of Christ was accepted as a fact in Arabia in the days of the founding of Islam. In spite of present-day insistence on the denial of the crucifixion as one of the fundamentals in the conception of Christ's work as a prophet, there are some very clear verses in the Koran to the contrary.⁸⁴

81. The Quranic references are: S.3.55/48; 4.157/156; 19.31/32, 33/34; 5.117. Passages which have been applied to 'Īsā by some scholars are 2.61/58 and 2.72/67,73/68.

82. Henri Massé, Islam, New York, 1938, p. 252.

83. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 41,42.

84. E.E. Elder, "The Crucifixion in the Koran," Muslim World, Vol. XIII, 1923, p. 243.

It seems obvious that many non-Muslim orientalists as well as some Muslims find the passages dealing with the end of 'Isā's time on earth confusing.

From the Moslem point of view there have been hundreds of prophets as great as Jesus Himself, or even greater, and he regards them all reverentially, yet he does not bother himself about the death of any one of them, save that of Jesus.⁸⁵

"That a prophet should be killed by those to whom he was sent he may have regarded as possible; but that a prophet should suffer in such a way was an unthinkable thing for him."⁸⁶ Jomier comes to the same thought as MacDonald,

The ideal of grandeur in Islam emphasizes the grandeur of force and of power. Thus, Islam rejects the idea of the crucifixion of our Lord (Islam allows, however, that many prophets have been put to death by the Jews).⁸⁷

A modern Muslim speaks to the issue of Allah removing 'Isā from the cross,

The assumption is that He will directly intervene to save him, as a more appropriately efficient and Divine proceeding. The same instinct, metaphysically seen, underlies the whole Muslim concept of the Divine rescue of the Christ from the Cross, since

85. Muhammad Dīn, "The Crucifixion in the Koran," Muslim World, Vol. XIV, 1924, p. 24.

86. MacDonald, op. cit., p. 248.

87. Jomier, op. cit., pp. 98,99.

Divine purposes cannot readily, or properly, be conceived of as making their way through a crisis of apparent defeat.⁸⁸

There cannot be any doubt that Muhammad was well advanced in his conception of prophethood when the account of the crucifixion is brought to his attention. At that point in his understanding, it horrified him, it being totally inconceivable that Allah would allow His messenger to be so humiliated and tortured by his enemies.⁸⁹ Hayek summarizes this attitude,

Muhammad was indignant about the Jews' claim to have killed the Verb and Spirit of Allah as he was also over their abominable calomnies with respect to Maryam. Perhaps he wished to affirm that 'Isā, as every bearer of the divine message, could not be defeated by Allah's enemies. The Qur'ān leaves the question open.⁹⁰

There are three Arabic expressions used in the references to the death and raising up of 'Isā which we desire to examine closely and which we believe yield the key to a complete understanding of the

88. Kamel Hussein, City of Wrong, Amsterdam, 1959, p. 215, n.8.

89. Harry Dorman, Toward Understanding Islam, New York, 1948, p. 7.

90. Michel Hayek, Le Christ de l'Islam, Paris, 1959, p. 217: "Muhammad s'élève avec indignation contre leur prétention d'avoir anéanti le Verbe et l'Esprit d'Allah, comme d'ailleurs contre les calomnies abominables qu'ils transmettaient au sujet de Marie. Peut-être ne voulait-il pas aborder le fait historique du Vendredi-Saint, mais simplement affirmer que Jésus, comme tout serviteur d'Allah, comme tout porteur du message divin, ne pouvait être vaincu par les ennemis d'Allah. En ce sens, on pourrait soutenir que le Coran laisse la question ouverte, que les versets IV, 157,158 ne constituent pas une prise de position définitive à l'égard de l'évènement lui-même dans sa pure réalité historique."

Quranic presentation of this phase of 'Īsā's life. By "complete understanding," we refer to the total picture drawn in the Quranic data. In other words, it is not a complete understanding of the event itself but of how the Qur'ān recounts that event.

tawaffā

The general meaning of tawaffā, in the Qur'ān is "to cause to die." ⁹¹ Some understand the term to indicate a "return" or a "gathering" ⁹² to Allah. ⁹³ The form used in S.3.55/48 is mutawaffiyuka.

Amāta, meaning literally "to cause to die," is not used. Concerning the Quranic reference cited above, Jomier says,

It is a reference to Allah who recalls 'Īsā and raises him to Himself (the obscure meaning of a word much discussed, to learn whether 'Īsā died before having been raised by Allah or whether, to the contrary, Allah raised him alive, without his having died).⁹⁴

91. Zaehner, op. cit., p. 210.

92. Cf. the sense of "return" to Allah at death which tawaffā indicates, which is brought about by either Allah, angels, the angel of death or death itself (death of men in general, S.6.60,61; 10.104; 16.70/72; 22.5; believers, 2.234,240/241; 3.193/191; 4.97/99; 7.126/123; 10.46/47; 12.101/102; 13.40; 16.32/34; 40.77; apostates, 47.27/29; unrighteous, 7.37/35; 8.50/52; 16.28/30; 32.11; 40.67/69; adulterous women, 4.15/19; 'Īsā, 3.55/48; 5.117).

93. Mutawaffika is the fifth form active participle of wafā, with the direct object personal pronoun suffixed to it. The meaning of the active voice in the fifth form is "to take to one's self," and in the passive voice of the same form, "to be received."

94. Jacques Jomier, Introduction à l'Islam actuel, Paris, 1964, p. 210: "Il est question de Dieu qui rappelle Jésus et l'élève à lui (sens obscur d'un mot discuté pour savoir si Jésus est mort avant d'avoir été élevé par Dieu ou si, au contraire, Dieu l'a élevé vivant sans qu'il soit mort)."

rafa'a

The usual meaning of this verb is "to raise up." By "raised up" is not meant the bodily resurrection, which is expressed by the verb ba'atha and is applied to 'Isā in S.19.33/34. It may be understood here in three ways: (1) 'Isā is raised up physically to Allah, before death, from the cross; (2) 'Isā is raised up physically to Allah, after death, from the cross; (3) not a physical raising up at all but a raising up in rank, as in 2.253/254, "We have favored some apostles above others: there are some to whom Allah has spoken, others He has raised in rank. He gave 'Isā, Son of Maryam, evidences...." Does the Qur'ān cite the case of 'Isā here as an example of one of those whom Allah "has raised in rank"? At any rate, with such references in the Qur'ān to the possible death of 'Isā, the reader is obliged to decide between the alternatives. Some have opted for a combination of the second and third points above.

Robson reflects the view which Christian orientalist seem to have taken in agreeing with the traditional Muslim understanding, which, after all, may be in contradiction to the text, that "this passage [4.157,158/156] clearly presents the doctrine which is so ardently believed by Muslims, that Jesus did not die, but was taken straight up to heaven."⁹⁵

95. James Robson, "Muhammadan teaching about Jesus," Muslim World, Vol. XXIX, 1939, p. 40.

shubbiha lahum

Shabbaha means (a) "to cause to resemble," and (b) "to cause doubt." As can be observed in the context, both meanings may be included here.⁹⁶ What took place on the day of 'Isā's departure had all the appearance of a crucifixion as far as the onlookers were concerned, in fact that is what they gave themselves credit for having accomplished; yet, subsequent to this appearance of things, they were found to be in doubt about what had actually taken place.

Some take the position that 'Isā did not die but simply disappeared. "That Mohammed, in accordance with the traditions current in his time, believed that Jesus miraculously disappeared, there is no doubt."⁹⁷ Chulam Ahmad says, "...his senselessness was then mistaken for actual death, and consequently having been taken down alive from the cross he fled to another country."⁹⁸

The excesses of the Jews were their disbelief, their cruel charge against Mary, and their utterly false claims that they had put to death Jesus, a Messenger of God..., they had only strong suspicion that Jesus had died on the cross. Allah, on the other hand, saved him from an accursed death on the cross and admitted him to the circle of His favored ones.⁹⁹

96. Reference, S.4.157,158/156.

97. Ameer 'Alī, op. cit., p. 208n.

98. Fisher, op. cit., pp. 67,68.

99. Mirza Hazrat, Introduction to the Study of the Holy Quran, London, 1949, p. 126.

There are those who believe, then, that the Jews were made to believe that ʿĪsā hung on the cross, due to the appearance of his substitute. Hamiduallah says,

The death of ʿĪsā is not an important thing in the Qurʾān....Nevertheless the Qurʾān denies the death of ʿĪsā on the cross, as an historical fact, and declares that they were deceived by the similarity.¹⁰¹

One of the problems is to determine the subject of the verb, shubbiha.

The Moslems often say the subject of the verb--the nāʾib al-fāʾil--is the person crucified in Jesus' stead. But there is no mention of him here, or anywhere else in the Koran. It seems obvious that it cannot refer to Jesus. It certainly must refer to something that has been mentioned.¹⁰²

One group of scholars therefore seeks to establish the fact of a substitution, without naming the substitute. Speaking of Rachid Rida, Jomier says, "He put forth his best effort in demonstrating the 'non-crucifixion' of ʿĪsā, for the reason that there was an exchange of

100. It is interesting to see how shubbiha lahum has been handled by various translators: "Son sosie a été substitué à leurs yeux" (Blachère); "Un homme qui lui ressemblait fut mis à sa place" (Kasimirski); "But he was counterfeited for them" (Watt); "Il [ʿĪsā] leur est apparu ainsi" (Massignon); "Il leur a semblé ainsi" (Hayek); "La chose fut rendue incertaine ou obscure pour eux" (Grégoire); "Alors qu'il [ʿĪsā] leur a paru comme tel" (Mercier).

101. Hamiduallah, op. cit., p. 425.

102. Elder, op. cit., p. 257.

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 victims." Arberry shows that one reason behind the idea of substitution is the desire to refute Christians: "Jesus son of Mary, Word of God, who was not as the Christians alleged killed upon the cross, a simulacrum being divinely substituted for him."¹⁰⁴ It is not always clear at what point such a substitution might have taken place.

But the Qur'ān says Jesus Christ was altogether saved from the indignity of the Cross, and as if by miracle, someone else of the same features was crucified by the Jews under illusion....¹⁰⁵

Some leave no room for debate over this vital question of substitution, considering that their particular interpretation has the full weight of Quranic authority behind it.

Everything points to the fact that the Quranic account is the correct one, and that the crucified was not Christ. The incorruptible state of the Qur'ān makes it sure that it is reliable on this point as on all others.¹⁰⁶

Another group, believing in the substitution theory, clearly identify Judas as the substitute.

103. Jacques Jomier, Le Commentaire Coranique du Manar, Paris, 1954, p. 312: "Mais le meilleur de son effort porte sur la démonstration de la non-crucifixion de Jésus pour la raison qu'il y aurait eu substitution de victime...."

104. Arthur Arberry, Sufism, London, 1956, p. 16.

105. Mohammed Burney, Islam, Hyderabad, 1953, pp. 204,205.

106. Dorman, op. cit., p. 64. Cf. Al-Fāriq bayn al-makhlūq wal-khāliq by Abdurrahman Bashaizadeh, Cairo, 1904, pp. 266,271.

The Jews intended to crucify Jesus, but God saved him from the plot, took him up to Heaven and stamped his likeness on a treacherous Jew who was apprehended and crucified in his stead. It is the constant doctrine of the Moslems, that it was not Jesus who underwent crucifixion, but someone else, resembling him in shape, namely Judas.¹⁰⁷

No less in contrast with the Christian record is his version of the Crucifixion and the Redemption through the cross. Mohammed rejects them both. He denies the crucifixion of the Christ, and teaches that Judas was substituted for him and nailed to the cross, while the Christ himself ascended direct to heaven.¹⁰⁸

One of his deals with the crucifixion of Christ and his resurrection. The common Muslim view is given, that Judas Iscariot was crucified instead of Jesus.¹⁰⁹

This substitution is seen sometimes as an ironic twist given a critical situation by a clever Allah. "Thus Allah's ruse triumphed over the
110
ruse of the priests."

There are Muslims who believe that the Qur'ān does not deny the crucifixion. "Abū Hātim, for example, basing his view on the opinion of his teachers, declared that the beginning of the Quranic verse
111
[4.157,158/156] does not deny at all the crucifixion." Many of the

107. Galwash, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

108. Bukhsh Khuda, "A Mohammedan view of Islam and Christianity," *Muslim World*, Vol. XVI, 1926, pp. 366,367.

109. Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 242, quoting from Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Akīdat al-Ṣalḥ wa al-fidā'*, 1331/1913, pp. 87ff.

110. Ledit, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

111. Louis Massignon, *Opéra Minora*, Liban, [n. d.], p. 535, quoting from Abū Hātim Rāzī, *Kitāb A'ḷām al-nubuwwa*, 322/934.

Ahmadiyya believe that the Qur'ān teaches that 'Īsā died, but not by means of a cross. "What, however, is quite clear from these verses is that the Qur'ān denies the death of Jesus by crucifixion."¹¹²

Another question to be treated is that of to whom the moral responsibility must be charged for the crucifixion of 'Īsā, if he was really crucified. The words, "They did not kill him in all certainty" (4.157/158/156), or, as another translation reads, "And they did not really slay him," may be understood to be emphasizing the point of the agent responsible rather than casting doubt upon an actual historical slaying. In other words, if they (i.e., the Jews) did not really kill him, then who did?

It might be well for us to examine the verse, and see its implications. In the first place, it does not say that Jesus was not killed, nor was He crucified. It merely states that they (the Jews) did not kill Him or crucify Him. This is true historically; although the responsibility was theirs, the Roman soldiers actually did the work. Christ Himself prophesied that His death would be at the hands of the Gentiles.¹¹³

Some feel that the responsibility of his crucifixion falls upon 'Īsā himself. Dīn quotes Elder as saying that

Jesus had affirmed before Pilate that it was He alone who had power over life and death, therefore the Koranic idea is right in so far as nobody else could either kill Him or slay Him otherwise. If He died, He died of His own free will, and then rose up again by His own authority.¹¹⁴

112. Jones, op. cit., p. 273.

113. Elder, op. cit., pp. 256,257.

114. Dīn, op. cit., p. 28.

Ghulam concludes concerning this point of view,

If Jesus Christ allowed the Crucifixion to take place of his own free will, then we are constrained to say that this act of his was not a wise one and that his self-sacrifice served no useful purpose. Had he spent his life in preaching, it would have been a source of blessings and of immense good to those of his fellow creatures who might have hearkened to him, and his words would have served as an anodyne and a soothing touch for generations.¹¹⁵

It is made clear in the Qur'ān that the Jews had every intention of putting 'Īsā upon a cross and of thereby putting him to death. The Qur'ān makes it clear, however, that the Jews were not ultimately the planners who took the life of 'Īsā, if indeed he was the one they crucified. This sovereign right and prerogative would belong to Allah alone. Just as the Muslims were mistaken after the Battle of Badr (S.8.17) in attributing the victory to their own military prowess, so from the same perspective the Jews would be guilty of the intention and subsequent act of killing the Masīḥ, 'Īsā, but wrong in their understanding of what really happened. It was "made to appear to them" as though they had been the responsible agents and at the same time, it was "made doubtful to them" as to what took place. In other words, the Qur'ān stresses once more the overriding omnipotence of Allah beyond, yet behind, the schemes of men.

Concerning the last two references cited at the beginning of this section on the death of 'Īsā (S.2.61/58; 2.72/67,73/68), Katch writes, "As for the last part of this Koranic verse [2.61/58], telling

115. Mohammad Ghulam, "Islam versus Christianity," Muslim World, Vol. X, 1920, p. 81.

of the unjust slaying of the prophets, Geiger thinks it is probably a reference to Jesus.¹¹⁶ Muhammad 'Alī, commenting on S.2.72/67,73/68, said that the man must be 'Isā; introducing the word "almost" (to read, "When you almost killed a person"), he maintains that 'Isā was not killed on the Cross, and then follows with the phrase, "Smite him with it partially," interpreted as meaning that 'Isā was not altogether killed. All of this is extremely nebulous as interpretation.

If read, then, without necessary reference to the Muslim tradition and remaining faithful to the texts, the crucifixion passages in the Qur'ān show (1) that 'Isā was not crucified by the Jews, or they would not have experienced doubt concerning the event (rumor would engender the uneasy premonition that the event had not occurred as they supposed); (2) that he was raised up bodily to Allah without chronological reference to the crucifixion, with the added possibility that this "raised up" included an elevation in rank. The text shows that from Allah's viewpoint, it was a terrible thing for the Jews to attribute to themselves the taking of a life, the life of 'Isā, a sovereign act among the prerogatives of Allah alone.

G. The Prophecy Concerning Ahmad

S.61.6 reads in part, "When 'Isā, Son of Maryam, said, '...I am the apostle of Allah to you,...announcing an apostle to come after me

116. Abraham Katch, Judaism in Islam, New York, 1954, p. 64.

whose name is more commendable." The Arabic word translated above as "more commendable," is ahmad. Schacht writes,

It has been concluded that the word ahmad in 61.6, is to be taken not as a proper name but as an adjective..., and that it was understood as a proper name only after Muhammad had been identified with the Paraclete.¹¹⁷

The Muslims applied the prediction of the Paraclete to Muhammad before the middle of the second century A.H., but the terms used are either the Greek parakletos or its correct Arabic translation, memhhamana. In other words, they understood the prediction of the coming of the Comforter, spoken of in the Gospel according to John, chapters 14-16, to refer to Muhammad but did not associate this prediction with the prophecy attributed to 'Isā in the Qur'ān, S.61.6.

And yet, be it remembered, the only ground Moslems have of claiming that Jesus promised the coming of their prophet is the presence of this unusual form of Mohammed's name in the Koran, viz.: Ahmad; for the existence of which apart from this theory they cannot otherwise account.¹¹⁸

There is no evidence that Muhammad was ever called Ahmad; as names, the two words are quite distinct. The presence of the same root letters is not evidence of any identity. Traditions show that the Prophet's name as Ahmad had not always been obvious, though commentators assumed it after about 200 A.H. How did this application to Muhammad of the adjective, ahmad, as a proper name, come about?

117. J. Schacht, Encyclopedia of Islam, Leiden, 1913.

118. Bevan Jones, "The Paraclete or Muhammad," Muslim World, Vol. X, 1920, p. 120.

The knowledge of those prophetic passages [from the Gospel accounts] in the Scriptures came to Muhammad through the Jews and Christians themselves, of whom there were some converts at Medina. These new disciples would naturally lay great stress on the prophecies as the main element in their own conversion. Very probably, the first suggestion came from them that the promises referred to Muhammad, who united in his own person the Jewish Messiah and the Christian paraclete.¹¹⁹

Thus it is not difficult to understand how the two prophecies came to find themselves the one the fulfillment of the other. It would seem strange, however, that Muhammad's correct name was not given in S.61.6. MacDonald speaks to this problem,

But why does he name that Messenger to come, Ahmad? That was not Muhammad's name. Apart from this passage there is no tradition that that was ever his name. It is true that his original, heathen name is unknown, but it was not Ahmad. Muslims, certainly, have applied that name to him, but only because of this passage.¹²⁰

The difference between the textus receptus and Ubayy's text should be noted. In the former, the three elements are: an apostle is coming, his name is Ahmad, no community is mentioned. In the latter: a prophet is coming, no name is given, the community is given. S.61.6, as it stands, would appear to predict the coming of this apostle with particular reference to the Jewish community, since the prediction was evidently a part of 'Isā's message. We conclude that 'Isā prophesied that another apostle would follow him at some point in history without

119. J. Bryan, "Mohammed's controversy with Jews and Christians," Muslim World, Vol. IX, 1919, p. 398.

120. MacDonald, op. cit., pp. 215,216.

specifying the time; he characterized his name as being more commendable without giving that name. The importance of this prophetic passage is in its constituting an important part of the role played by the Quranic 'Īsā during his earthly mission.

H. The Question of His Divinity, or Sonship, and the Trinity

Since 'Īsā is in view in the references to these questions, it is only appropriate that we examine them briefly as we approach the end
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of this summary.

Divinity

S.5.72/76,116,17/19 preclude any identity of the persons of Allah and the Messiah. Observing the Qur'ān's presentation of the person of Allah, we may understand this denial of identity to be a denial of the divinity of the Masīḥ 'Īsā. The force of this denial in the Qur'ān is to exclude 'Īsā from a sharing of the divinity which Allah incorporates in His own being.

Sonship

Similarly, S.19.34/35,35/36; 4.171/169; 9.30, preclude any filial relationship between Allah and 'Īsā. Allah's paternity of a
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child, always walad, is emphatically denied sixteen times, with two of these references excluding any woman companion (S.72.3; 6.101).

121. S.19.34/35,35/36; 4.171/169; 9.30; 5.17/19,72/76,73/77, 74/78,75/79,116.

122. Distribution of passages: Middle Meccan, 8; Late Meccan, 5; Medina, 3.

An interesting note, however, is struck in S.43.81 where Muḥammad is quoted as saying, "If the All-merciful has a son, then I am the first of worshipers."¹²³ Does the Qur'ān hint at the possibility of Allah's having a son while categorically denying its historicity? In 53.20, furthermore, we have the suggestion that if Allah had offspring at all, it would be male. Beyond such speculation, it is definitely established in the Qur'ān that 'Īsā is not the "child" of Allah.¹²⁴

Trinity

S.4.171/169; 5.73/77,74/78,116, clearly reject the worship of a triad of gods, or a "divine trio," possibly consisting of Allah, 'Īsā and his mother Maryam. Essentially, the possibility of any kind of trinity, in the sense of "threesomeness," is declared non-existent.

123. Cf. Wright's Grammar, Vol. II, p. 347, on the use of in, "if."

124. Of 41 occurrences of the word ibn, "son," 25 passages refer to 'Īsā as the son of Maryam, and 21 of these fall in the Medinan period. "Son of Maryam," therefore, takes on the notion of a title. Since 8 of the 41 occurrences are used parabolically of a traveler, there is every reason to feel that basically ibn is a technical term with special reference to 'Īsā.

CHAPTER III

THE 'ISĀ OF THE COMMENTATORS

While we have quoted various authorities in the preceding chapter as to their interpretation of the Quranic text, we restrict our attention in this chapter to the interpretations of Bayḍāwī, Rāzī and Ṭabarī.

A. Birth and Childhood

Angelic Agency and the Conception of 'Isā

The role played by angels is evident with respect to 'Isā's birth, from the announcement to Maryam to the conception of 'Isā in her womb. Gabriel is the one who told the whole account to Muḥammad, according to Ṭabarī.¹ As Gabriel is the principal spokesman sent from Allah to Maryam, he appears doubly qualified to reveal this event to Muḥammad. Rāzī is quite dogmatic about this point.² We shall return to this aspect of the matter.

The commentators write at length concerning the breathing of the spirit with relation to Maryam's conception of 'Isā. Rāzī's comments on the various passages dealing with this breathing are as follows:

1. Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, Egypt, 1321 A.H., 3.187.12 on S.3.58/51.

2. Rāzī, Mafātīh al-Ghayb, Cairo, 1308 A.H., 2.467.15 and 2.469.24 on S.3.42,43,45/40,46/41.

- 3.49/43: Some theologians said that the verse indicated that the spirit is a fine body as the wind; therefore He described it as breath.³
- 3.49/43: The Qur'ān indicates that he was born from the breath of Gabriel into Maryam. Now Gabriel is a spirit and spiritual, so of course the breath of 'Īsā is productive of life and the spirit.⁴
- 19.22: [A summary of his remarks] (1) Who breathed? (a) Allah, because He breathed into Adam and 'Īsā is as Adam; (b) Gabriel, because he came to "bestow" a son. (2) How did he breathe? The Qur'ān does not indicate.⁵
- 21.91: [A summary] Allah breathed through Gabriel (His spirit) into 'Īsā in Maryam and brought him to life in her.⁶
- 66.12: It was Gabriel who did the actual breathing into the opening of Maryam's shirt; this breath worked its way into all the parts of her body as an airy wind and Maryam believed the "words" (i.e., 'Īsā, the word of Allah) which expression is in the singular.⁷

Bayḍāwī's comments are rather short:

- 9.17: Gabriel..., "to inflame" her desire and bestow a youth free from sins.⁸

3. Rāzī, 2.475.3,4 on S.3.49/43.

4. Ibid., 2.475.9-11 on S.49/43.

5. Ibid., 5.546.5-10 on S.19.22.

6. Ibid., 6.152.7ff. on S.21.91.

7. Ibid., 8.168,169 on S.66.12.

8. Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl, Cairo, 1344 A.H., 1.578.14 on S.9.17.

21.91: We breathed into ʿĪsā in hgr; i.e., We quickened him in her womb.

66.12: Of a spirit created by Us without causative means.¹⁰

Rāzī hesitates to declare unequivocally that Allah did the actual breathing and intimates that Allah used Gabriel's breath. For Rāzī this breathing may have resulted either in creating within Maryam a believing heart about the "word of Allah" or in bringing ʿĪsā to life within Maryam, with which latter thought Bayḍāwī agrees. "Most agree," says Rāzī, "that the spirit is the angel Gabriel. Abū Muslim, however, believes the spirit is the one sent and formed as a "man perfected" in Maryam's womb.¹¹ The textual support for Abū Muslim's view would be the potential identity between "Our spirit" sent to Maryam and ʿĪsā, referred to as a "spirit from Him" (i.e., from Allah).

With this inbreathing, whether into Mary or into ʿĪsā within Maryam's womb, ʿĪsā becomes from that moment a human person. Notwithstanding this angelic ministry, the event is viewed by the commentators as a virgin birth inasmuch as no human father has any part in the conception of ʿĪsā. Since the "likeness of ʿĪsā is that of Adam," the commentators draw parallels between the two creations of Adam and ʿĪsā and further address themselves to the point of the virgin birth itself:

9. Bayḍāwī, 1.623.16,17 on S.21.91.

10. Ibid., 2.343.2,3 on S.66.12.

11. Rāzī, 5.543.21 on S.19.17.

- 3.45/40: If it requires a father for the existence of a person imbued with life, understanding and reason, Allah is capable of creating a person with all of these without a father. The Prophet has testified to this both with respect to its possibility and its realization. [Rāzī].¹²
- 3.59/52: As the creation of Adam was not impossible without a father and the creation of ‘Īsā was not impossible without a father, so the two are identical in this and this is a clear proof. However from the philosophical aspects the matter is clearly sanctioned also: (3)...when she imagined his form, that sufficed for the realization of the child in her womb [Rāzī].¹³
- 3.59/52: The commentators agree that these verses descended upon the Apostle of Allah during the visit of the delegation from Najrān. They said, O Muḥammad, when you agree that he [‘Īsā] had no father of flesh, of necessity his father is Allah. He said, Adam had no father or mother and it was not necessary that he should be the son of Allah and thus the saying about ‘Īsā came. Also if it was possible for Allah to create Adam from dust why would it not be possible for Allah to create ‘Īsā from the blood of Maryam, which is even more reasonable [Rāzī].¹⁴
- 3.59/52: [Summary] (1) ‘Īsā is like Adam in that he was created without a father; (2) ‘Īsā's birth without a father is not more astonishing than that of Adam who was created apart from male and female; (3) the two are alike in that I [Allah] commanded both to be and they were [Ṭabarī].¹⁵

12. Ibid., 2.470.10 on S.3.45/40.

13. Ibid., 2.470.14 on S.3.59/52.

14. Ibid., 2.484.30-37 on S.3.59/52.

15. Ṭabarī, 3.187.21ff. on S.3.59/52.

The commentators, while affirming very definitely the virgin birth of ʿĪsā, warn against undue elevation of his person. Adam is cited as a parallel yet superior example of virgin birth. The virgin nature of ʿĪsā's birth is emphasized by the clause, "...who protected her condition of virginity" (S.21.91; 66.12). Ṭabarī comments, "It either refers to herself or the opening of her garment which she kept closed against Gabriel before knowing he was sent as apostle to her. ¹⁶ Probably the first is correct."

Name and Titles

There seems to be as little certainty concerning the derivation of ʿĪsā's name and titles among the commentators as there has been among linguists and orientalist down through the centuries. Bayḍāwī says that "ʿĪsā in Hebrew is Ishūʿ and Maryam means 'servant' [khādim]." ¹⁷ Rāzī explains at length:

[Quoting Abū ʿUbayda] On Masīḥ: it was originally in the Hebrew, mashīḥ; the Arabs arabicized it and changed its pronunciation. On ʿĪsā: its origin is Ishūʿ as in the case of Mūsā, originally Mūshā or Mīshā in Hebrew. If this is true, then it is not derived. Ibn ʿAbbās said ʿĪsā was named Masīḥ because he cured the sick by the touch of his hand. Aḥmad Ibn Yahyā said: He was named Masīḥ because he traveled in the earth, i.e., he traversed [traveled] it and consequently the traveling of the parts of the earth. Therefore it is possible to say about ʿĪsā, Masīḥ, in the intensified form as it is said about a man, fasīḥ or sharīb. Or he was called Masīḥ because he anointed the heads of the orphans for Allah and according to this, he is faʿīl with the sense of fāʿīl, as rahīm with the meaning of rahīm. Next, that

16. Ibid., 17.60.19ff. on S.21.91.

17. Bayḍāwī, 1.71 on S.2.87/81.

he anointed from burdens and iniquity. Or he was named Masīḥ because he was flat-footed and was anointed in his feet. He was named Masīḥ because he was anointed with a pure blessed ointment with which only the prophets are anointed and it is said that this ointment allowed Allah to appoint him a sign so that the angels recognized that whoever was so anointed at the time of birth was a prophet. Or he was named Masīḥ because Gabriel anointed him with his wing at birth that this might protect him from the touch of Satan. Lastly, he was named Masīḥ because he was born anointed with the ointment and according to this, Masīḥ has the meaning of mamsūḥ as fa'īl is related to maf'ūl. Abū 'Amr said: The Masīḥ, the truthful one [sadīq]. He said this metaphorically, in praise with respect to his birth and not as an indication to language. As to the anti-Masīḥ, he is named Masīḥ for one of two reasons: (1) he has one eye anointed [mamsūḥ]; (2) he travels [traverses] the earth for a short time. It is said for this reason, Dajjāl, because he strikes upon the maximum part of the earth.

Masīḥ was a title whereas 'Isā was a name. Why, then, did the title precede the name? Answer: Masīḥ is as a title which elevates his creation in nobility and height of rank (as sadīq and farūq) and Allah mentions him by his title first to indicate his elevated rank; then He mentions him by his particular name.¹⁸

Commenting on S.3.45/40, Rāzī adds,

Why did He say, 'Isā, son of Maryam, when the speech is [directed] to Maryam? Answer: Because the prophets are related to the fathers and not to the mothers. When Allah relates him to the mother without the father, that was a sign to her that he would be created without a father and this contributes to his superiority and elevation of rank.

...The pronoun in "his name" [ismuhu], refers to "the word" which is feminine. Why the masculine pronoun? Answer: Because the one being named is masculine.

...Why did He say, His name is Masīḥ, 'Isā son of Maryam, when only 'Isā is his name? Masīḥ is a title

18. Rāzī, 2.471.2ff. on S.3.45/40.

and son of Maryam is a description. Answer: The name is the sign of the named one and an identification for him so that it is said that he who is known by it is the ensemble of the three.¹⁹

Ṭabarī says that Allah named ʿĪsā Masīḥ for His having purified him from sine and defilements, which are in human beings, the way an object is purified from dirt which is in it. Some believe this word is originally Hebrew or Syrian and arabicized as Masīḥ as the rest of the prophets' names have been treated in the Qurʾān.²⁰ Ṭabarī quotes ʿAmr who says that ʿĪsā is Masīḥ because Allah anointed him with baraka and that is why Ibrāhīm refers to him as al-Masīḥ al-ṣiddīq.²¹

Rāzī gives two reasons for the descriptive title, "son of Maryam": (1) To show that he was indeed the son of a human being and not the son of Allah;²² (2) To show that he was without a father.²³ Ṭabarī supports this emphasis on the humanity of ʿĪsā, commenting on this title, "Al-Masīḥ...is not the son of Allah as you allege; he is ʿĪsā the son of Maryam and of no other person; he has no other lineage."²⁴

19. Ibid., 2.471.21ff. on S.3.45/40.

20. Ṭabarī, 6.21.18ff. on S.4.171/169.

21. Ibid., 3.169.13-16 on S.3.45/40.

22. Rāzī, 5.556.19 on S.19.34/35.

23. Ibid., 6.608.18 on S.33.17.

24. Ṭabarī, 6.21.15 on S.4.171/169.

The Calling to Maryam

The clause, "But one called to her from below her" (S.19.24), is not clearly understood by the commentators. Ṭabarī says either Gabriel or ʿĪsā called, without specifying which.²⁵ Rāzī states that the identity depends on whether a fatha is read or a kasra. "With a kasra, it is the angel and with a fatha, it is ʿĪsā."²⁶

ʿĪsā's Speaking in the Cradle and of Age

Rāzī treats the question as to why a verbal sentence is used instead of continuing the nominative style used in saying that ʿĪsā was illustrious. He suggests that "He will speak...",²⁷ is associated with "Allah gives you good tidings."²⁸ "The cradle," says Rāzī, "was either (1) the bosom of his mother; (2) the known place for the infant during the time of nursing." He goes on,

"Of age" includes his infancy, youth and maturity. Question: It was a miracle for him to speak in the cradle but not when of age. Why mention this? Answer: (1) to indicate the completely changed circumstances of his being, although possibly the intention is to answer the deputation returned from Najrān; (2) the intention is that he would speak to people once when in the cradle for the vindication of his mother's purity and then when of age he would speak by inspiration and prophethood; (3) Muslim said: the fact that he would speak in the cradle and when of age means only one

25. Ibid., 16.45.10-14 on S.19.24.

26. Rāzī, 5.548.6ff. on S.19.24.

27. Ibid., 2.474.8ff. on S.3.46/41.

28. Idem.

thing--he is the greatest when it comes to miracles;
 (4) al-^Ḥāṣim said: the intention is to show that he
 would reach manhood.²⁹

Commenting on S.19.30/31, Rāzī adds,

He uttered these words while in his infancy and was
 at the same time a prophet. This is not so; he ut-
 tered these words primarily for the sake of relieving
 Maryam and indicated simply his quality of a prophet
 which in time would manifest itself outwardly.³⁰

This is confirmed by Rāzī's interpretation on 3.42,43, " ³¹ ʿĪsā did not
 leave his mother until he testified to her innocence." And, in
 summary, "His speaking was not restricted to these two times; no other
 prophet before or after him was singled out in this way."³² Bayḍāwī
 says, in essence, "This indicates he spoke in youth equally as well as
 when mature."³³ Ibn Zayd is quoted by Ṭabarī as saying, "He spoke in
 the cradle and will speak to them when he kills the Dajjāl."³⁴

The Strengthening With the Spirit

Four elements are under discussion here: the angelic interven-
 tion; the "strengthening"; the "spirit"; holiness. An extended quota-
 tion from Rāzī is to the point:

29. Ibid., 2.472.8ff. on S.3.46/41.

30. Ibid., 5.553.35ff. on S.19.30/31.

31. Ibid., 2.467.35 on S.3.42,43.

32. Ibid., 3.481.18-21 on S.5.110/109.

33. Bayḍāwī, 1.279.10-12 on S.5.110/109.

34. Ṭabarī, 3.170.27 on S.3.46/41.

(1) They differ about the spirit variously because (a) it is Gabriel and he is only named thus because it is intended from rūh al-quds to mean al-rūh al-muqaddasa, as goodness is said to be required and a truthful man; Gabriel is so described, honoring him and manifesting the exalted position he has with Allah. (b) Gabriel is thus named because religion lives by him as the body does by the spirit, so he is entrusted with the inspiring of the prophets.... (c) His predominating characteristic is spirituality; (d) Gabriel is named a spirit because of how he combines the backbones of the males and the wombs of the mothers. (2) The Injīl is meant by the holy spirit as He said in the Qur'ān, a "spirit from Our decree," and it was named that because religion is quickened by it and the affairs of the world are organized with respect to it. (3) It is the name by which 'Isā quickened the dead according to Ibn 'Abbās and Jubayr. (4) It is the "spirit" which was breathed into him and the "holy," that is spoken in reference to Allah.³⁵

Summarizing Rāzī's remarks, the application of the name "spirit" to Gabriel, to the Injīl and to the greatest name is possible because Gabriel is the cause of the hearts' life by the sciences, the Injīl is the cause for the manifestation of the Laws and their life, and the greatest name is a cause because man may use it for the attaining of goals. However, the names of the spirit and Gabriel are more closely identified since (1) Gabriel is created from pure air; (2) this designation to him was made more manifest from that in which it transcended him; (3) His expression, "and We strengthened him with the holy spirit" means "We empowered him" and the aim of this empowering is the help and the linking of the help to Gabriel; (4) it is the competence Gabriel has with respect to 'Isā, as none of the prophets enjoyed it previously,

35. Rāzī, 1.425.18ff. on S.2.87/81.

consisting of his pronouncement to Maryam, then the fact that ʿĪsā was born only by the breath of Gabriel; it was he who raised him [i.e., ʿĪsā] in all conditions and he went with him wherever he went and was with him when he ascended into the sky.³⁶

Concerning the descriptive quality of holiness,

Ḥasan said, The holy is Allah and His spirit Gabriel and the apposition is for honoring and the meaning is His concern for Gabriel in the beginning, middle and the end of his affair. As for the beginning of the matter, His statement, We breathed into it some of Our spirit; as for the middle of it, because Gabriel taught him the sciences and guarded him from enemies; as for the end of the matter, when the Jews intended to kill him, Gabriel liberated him and raised him to the sky and what indicates that the holy spirit is Gabriel is His statement, Say: The holy spirit brought it down [S.16.102/104].³⁷

Rāzī supports this interpretation when he comments on 5.110/109,

(1) The holy spirit is Gabriel; the spirit is Gabriel and the holiness is Allah as if He sought to exalt Himself by connecting him with Himself. (2) Allah particularized ʿĪsā by the pure, enlightening, exalted, good spirit. [Summary] Gabriel protected ʿĪsā before knowledge came to him and helped him against the deceptions of the world.³⁸

Ṭabarī says, "Holiness equals purity and both Gabriel and ʿĪsā are spirits with respect to Allah in that they had no father. Others

36. Idem.

37. Ibid., 2.315-321.19 on S.2.253/254.

38. Ibid., 3.481.10ff. on S.5.110/109.

say that 'al-Quds' is 'the blessing' and others, Allah. Essūdī takes³⁹ the first position; Ja'far and Ibn Zayd the second." According to Baydāwī's comments on S.2.87/81,

"We strengthened him with the holy spirit"...He [Allah] intended by it Gabriel. It is also interpreted as the spirit of 'Īsā,... He described him by it because of his being pure from Satan's touch, or because of his standing in the eyes of Allah; that is why He added him to Himself; or because neither loins nor menstruating wombs contained him; or [on account of the] Injīl; or the name of Allah Almighty with which he revived the dead. Ibn Kathīr reads it as al-Quds by having a sukūn throughout the Qur'ān.⁴⁰

This is further emphasized in his comments on 5.110/109, "'We have strengthened thee with the holy spirit,' [i.e.,] with Gabriel, or by the speech with which religion, or the soul, is revived to life everlasting and is purified from sins."⁴¹ The "strengthening" is, as⁴² Ṭabarī says, simply an enabling, an empowering, a helping. The avenues along which this enabling was exercised have already been indicated.

Place of Refuge

Baydāwī offers four locations for the elevated place of refuge, a place of rest and water: (1) Jerusalem; (2) Damascus; (3) Ramlā;

39. Ṭabarī, 1.305.31ff. on S.2.87/81.

40. Baydāwī, 1.71.23-25 on S.2.87/81.

41. Ibid., 1.279.10-12 on S.5.110/109.

42. Ṭabarī, 1.304.31ff. on S.2.87/81; 3.2.15ff. on S.2.253/254; 7.77.17 on S.5.110/109.

- 43
 (4) Egypt. Rāzī contents himself with quoting "some" as saying that
 44
 the place was Egypt, others, Damascus.

B. Mission

The question naturally arises as to the purposes of 'Isā's coming to the Children of Israel. What did he hope to accomplish? What was the reaction to his message and mission? The commentators interpret his mission, his message, his men and the menace of his people. The presence of proofs, or, "evidences," is also explained.

Mission

Rāzī writes,

Of the objectives of the mission of 'Isā was the confirming of the Tawrāt and the continuance of the doubts of the deniers and the distortions of the ignorant ones.... He declared that it was a book come from Allah and that it was truth of which the performance was obligatory.⁴⁵

Writing on the same passage, Ṭabarī confirms and enlarges upon this interpretation,

All the prophets confirm all that preceded them of Allah's Books and His apostles, in spite of some of their laws having differed because Allah differentiated between them, although 'Isā, as we hear, had adhered to the Tawrāt, and did not contradict any of its rules except in respect of what Allah has

43. Bayḍawī, 2.7.11 on S.23.50/52.

44. Rāzī, 6.228.5-10 on S.23.50/52.

45. Ibid., 2.476.7-9 on S.3.50/44; 3.422.26-28 on S.5.46/50.

lightened for its people, in the Injīl, of what was heavy on them in it [i.e., the Tawrāt].⁴⁶

Jabarī's paraphrase of 33.7 is in line with this emphasis upon the ministry of confirmation: "We established with all of them an assured covenant that they should confirm each other."⁴⁷

More specifically, "Only one commandment was repeatedly given to each prophet as his charge: 'Perform the religion and be not divided in it.'⁴⁸ With respect to 'Īsā's charge, we read, "Verily, Allah is my Lord and thy Lord, and so worship Him." Bayḍāwī says, "This is an explanation of what he ordered them to be obedient in, namely, monotheism and pious observance of the Law."⁴⁹ Part of the prophet's ministry is of necessity negative in nature but equally important. Therefore, 'Īsā, in common with Dāwud, cursed those Children of Israel who were disbelieving. Rāzī summarizes this part of 'Īsā's ministry, saying that both Dāwud and 'Īsā cursed the disbelieving Children of Israel and both predicted the coming of Muḥammad (in which apparently the Children of Israel disbelieved).⁵⁰ Bayḍāwī adds, "That is, Allah cursed them in

46. Jabarī, 3.176.24ff. on S.3.50/44.

47. Ibid., 21.72.7 on S.33.7.

48. Ibid., 25.9.12,13 on S.42.13/11.

49. Bayḍāwī, 2.241.6 on S.43.64.

50. Rāzī, 3.450.2-9 on S.5.78/82.

the...Injīl by [‘Īsā’s] tongue, that is, those who disbelieved at the
 51
 sending down of the Table."

The prediction of the coming of one whose name would be Aḥmad must be construed as part of ‘Īsā’s overall ministry. A summary of Rāzī’s remarks follows:

The one whose name would be "Aḥmad," would be to the praise of Allah beyond any comparison with others, praising Him with the best of manners and morals. It is Muḥammad who is in question here and all the references in the Gospel according to John are meant to apply to Muḥammad.⁵²

The Scriptures

In common with other prophets, ‘Īsā came with a scripture.

Say: We have believed in Allah and in that which has been sent down to us and in what was sent down to Ibrāhīm, Isma‘īl, Ishāq, Yaqūb, and the Tribes; and that which was given Mūsā and ‘Īsā, and what was given the prophets from their Lord. We do not differentiate them and we are surrendered to Him.⁵³

Ṭabarī makes it clear that he considers the Injīl to be that which was given ‘Īsā: "We believe in the Injīl which Allah gave ‘Īsā...we confess
 54
 that they are all apostles and prophets sent with truth and guidance." Where this kind of general designation of scripture is again indicated in 19.30/31, Rāzī summarizes the alternatives,

51. Bayḍāwī, 1.270.2,3 on S.5.78/82.

52. Rāzī, 8.139.12-37 on S.61.6.

53. Qur’ān, S.2.136/130.

54. Ṭabarī, 1.421.5-10 on S.2.136/130.

Some say it means the Tawrāt, others the Injīl and others the Tawrāt and the Injīl. In the first, the article would indicate specification, in the second it would indicate kind and in the third, it would indicate the totality of revelation.⁵⁵

We have seen the vague reference to what was given 'Isā and the general designation of "scripture"; 'Isā is said to have come also with "wisdom." Commenting on S.43.63, Baydāwī says wisdom refers here to either the Injīl or the Law.⁵⁶ Rāzī understands the same reference not to be indicative of any scripture as such. "Wisdom is the knowledge of the person and the characteristics of Allah and His works, and the sources of true religion."⁵⁷

In two references, 3.48/43 and 5.110/109, 'Isā is said to be taught the "scripture, wisdom, Tawrāt and the Injīl." Rāzī comments,

By scripture is meant the script, by wisdom is meant the physical and theoretical sciences; Tawrāt and Injīl are mentioned last by way of exalting them and in these only the great prophets have searched out the secrets.⁵⁸

Concerning the first reference, Jabarī contents himself with quoting Qutāda and Ibn Jarīh to the effect that the "wisdom is the Sunna."⁵⁹

With respect to 5.110/109, he states that the "scripture is the text;

55. Rāzī, 5.554.16-19 on S.19.30/31.

56. Baydāwī, 2.241.3 on S.43.63.

57. Rāzī, 7.435.11 on S.43.63.

58. Ibid., 3.481.21-28 on S.5.110/109; 2.473.21-30 on 3.48/43.

59. Jabarī, 3.172.2 on S.3.48/43.

the wisdom is the understanding."⁶⁰ Thus, although the Qur'ān nowhere states explicitly that 'Īsā brought the Injīl, it does make it clear that he came with a scripture and that something was sent down to him. The commentators agree between themselves that this scripture was the Injīl.

The Miracles

In S.2.253/254, reference is made to the "evidences." Rāzī emphasizes the wonder of this event,

His statement, "We gave 'Īsā, the son of Maryam, the clear evidences"; He chose first person utterance because the pronoun in His expression, "We gave...", is the pronoun of greatness and the exaltation of the giver indicates the greatness of the giving.⁶¹

Ṭabarī considers that this passage, with respect to "evidences," or, "proofs," applies in a threefold manner: (1) to all that all the prophets and apostles brought; (2) to all that Mūsā and 'Īsā brought; (3) to the āya brought as revelation.⁶² Baydāwī states dogmatically, "His miracles were clear signs and great miracles, not used by anyone else."⁶³ He repeats this in general in his comments upon the passages in 2.87/81 and 43.63.⁶⁴ The proofs or evidences, then, are signs in the form of miracles, according to the commentators.

60. Ibid., 7.77.25ff. on S.5.110/109.

61. Rāzī, 2.315-321.19 on S.2.253/254.

62. Ṭabarī, 3.2.17ff. on S.2.253/254.

63. Baydāwī, 1.130.15 on S.2.253/254.

64. Ibid., 1.71.19,20 on S.2.87/81; 2.241.3 on S.43.63.

Why were such signs required? Ṭabarī says,

These were proofs of his prophethood, the raising of the dead, the healing of the blind, or verses which Allah gave him indicating his truthfulness and the soundness of his prophethood.⁶⁵

And in another place, "The proofs were given to ʿĪsā as proof of his prophethood: healing of the blind and leper, the raising of the dead, etc., as well as the Injīl."⁶⁶ It is clear that Ṭabarī, while personally convinced that the evidences were the miracles executed by ʿĪsā, is not forgetting the more remote possibility that the proofs refer to the verses of the Injīl which he brought. There is no fundamental conflict in seeing these two possible meanings in the word, "evidences." Muslims consider the Qurʾān to be the greatest miracle that could ever occur; in the same sense, then, the Injīl can legitimately be considered one of ʿĪsā's miracles. Rāzī underlines the same thought,

(1) the miracles from the raising to life of the dead, etc., and (2) the Injīl and it is the strongest as all enters into it because the miracles demonstrate the rightness of his prophethood as the Injīl demonstrates the manner of his Law.⁶⁷

Rāzī finds five categories of miracles in the creation of birds, the raising of the dead, the healing of those born blind, the healing of lepers and the revealing of secret knowledge.⁶⁸ He attempts

65. Ṭabarī, 1.304.25ff. on S.2.87/81.

66. Ibid., 3.2.12ff. on S.2.253/254.

67. Rāzī, 1.425.18 on S.2.87/81.

68. Ibid., 2.475.3-22 on S.3.49/43.

to show that this "creating" is not to be interpreted as the equivalent of divine creation. He uses the Qur'^{ān} and also poetry to prove that "create" can mean "form" or "produce."⁶⁹ His paraphrase on S.3.49/43 reveals his understanding of this creating by 'Īsā: "Only Allah does the actual creation of life in the forms I have made, by way of performing miracles at the hand of the apostles."⁷⁰ He goes on to say that 'Īsā created only the likeness of the likeness of a bird and never created or brought into existence the living bird. The fact that it was by the permission of Allah is further proof that it was not by his own decree or power.⁷¹ Similarly, the dead come to life only by Allah's permission, at the voice of 'Īsā.⁷²

The sending down of the Table is considered by commentators and the world of Islam alike to be the most outstanding specific miracle performed by 'Īsā. The event itself was initiated by the request of the disciples of 'Īsā and subsequently occurred following his prayer to Allah for the Table. In the request of the disciples, physical food is first desired, then the spiritual; in the prayer offered by 'Īsā, the spiritual desires are first enumerated, then the food requested--but even here he turns from the food to the foodgiver. From the created thing he

69. Ibid., 2.474.3-34 on S.49/43.

70. Ibid., 2.475.11-13 on S.3.49/43.

71. Ibid., 3.481.28-37 on S.5.110/109.

72. Ibid., 3.482.104 on S.5.110/109.

turns to the Creator of things.⁷³ ʿĪsā says to the disciples, "Fear Allah." This, because it is a great sin to ask for another miracle after having seen so many; fear Allah in order that He may bring about your present request. It is not perfectly clear whether ʿĪsā asked for the Table for himself or for his people; probably both are intended. There is some difference of opinion as to whether, after Allah had warned concerning possible disbelief following the sending down of the Table, the disciples did not say, "Never mind, we will do without the Table."⁷⁴ It was definitely meant to serve as a sign of Allah's unicity and a proof of the prophethood of ʿĪsā.⁷⁵ There is a remote possibility that the disciples, when they asked, "Is your Lord...?" meant Gabriel since it was his task to bring up ʿĪsā,⁷⁶ keep him and strengthen him.⁷⁶

The Disciples

We have referred to the disciples in relation to a particular miracle, the sending down of the Table. Now we want to consider them in their role of "helpers." Rāzī paraphrases ʿĪsā's question in S.3.52/45:⁷⁷ "Who are my helpers in that pertaining to Allah?" According to

73. Ibid., 3.484.10-21 on S.5.114.

74. Ibid., 3.484.31ff. on S.5.115.

75. Ibid., 3.484.2-10 on S.5.114.

76. Ibid., 3.483.15-18 on S.5.112.

77. Ibid., 2.477.10,11 on S.3.52/45.

Jabarī, Essūdī understood the phrase, "helpers to Allah," to mean "with Allah."⁷⁸ A contrast of 'Īsā's position with that of Muḥammad is seen here. Where Muḥammad commanded, no answer was required; where 'Īsā questioned, an answer was required. The difference consists in being helpers of 'Īsā or, in response to Muḥammad, of being helpers of Allah.⁷⁹

We must now examine once more the incident of the sending down of the Table from the standpoint of the disciples as helpers of 'Īsā. Various comments on the question which the disciples put to 'Īsā are summarized by Rāzī in this way:

Many authorities read: Are you (instead of, Is your Lord) able to ask your Lord. The first form is preferable since it implies doubt in 'Īsā but not in Allah, since they had just confessed their faith. This faith would not be very complete if now they were already doubting.⁸⁰

The commentators, in general, understand the request of the disciples as meaning: we are hungry; our certainty of Allah's power will be the greater; as we do believe in the other miracles, this next one will increase our faith; the miracles we have seen so far have been earthly, this one will be heavenly and so we will be witnesses to those not present, of Allah's power and of your prophethood.⁸¹

78. Jabarī, 3.178.25 on S.3.52/45.

79. Rāzī, 8.142.13ff. on S.61.14.

80. Ibid., 3.482.29-483.3 on S.5.111,112.

81. Ibid., 3.483.32ff. on S.5.113.

The Reaction To 'Īsā

Some of the Children of Israel believed in the message brought by 'Īsā, and in him as a prophet and apostle of Allah. Ṭabarī paraphrases S.3.55/48,

I will place those who followed you in your program and community in surrender and under your leadership, above those who opposed your prophethood and opposed in their path the people of the community and treated as lies what was brought to them..., their destiny is above theirs and they are victorious over them.⁸²

As this passage makes very clear, there were indeed those who disbelieved and opposed. Some charged 'Īsā with sorcery. In reference to S.110/109, Rāzī says that the accusation of sorcery falls against 'Īsā⁸³ and his Injīl, not against either but against both. Commenting on 61.6, Bayḍāwī states that the charge of sorcery either refers to that which came by 'Īsā or to 'Īsā himself, which latter understanding is strengthened by the readings of Ḥamza and Kisā'ī; This is a sorcerer.⁸⁴ Transgression was involved in the rejection of 'Īsā and his message. Bayḍāwī says, "The Jews transgressed in stoning 'Īsā...."⁸⁵ "Disbelief" is used to characterize in a general manner the attitude adopted toward 'Īsā by his people.⁸⁶

82. Ṭabarī, 3.185.19,20 on S.3.55/48.

83. Rāzī, 3.482.9-14 on S.5.110/109.

84. Bayḍāwī, 2.330.21,22 on S.61.6.

85. Ibid., 1.243.3 on S.4.171/169.

86. Ibid., 1.240.2 on S.4.156/155.

C. Qualities and Relationships

Certain questions naturally arise as to the person and nature of ʿĪsā. Who is he? What is his relationship to men, and, more importantly, to Allah? Is he created or uncreated? Mortal or immortal? In what ways does his subservience to Allah manifest itself? It would appear that the commentators agree on their understanding of what the Qurʾān says on these points and that they are anxious to refute Christians, Jews and pagans alike in their heresies and errors. We shall deal first of all with ʿĪsā's relationship with Allah.

Relationship With Allah

The commentators agree that ʿĪsā is not Allah, that he is not divine and that he is not associated with Allah. Rāzī makes this point clear in his comments on S.5.17/19:

ʿĪsā is seen here as only one of many on the earth, standing as an example of the rest of creation, which he resembled in form, createdness, physical nature, stature and changing characteristics and circumstances. ⁸⁷

An expression occurs in 3.50/44,51/44, "so fear Allah and obey me," which, in Rāzī's thinking, may leave the door open for some misunderstanding as to the nature of ʿĪsā. Thus his paraphrase,

So fear Allah and obey me. Just as it is obligatory to fear Allah so it is obligatory to obey me, as His apostle. Only so that you realize that I am not equivalent to Allah, Allah is my Lord and your Lord.

87. Rāzī, 3.390.30-37 on S.5.17/19.

The purpose here is to show his subordination and confession of his servitude, that they might not say any vanity about him as that he is a god or son of god and to prevent anyone praying to him as the ignorant of the Christians do.⁸⁸

But I wish to return to the first reference cited above, S.5.17/19. Baydāwī is very brief in his statement, "If Allah is one and ʿĪsā is Allah then Allah is ʿĪsā. The statement, then, is the explanation of their ignorance."⁸⁹ Christians, however, are quick to declare that they do not make such a statement as, "Allah is ʿĪsā." Rāzī is not insensitive to this apparent discrepancy.

This verse raises a question, namely, that no one among the Christians does say that Allah is the Masīḥ, the son of Maryam. How is it that Allah has said this about them although they do not say it? The answer is that many among the Incarnationists say that Allah Most High might indwell in the body or the soul of a specific person. If this is the case, then it is not far from saying that some of the Christians go so far as to say it. They are actually closer to saying it for they say that the subsistent principle of the Word has united with ʿĪsā. The subsistent principle of the Word is either an essence [dhāt] or an attribute [or, quality, sifa]. If it were an essence, then the essence of Allah indwelt ʿĪsā and united with ʿĪsā and ʿĪsā would be Allah. And if we say that the subsistent principle is an attribute [or quality], [we know] that the transfer of an attribute from an essence to another [essence] is unreasonable. Moreover, if we suppose that the subsistent principle of knowing has transferred from Allah's essence to ʿĪsā, it follows that Allah's essence has been stripped of knowledge, and he who is not "knowing" (one who does not possess knowledge) is not Allah. In that case, Allah is ʿĪsā, according to their saying. Therefore, although the Christians

88. Ibid., 2.476.26-29 on S.3.50/44,51/44.

89. Baydāwī, 1.252.5-7 on S.5.17/19.

do not actually state this, their faith amounts to nothing but that.⁹⁰

Another expression occurs which bears upon 'Īsā's relationship with Allah, "Say not three!" (S.4.171/169). Rāzī in his commentary upon this passage states that it is all right to enumerate the attributes of Allah but not to make them distinct persons in Allah, otherwise much of the Qur'ān would be voided. The Qur'ān seems to suggest that the Christians were saying that Allah, 'Īsā and Maryam were three gods.⁹¹ Baydāwī enlarges on this:

That is, Allah, 'Īsā and Maryam.... They say Allah is three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. By Father, they mean the Essence; by the Son, they mean knowledge; by the Spirit, they mean life.⁹²

Thus the commentators are agreed with respect to the absence of "trinity" in the person of Allah.

Rāzī sees both the idea of "trinity" and sonship denied by the reference 4.171/169 and comments,

The one "who is possessor of all in the heavens and the earth and what is in them" is possessor also of 'Īsā and Maryam because they were in the heavens and in the earth and none was greater than they in self and attributes and if He was possessor then He was greater than them both and if they were possessed by Him, how could it be reasonable to express their relationship to Him as child and wife?⁹³

90. Rāzī, 3.395.22-30 on S.5.17/19.

91. Ibid., 3.357.35-358.7 on S.4.171/169.

92. Baydāwī, 1.243.8-12 on S.4.171/169.

93. Rāzī, 3.358.18-21 on S.4.171/169.

Bayḍāwī deals abruptly with the passage, "Allah preserves all things and is not in need of anything He has created."⁹⁴ And Ṭabarī adds to this discussion, "To say that ʿĪsā is the son of Allah is untrue; Allah is one: He has no partner, female friend, or child. And how could ʿĪsā be His son when ʿĪsā is in either earth or heaven and experiences need?"⁹⁵ Concerning the expression, "Be, and it is," Rāzī comments: "He says, 'Be,' and he is--i.e., he is a servant, not a son."⁹⁶ Ṭabarī regarding the same expression says, "Everything apart from Allah is of His creation. What could require Allah to take a son and that be improper to Him?"⁹⁷

Relationship to Other Apostles and Prophets

The interaction between Muḥammad and ʿĪsā is clear. The latter prophesied the coming of the former, and Muḥammad was the recipient of the truth concerning ʿĪsā.

Contrary to what the Jews and Christians say about ʿĪsā, the truth has now come down upon you, O Muḥammad, concerning ʿĪsā. You and your community are called upon to withdraw from doubt about it.⁹⁸

Common to all the prophets is their entering into covenant relationship

94. Bayḍāwī, 1.243.14,15 on S.4.171/169.

95. Ṭabarī, 6.21.8,9-22.17 on S.4.171/169.

96. Rāzī, 5.557.5 on S.19.35/36.

97. Ṭabarī, 16.56.13,14 on S.19.35/36.

98. Rāzī, 2.486.13-25 on S.3.60/53.

with Allah (9.33.7). They were to guide their several communities and not exceed or lessen their charge.

To obtain an overview of various commentaries on those passages dealing with the placing of ʿĪsā in series or in simple association with other apostles and prophets, the following references are given in chronological order:

23.51/53

[Bayḍāwī understands this to mean prophets.]⁹⁹

42.13/11

Between Nūḥ and Muḥammad are found the great law-givers. [Bayḍāwī]¹⁰⁰

All of them except Muḥammad "commanded." Muḥammad inspired or suggested, as from Allah. [Rāzī]¹⁰¹

2.87/81

The mention of ʿĪsā is separate because previous to him, the apostles brought the Law of Mūsā and were followers of it, but it was not so with ʿĪsā, for his law was the abrogation of most of the Law of Mūsā. [Rāzī]¹⁰²

2.136/130

They stand for their Scriptures, the Tawrāt and the Injīl, and they are in contrast to what preceded them and disputing began about them.¹⁰³

99. Bayḍāwī, 2.7.16 on S.23.51/53.

100. Ibid., 2.228.8 on S.42.13/11.

101. Rāzī, 7.381.21ff. on S.42.13/11.

102. Ibid., 1.425.18 on S.2.87/81.

103. Bayḍāwī, 1.87.3,4 on S.2.136/130.

S.2.253/254

These are mentioned because their miracles were more striking and their nations were still existing.¹⁰⁴

33.7

These are only mentioned by name because these are the most famous of lawgivers.¹⁰⁵

Apparently the commentators do not see a clear distinction between the apostles and the prophets. They attach a good deal of importance, however, to the calling of some to be "lawgivers." Lastly, the distinction is sometimes made between Muḥammad and all those who preceded him on the basis that Allah "suggested" to him but "commanded" his predecessors. This is not always a valid difference (S.4.163/161).

Servant, ʿAbd

Rāzī relates this quality of ʿĪsā to that of the angels,

The Masīḥ, endowed with so little power in comparison with the mighty angels does not disdain being simply a servant when they with so much more power do not disdain being His servants.¹⁰⁶

The basis on which Bayḍāwī makes a comparison with the angels is, however, quite different: "The proof of servanthood does not consist in being human rather than being angelic, but rather in being subject to chastisement."¹⁰⁷ In both 5.72/76 and 43.59, ʿĪsā is clearly stated to

104. Rāzī, 2.315-321.19 on S.2.253/254.

105. Bayḍāwī, 2.123.17 on S.33.7.

106. Rāzī, 3.358.24 on S.4.172/170.

107. Bayḍāwī, 1.281.22 on S.5.118.

be a servant. Speaking of S.19.30/31, Rāzī says that these first words ʿĪsā spoke should have lifted the Christians out of their delusion about his nature; he attempted to remove distrust from the person of Maryam and to focus trust upon Allah.¹⁰⁸

Prophet, Apostle, Nabī, Rasūl

The commentators do not see any reason to comment at length upon a point where everyone is agreed; i.e., ʿĪsā is a prophet and an apostle. It is of passing interest to note that Jabarī speaks twice of ʿĪsā as a prophet in passages where he has been called an apostle.¹⁰⁹ Where emphasis is placed upon his being an apostle by the commentators, it is generally with the desire to demonstrate his created nature. So Rāzī on 4.171/169, "ʿĪsā is of the apostles of Allah, so believe in him as you believe in the rest of the apostles and do not make him a god."¹¹⁰ The passage in 5.75/79 received attention from each of our commentators and is given here.

He was only an apostle of the community of apostles who passed away before him and who came with the signs of Allah. If Allah healed those born blind and the lepers, and raised the dead by him, He had already quickened the staff and made it a snake and floated it upon the sea by Mūsā. And if He created him without a father, so He created Adam without father or mother.¹¹¹

108. Rāzī, 5.551.1ff. on S.19.30/31.

109. Jabarī, 3.171.23,24 on S.3.49/43; 3.182.12ff. on S.3.53/46.

110. Rāzī, 3.357.34,35 on S.4.171/169.

111. Ibid., 3.448.23-26 on S.5.75/79.

He is only an apostle as the apostles preceding him, whom Allah particularized with evidences as He did them.¹¹²

An expression of humanity and not used of the Creator of humanity.¹¹³

Utterance of Truth, Qawl al-Haqq

This expression occurs in S.19.34/35, and the commentators differ in their interpretation of it. Rāzī says (1) there is no difference between the expression and "ʿĪsā, word of Allah"; (2) there is a difference between saying that ʿĪsā is a statement of the truth and saying that he is the truth.¹¹⁴ Bayḍāwī says simply that the meaning is the word of Allah.¹¹⁵ Ṭabarī takes an altogether different view and paraphrases, "This announcement which I have recounted to you is the utterance of truth and the words which I have recited to you is the utterance of Allah."¹¹⁶

Word, Kalima

Rāzī's comments on 3.45/40 are worth noticing here.

Every body is conceived, even though he is created by the Word, which is in His statement, "Be." However, the customary cause was missing in the case of ʿĪsā..., i.e., a father. Ascribing his creation to the Word is, of course, more complete and perfect. By this inter-

112. Bayḍāwī, 1.269.11ff. on S.5.75/79.

113. Ṭabarī, 6.179.2ff. on S.5.75/79.

114. Rāzī, 5.556.19ff. on S.19.34/35.

115. Bayḍāwī, 1.581.1 on S.19.34/35.

116. Ṭabarī, 16.55.3,4 on S.19.34/35.

pretation, he has been made as if he were the essence of the Word [nafs al-kalima], as a person full of generosity is referred to, by way of exaggeration, as the "essence" [nafs] of generosity.... This is the case here.¹¹⁷

This is the expression of Him who is not partitionable. If this were possible, Allah would be divisible, capable of being assembled and disassembled, and whoever is thus is a created being. No, the intention here is to show the exalted beginning in the case of 'Īsā where there was no father. And so the effect of the word of Allah in his formation and creation became more complete and evident and the being of the word of Allah was the more complete prelude to his appearance and his creation. The meaning of the expression is what we have said and not what the Christians and the Incarnationists have construed it.¹¹⁸

Qatāda, quoted by Ṭabarī, says the "word" is the kun, while Ibn 'Abbās¹¹⁹ holds it to be a name for 'Īsā. Ṭabarī concludes that it is "the sent word which Allah ordered His angel to bring to Maryam as good tidings from Allah to Maryam."¹²⁰ On S.3.45/40, Ṭabarī had said "word means a message or announcement from Allah; Allah gave good tidings to Maryam of a child."¹²¹ Thus he is consistent. It has been said that the meaning "is that he was created by the word of Allah and His decree

117. Rāzī, 2.470.1ff. on S.3.45/40.

118. Ibid., 2.470.34-37 on S.3.45/40.

119. Ṭabarī, 3.168.14-18 on S.3.45/40.

120. Ibid., 6.21.28 on S.4.171/169.

121. Ibid., 3.168.10 on S.3.45/40.

without any mediator,"¹²² and that "ʿĪsā is a word Allah put inside
123
Maryam."

Spirit, Rūh

Bayḍāwī states, "He is a spirit by reason of raising the dead
124
to life and also hearts." Rāzī attempts a fuller, more satisfactory
explanation of the expression.

It was customary among the people to say, in describing a thing extremely pure and clean, "It is a spirit." Since ʿĪsā was not formed from the sperm of a father but from the breath of Gabriel, he was described as a spirit. And the object of saying this about ʿĪsā is to honor and express preference for him, in the same way as it is said, "This is a grace from Allah," intending to mean that that grace is perfect and pure. That he was a factor [cause] for reviving people's religions, and whoever does this is described as a spirit. Allah said, describing the Qur'ān, "We have revealed to you a spirit from Us." A spirit from Him means a mercy from Him. His statement, "He supported him with a spirit from Him," has been interpreted as a mercy from Him. The prophet said: "I am a mercy granted." Since ʿĪsā was Allah's mercy for mankind inasmuch as he was guiding them to their duties in their religion and their lives, so naturally he was called a spirit from Him.

Spirit means breath, or "blowing," in Arabic. Rūh and rīh are similar. The rūh was Gabriel's breath and minhu means the breath from Gabriel was by the decree of Allah and His permission, as in the saying, "We breathed into her of Our spirit." His statement, "rūh," makes the word indefinite and this means glorification. The meaning is a spirit from the honored, high and holy spirits. The words "from Him" are ascribing that spirit to Him for the purpose of honoring and glorification.¹²⁵

122. Rāzī, 3.357.22,23 on S.4.171/169.

123. Bayḍāwī, 1.243.6,7 on S.4.171/169.

124. Idem.

125. Rāzī, 3.357.24-27 on S.4.171/169.

Rāzī does not state which of these alternative interpretations he considers to be correct.

Sign, Āya

Both Maryam and ʿĪsā are referred to in the Qurʾān as "signs." The pertinent passages are: S.3.49/43; 19.21; 21.91; 23.50/52. Bayḍāwī commenting on 19.21 says, "A sign and a proof of the totality of Our [Allah's] power."¹²⁶ Again, on 23.50/52, he says,

(1) Both are one sign by reason of the miraculous birth, or (2) ʿĪsā is a sign by his speaking in the cradle and his miracles and his mother a sign because of bearing him apart from a man.¹²⁷

Ṭabarī paraphrases 3.49/43, "A sign to prove that I am an apostle from your Lord to you." He explains, "The sign is the inbreathing of life in the bird."¹²⁸ Again a paraphrase on 23.50/52, "A proof of Our ability to produce bodies without causative sources as We created ʿĪsā without a father."¹²⁹ Concerning the coupling of Maryam and ʿĪsā as one sign, he says, "The greatness of Our power and Our authority for what We will. One 'sign' for either one serves as indicative of Allah; their affair is one."¹³⁰ Rāzī comes up with a slightly different interpretation regarding Maryam and ʿĪsā being a sign.

126. Bayḍāwī, 1.578.26 on S.19.21.

127. Ibid., 2.7.9,10 on S.23.50/52.

128. Ṭabarī, 3.172.7ff. on S.3.49/43.

129. Ibid., 18.17.19-21 on S.23.50/52.

130. Ibid., 17.60.29,30 on S.21.91.

This being out of the ordinary was a miracle and therefore a sign.... Their two lives together constituted a sign proving the power of Allah.... 'Isā born without a father, Maryam giving birth without a husband, they share this miracle together; it is one sign. In this case, Maryam and 'Isā are the sign and this sign is not as the signs performed by them.¹³¹

There is obvious agreement here that 'Isā alone and 'Isā and Maryam together constitute a sign of the power and authority of Allah.

Near-placed, Muqarrab

Those who are "near-placed" are associated with the "believing witnesses." According to Rāzī's comments on S.3.53/46,

These words are an indication that the book of the righteous is in the heavens with the angels. Allah said that the book of the righteous is in the highest places [S.83.18] and if Allah has written down the remembrance of them with the believing witnesses, then their remembrance is famous in the highest position and with the angels near-placed.¹³²

It is implied here that 'Isā is also "of the right-doers." Rāzī explains 3.46/41 thus:

If it be said that 'Isā is a word from Allah, illustrious in this world and the next, of the near-placed, speaking to people in the cradle and when of age, each of these descriptions is greater and more noble than his being of the right-doers. Why then does Allah seal up the descriptions of 'Isā by saying, "and of the right-doers"? We reply that there is no level greater than that of being right-doing, because no one can be that without having the victory in all actions and deeds. Everyone knows that that receives all the positions in this world and in religion, both in the

131. Rāzī, 6.152.17,18 on S.21.91; 6.227.25-33 on S.23.50/52, 51/53.

132. Ibid., 2.479.25-27 on S.3.53/46.

deeds of the heart and in the deeds of the members [of the body]. When Allah mentioned some of the details, He concludes with these words which indicate the highest of ranks.¹³³

This question of "rank" with which Rāzī terminates his remarks above is an important one. According to Bayḍāwī, this rank was not exclusively the property of ʿĪsā but included Ibrāhīm, Idrīs and Muḥammad.¹³⁴ On the other hand, while Rāzī seems to imply that to be "of the right-doers" is to be in the "highest of ranks," elsewhere he equates the being raised in rank with being admitted to the position of the angels, those who are near-placed:

Allah...thus admitted ʿĪsā to their position and rank by means of this description. This description is as an indication that he would later be lifted up to heaven, accompanied by the angels. Not every illustrious person is among the near-placed because the people of Paradise have different positions and ranks. Therefore, He said, "You will form three groups, and the Sābiqūn, the Sābiqūn are the near-placed."¹³⁵

Bayḍāwī associates the revelation of this position with the occurrence of the Najrān delegation.

This verse was revealed in honor of ʿĪsā's being, like them, a servant of Allah when that servant status was misunderstood by the Najrān delegation. The attitude of the angels is used as proof of the attitude of the servant ʿĪsā.¹³⁶

133. *Ibid.*, 2.473.6ff. on S.3.46/41.

134. Bayḍāwī, 1.130.10-13 on S.2.253/254.

135. Rāzī, 2.472.4ff. on S.3.45/40.

136. Bayḍāwī, 1.243.18,19 on S.4.172/170.

Ṭabarī quotes Qatāda and Ja‘far as saying that "near-placed" means to be placed near Allah on the Day of Resurrection.¹³⁷ We find agreement among our commentators that to be near-placed means a raising in rank similar at least to that of the angels and in some kind of association with them, in the proximity of Allah.

Illustrious, Waḥīh

In company with Mūsā, S.33.69, ‘Isā is described as being illustrious. Rāzī defines the term:

The meaning of illustrious is honor and power...a person is illustrious if his position becomes elevated with people and the king. Language authorities say that illustrious means honored, for the most honorable part of a man is his face. Thus his face is made the place where honor and beauty both break out.¹³⁸

Al-Zājjāj said, "The meaning of 'illustrious' being in the circumstantial accusative is, 'Allah gives you tidings of a son [who will be] illustrious in this world and in the next.'" Al-Farrā‘ treated this as an absolute, as if He said, "‘Isā, son of Maryam, the illustrious one,"¹³⁹ and that He subsequently took away the determinative.

Rāzī summarizes the various views regarding this characteristic of ‘Isā:

(1) He was illustrious in this world because of prophethood and in the next because of his position with Allah;

137. Ṭabarī, 3.169.1ff. on S.3.45/40.

138. Rāzī, 2.471.27ff. on S.3.45/40.

139. Ibid., 2.472.2ff. on S.3.45/40.

(2) He is illustrious because his prayers were heard and by means of his prayer he healed those born blind, the leper and quickened the dead, and he is illustrious in the next world because He made him the intercessor of his community; his intercession of his community; his intercession for them is received even as the accusation of the proud one is received against them; (3) He was illustrious because he was kept free from the faults which the Jews attributed to him and he is illustrious in the next world because of the abundance of his merits and the elevation of his rank with Allah.

And if it be asked how he could be illustrious in this world when the Jews did to him what they did, we reply: We have already mentioned that Mūsā was considered illustrious in spite of what the Jews did to him, so that Allah kept him from what they said and that did not take away from his illustriousness and so it is here.¹⁴⁰

Blessed, Mubārak

"He was blessed among the people because, by reason of his call, they experienced the resurrection of the dead, the healing of those born blind and the leper."¹⁴¹ This epithet is related to another, "graced," and Bayḍāwī speaks for most commentators when he declares that this grace is detailed by the enumerated circumstantial indications which follow in the passage.¹⁴²

Mercy, Rahma

Bayḍāwī explains that anyone is "a mercy for the people who leads them aright with his guidance."¹⁴³

140. Ibid., 2.471.27ff. on S.3.45/40.

141. Ibid., 5.554.30-555.1,2 on S.19.31/32.

142. Bayḍāwī, 1.279.5 on S.5.110/109.

143. Ibid., 1.578.27 on S.9.21.

D. Death and the Last Day

Execution of Allah's Servants

Commenting upon S.2.87/81, Ṭabarī says it is "clearly indicated here that some apostles were killed by disbelieving Jews and some indication that this was subsequent to Mūsā." ¹⁴⁴ He continues the thought with his comments on 4.155/154: "...for their killing the prophets after the establishment of proofs against them by their prophethood; unjustly, i.e., without any justification for such treatment or for any fault requiring capital punishment." ¹⁴⁵ This leads us to Rāzī commenting upon the Jews' claim to have killed the Masīḥ (4.157/156):

This indicates their great disbelief because they said, "We did that," and this indicates that they were desirous of his killing, working for it, without doubt great disbelief. If it is said the Jews were disbelieving in ʿĪsā and enemies to him, efforting for his killing, calling him sorcerer, son of sorcery, how then do they say, "We have killed the Masīḥ, ʿĪsā, the son of Maryam, the apostle of Allah?" The answer is (1) they said that out of ridicule as the saying of Pharaoh, "Your apostle who is sent to you is possessed!" and as the saying of the disbelieving Quraysh to Muhammad, "O One upon whom the Mention has descended, you are surely possessed!"; (2) it is possible that Allah made the good expression take the place of the wicked one in the story about them, exalting ʿĪsā from what they were saying about him. ¹⁴⁶

144. Ṭabarī, 1.306.1ff. on S.2.87/81.

145. Ibid., 6.7.25-27 on S.4.155/154.

146. Rāzī, 3.349.29-35 on S.4.157/156.

Plot

It is clear from the Qur'ān that the Jews were seeking to kill 'Īsā. As Ṭabarī puts it, "Those whose disbelief 'Īsā perceived, plotted his death."¹⁴⁷ Both Ṭabarī and Bayḍāwī interpret S.5.110/109 as revealing Allah in the act of restraining the Children of Israel from killing 'Īsā.¹⁴⁸ According to Rāzī's interpretation, Allah protected 'Īsā by raising him to heaven.¹⁴⁹ This introduces a counter-plot on the part of Allah as a reaction to the plotting by the disbelieving Jews. Ṭabarī says,

Allah plotted against those attempting the killing of 'Īsā in their disbelief in Allah and their treating of 'Īsā as a liar in what was brought them by him from their Lord. That is, Allah plotted against them when Allah said to 'Īsā, "I am gathering you to Myself...."¹⁵⁰

In other words, Rāzī explains the plot of Allah as having the result of raising 'Īsā to heaven; Ṭabarī explains the result of the divine plot as terminating 'Īsā's life in some way upon earth. Rāzī summarizes the divine plotting, giving the following alternatives:

(1) The Jews plotted to kill 'Īsā, but Allah took him up from the cross. (2) The 12 disciples had a hypocrite among them and Allah cast the likeness of 'Īsā upon him and he was taken and crucified instead of 'Īsā. (3) Allah directed that Titus should come and destroy Jerusalem as a punishment upon the Jews for

147. Ṭabarī, 3.182.25 on S.3.54/47.

148. *Ibid.*, 7.77.32; Bayḍāwī, 1.279.15,16 on S.5.110/109.

149. Rāzī, 3.482.5-8 on S.5.110/109.

150. Ṭabarī, 3.183.13-15 on S.3.55/48.

having wanted to kill 'Isā. (4) The other possibilities center around Allah meting out to the Jews punishment not related to anything they did to 'Isā.¹⁵¹

The Raising Up To Allah

Commenting on S.5.116, Ṭabarī says that Allah spoke this to 'Isā¹⁵² when He raised him up to Himself in the world. On the other hand, Rāzī, commenting on the same passage, says that this questioning takes place on the Day of Resurrection and not at the time of his being raised to Allah.¹⁵³ Rāzī, furthermore, interprets this raising figuratively when interpreting 3.55/48,

Not to Allah as though He were in a place, but to the place of his ['Isā's] reward and recompense. That is, to the place of "My honor," and He made that a raising to Himself for amplification and greatness. Know that this verse proves that His raising up is the raising up of degree and nature, not of place. So the most important thing in this verse is not the place but the degree and the raising up.¹⁵⁴

We must conclude from the above that Ṭabarī and Rāzī disagree concerning the time, place and nature of this "raising up."

Mutawaffika/Tawaffaytani

The meaning of this expression is of vital importance to the understanding of 'Isā's departure from earth. Some commentators feel that its import is closely associated to the event above, the "raising

151. Rāzī, 2.480.1-31 on S.3.54/47.

152. Ṭabarī, 7.82.29 on S.5.116.

153. Rāzī, 3.485.11-15 on S.5.116.

154. Ibid., 2.481.33,34; 482.1-4,16,17 on S.3.55/48.

up." The two passages where this verb occurs are S.3.55/48 and 5.117. Rāzī's combined comment upon them follows.

When 'Isā was raised to heaven, his state became as the state of the angels in the cessation of lust, anger and blameworthy manners. The object here is the cessation brought about by the raising to heaven, from His saying, I will "lift you up" [mutawaffika] to Me.¹⁵⁵

Ṭabarī implicitly admits the notion of death in the term and likens it to the "death of sleep." His comments on the same passages,

Interpreters have differed in the meaning of al-wafāt which Allah mentions in this verse. Some said it is the death of sleep. In this sense, the words mean, I will put you to sleep and raise you to Myself in your sleep.... When You took me to Yourself.¹⁵⁶

Bayḍāwī interprets the event implied by the term as the raising up.¹⁵⁷ He says, however, "Death is one meaning of this word." Again, on the meaning of the term, Ṭabarī quotes Ja'far and Ibn Zayd as saying that it does not mean physical death but "I am seizing you from the earth and raising you to Myself." He quotes Ibn 'Abbās and Wahhāb as¹⁵⁸ finding that it means physical death.

Rāzī seems to feel, in spite of his comments above, that at some point, Allah will indeed take the life of 'Isā through physical death. He paraphrases 3.55/48,

155. Ibid., 2.481.12,13 on S.3.55/48; 3.486.6,7 on S.5.117.

156. Ṭabarī, 3.183.15,16 on S.3.55/48; 7.84.5 on S.5.117.

157. Bayḍāwī, 1.281.18 on S.5.117.

158. Ṭabarī, 3.183.19ff. on S.3.55/48.

I will complete your life and then [atawaffāka] and I will not let them kill you but I will raise you to My heaven and bring you near to my angels and I will protect you from their being able to kill you. This is the good interpretation. How He will do this and when He will do it is still standing upon proof. Proof has established that he is alive and the Prophet has said that he will descend and kill the Dajjāl and then Allah will take his life after that.¹⁵⁹

Possible Crucifixion

Bayḍāwī maintains vigorously that there is no reference in S.2.87/81 to the death of ʿĪsā.¹⁶⁰ The same commentator, in dealing with the passage in 4.157/156,158/156, refutes and denies the death of ʿĪsā and establishes the fact of his having been raised prior to any death. He gives various traditional accounts as to how this took place.¹⁶¹ Ṭabarī generally agrees with Bayḍāwī in this interpretation, saying, "instead of being crucified or killed, ʿĪsā was raised up to Allah."¹⁶² Rāzī, commenting on 19.33/34, says, "The day of birth, of death, and of resurrection are the three occasions where man has his greatest need of peace. ʿĪsā had this."¹⁶³ By contrast, Bayḍāwī is altogether silent here. He admits, in his comments on 5.17/19, that Allah could prevent anyone else from killing ʿĪsā but no one could

159. Rāzī, 2.481.1-3 on S.3.55/48.

160. Bayḍāwī, 1.72.3 on S.2.87/81.

161. Ibid., 1.240.8-16 on S.4.157/156; 1.240.26,27 on S.4.158/156.

162. Ṭabarī, 6.11.34ff. on S.4.158/156.

163. Rāzī, 5.555.35ff. on S.19.33/34.

164

prevent Allah from doing so if He chose to. The commentators are therefore basically agreed that ʿĪsā did not die.

Shubbiha

Shubbiha includes two meanings: (1) the causing of doubt; (2) the making to resemble. Traditionally, the passage in which this passage occurs has been understood to have the second meaning. As Rāzī says, "The text of the Qur'ān shows that when He raised him up, He cast his likeness upon someone else according to what He said, 'They neither killed him nor crucified him but shubbiha lahum.'" ¹⁶⁵ Ṭabarī says regarding the appearance,

Interpreters have differed concerning the kind of appearance which appeared to the Jews in the matter of ʿĪsā. When they had surrounded ʿĪsā and his companions, they all changed into his form and those who were intending his killing found it difficult to distinguish him from the others....¹⁶⁶

"Shubbiha," says Rāzī, "is connected to the pronoun of the slain one, because of His saying, 'And they did not kill him,' indicating that death fall upon someone else."¹⁶⁷ Thus the commentators are united in their interpreting this expression to mean that ʿĪsā did not die and someone bearing his likeness did die.

164. Bayḍāwī, 1.252.7-9 on S.5.17/19.

165. Rāzī, 2.482.20-24 on S.3.55/48.

166. Ṭabarī, 6.8.29ff. on S.4.157/156.

167. Rāzī, 3.350.3-5 on S.4.157/156.

Although the section is extensive, it is worth abridging Rāzī's summary of the problems and answers which surround the entire question of shubbiha.

Problems: (1) Perhaps it was only a trick of the senses; (2) if Gabriel was with him all the time (and the majority of the commentators agree that this is the meaning of the words, "I have strengthened you with the spirit of holiness"), then his wing would have sufficed to take care of his enemies and ʿĪsā who could give life miraculously could have taken the lives of his enemies; (3) why shubbiha at all after having raised him up? Where is the usefulness of this?; (4) some people believed it was ʿĪsā and this threw them into ignorance and obscurity which is not like the wisdom of Allah; (5) it is reported that they (Christians) witnessed him dead and crucified so if we deny that, we cancel out what has been established by repetition and by cancelling out what is by repetition, then of necessity the prophecies of Muḥammad are cancelled out and the prophecies of ʿĪsā and their very existence and the rest of the prophets and all that is vain; (6) since ʿĪsā is supposed to have stayed on the cross a long time, and it was not ʿĪsā, the one crucified would have yelled out, "I am not ʿĪsā!"

Answers: (1) Allah is able to create another man with the same appearance and there is no room for the doubt you speak of; (2) if Allah had allowed either Gabriel or ʿĪsā to defend him against his enemies the type of miracle not permitted would have taken place, likewise if Allah had simply raised ʿĪsā up without placing his likeness upon someone else; (4) the disciples of ʿĪsā were present and knew the manner of the event and they dispersed that obscurity; (5) those present were small in number and the impression of a likeness upon a small group is possible and if the events were limited finally to a small number, it would not have been worth inquiring about; (6) it is possible that the person upon whom the likeness was cast accepted this in the stead of ʿĪsā and kept quiet.¹⁶⁸

168. Ibid., 2.482.24-37; 483.8,9 on S.3.55/48.

Lack of Certainty

We come now to the other emphasis of shubbiha, the matter of doubt and uncertainty, the "causing to differ." This difference is due to doubt. Bayḍāwī says, "They did not know for certain if it was ʿIsā¹⁶⁹ whom they had killed." He explains that doubt as ignorance.

Apart from the Jews who disbelieved and doubted at this time, Rāzī says,

There are three groups of Christians about whom this is speaking: Nestorians who say that Masīḥ the man was killed but not his divinity; Melchites who say that the killing and crucifixion reached divinity by way of the senses and feelings but indirectly; and the Jacobites who say that the killing and the crucifying reached the Masīḥ who was incarnated essence. ¹⁷⁰

Ṭabarī explains the passage in this way,

Because of the circumstances surrounding the raising up of ʿIsā and the killing of someone (for certain), those doing the killing found it impossible to be certain as to whom they had killed. ¹⁷¹

Rāzī adds concerning S.4.157/156, "Either Muḥammad is now establishing that they certainly did not kill him or they were not certain when they put someone to death that it was ʿIsā." ¹⁷² And on 3.55/48, Ṭabarī says,

169. Bayḍāwī, 1.240.24 on S.4.157/156.

170. Rāzī, 3.350.29-351 on S.4.157/156.

171. Ṭabarī, 6.11.16 on S.4.157/156.

172. Rāzī, 3.351.17-23 on S.4.157/156.

"Allah will judge between the two groups concerning ʿĪsā's affair, those
¹⁷³
 who followed and those who disbelieved."

Return and Last Day

There is some difference of opinion as to the specific details in ʿĪsā's return to the earth at the Last Day, but general agreement prevails among the commentators as to the major outline. Bayḍāwī writes,

His descent is one of the conditions of the Hour, or because his resurrection of the dead indicates the power of Allah upon him. According to tradition, ʿĪsā descends a second time to the holy land, kills the Dajjāl, goes to the holy temple while the people are at morning prayer. ʿĪsā prays after the Imām, according to Muḥammad's Law, then he kills the swine, breaks the cross, destroys the churches, and kills the Christians, except who believes in him.¹⁷⁴

Bayḍāwī later adds that all "Jews and Christians will believe on him,
¹⁷⁵
 Then ʿĪsā will die and Muslims will bury him." Ṭabarī confirms this with his own interpretative comments: "All People of the Book will believe in ʿĪsā before ʿĪsā's death, after ʿĪsā has killed Dajjāl and all communities have become one--Islām, Ḥanafite, the religion of
¹⁷⁶
 Ibrāhīm."

ʿĪsā has also the function on the Last Day of witnessing and judging. Ṭabarī says, commenting on S.4.159/157, "He will be a witness

173. Ṭabarī, 3.186.11ff. on S.3.55/48.

174. Bayḍāwī, 2.241.21ff. on S.43.61.

175. Ibid., 1.241.1-8 on S.4.159/157.

176. Ṭabarī, 6.12.6-9 on S.4.159/157.

against them of their treating as lies, those of them who did this and confirming those who of them believed in what he brought them from Allah." ¹⁷⁷ Rāzī agrees with this view:

On the Day of Resurrection he will witness against them. It is said that he will witness against the Jews that they treated him as a liar and against the Christians that they associated him with Allah and thus every prophet is a witness against his community.¹⁷⁸

The function of judging comes from the passage S.3.55/48,

He announced to ʿĪsā that He would give him in the world noble qualities and exalted rank, but in the resurrection, He would judge between those who believed in him and those who opposed his mission.¹⁷⁹

One technical point is worth mentioning. Ṭabarī points out

Interpreters differ as to what the ha refers to in the expression innahu [43.61]. Some say it refers to ʿĪsā and means that his appearance indicates the coming of the Hour, as his appearance is one of the conditions for it and his descent to the earth indicates the passing away of this world. Others say the ha refers to the Qur'ān which is a sign of the Hour.¹⁸⁰

177. Ibid., 6.14.36ff. on S.4.159/157.

178. Rāzī, 3.352.22-24 on S.4.159/157.

179. Ibid., 2.482.17-19 on S.3.55/48.

180. Ṭabarī, 25.49.1-3 on S.43.61.

CHAPTER IV

THE 'ISĀ OF TRADITION

The important role which tradition plays in the interpretation of the Qur'ān cannot be over-emphasized. These various traditions "reflect the first two hundred years after the Hijra, the controversies of ideology of that time, and the consensus, iqma, which originated as a result of these controversies."¹ The three persons who made the most notable contribution to tradition are: Ibn 'Abbās who knew Muḥammad for the last four years of the Prophet's life and was fourteen years old at the time of his death; Abū Huraira who became a Muslim four years before Muḥammad's death and was an undistinguished youth during that time; Mālik Ibn Anas, without noble birth, standing or education, nineteen years old at Muḥammad's death.²

What is 'Isā like according to tradition--all tradition? Does the 'Isā of tradition differ from the 'Isā of the Qur'ān, or the 'Isā of the commentators, and if so, in what way? This is the basic question to which we shall seek an answer from this non-Quranic source. As the basic framework for our examination of the traditions, we shall summarize briefly Zwemer's translation of the life of 'Isā from al-Tha'labī's

1. Birkeland, Thy Lord Guideth, p. 6.

2. W.H.T. Gairdner, "Mohammedan tradition and Gospel record," Muslim World, Vol. V, 1915, p. 352.

3
 account. There are other general accounts but they are largely paral-
 lel. Al-Tha'labī based his account on traditions acknowledged as sound
 by the majority of Muslims. The translation is, for the most part,
 quite literal.⁴ Traditions elucidating incidents integral to al-Tha'la-
 bī's account will be cited.

A. His Birth

Maryam saw that her water jar was empty and suggested to Yūsef
 that they go together to fill them. The day was the longest of the year
 and the hottest, and, since he had enough water for another day, Yūsef
 declined to accompany her. On entering the cave, she met Gabriel whom
 Allah had made to resemble a handsome youth. He announced that he had
 been sent to give her a child. In her honest reaction, she took refuge
 with Allah from him, hoping he was a true believer who would respect her
 fear.⁵ He assured her of his commission to her, and when she submitted
 to the decree of Allah, he breathed into her clothing, and she conse-
 quently conceived 'Īsā. Then she returned to the mosque where both she
 and Yūsef worked.

During the forty days prior to 'Īsā's birth, Maryam lived in
 the cave.

3. Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tha'labī, Qisas al-Anbiyā', Cairo, 1325 A.H.,
 pp. 241-255.

4. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 59-106.

5. Ibid., pp. 60,61.

It is related that when ʿĪsā was born, the demons came to Satan and said: "All the idols have fallen on their faces." He said, "This is a momentous event. [Remain] in your places." Then he flew until he reached the utmost regions of the earth; there he found ʿĪsā had been born and the angels gathered around him in jubilation. So he returned to the demons and said to them: "Truly a Prophet was born yesterday. No woman has ever conceived and given birth before to a child when I was not present except in this case."⁶

Maryam's people were naturally shocked when they saw her with ʿĪsā, and reproached her severely for her supposed wickedness.⁷ Maryam provoked their anger when she referred them to ʿĪsā, still in the cradle. His words calmed their fears and proved his faith.⁸ ʿAmr Ibn Maymūn said that when Maryam came to her people with ʿĪsā, they took up stones and tried to stone her, but when ʿĪsā spoke, they left her alone.⁹ ʿĪsā did not speak again after this until he was of the ordinary age of children beginning to talk.

B. His Youth

Yūsuf brought ʿĪsā and Maryam to live in Egypt, in the house of a village headman. It is here that the first "sign" was evidenced. ʿĪsā by acute perception, was able to solve the mystery of the missing money stolen from the headman's cashbox.¹⁰ Again, when the ruler of the

6. Al-Ghazālī, Kitāb Ihyaʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn, Cairo, 1312 A.H., 3.26.4.

7. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 63,64.

8. Ibid., pp. 64,65.

9. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, Cairo, 1313 A.H., 2.307ff.

10. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 68,69.

country was lacking in his wine cellar supplies due to unexpected and uninvited guests from Syria, ʿĪsā passed by rows of jars, touching each with his hand. At his touch, each was filled with wine.¹¹

The day ʿĪsā began his school work in earnest is marked by an auspicious occurrence:

The son of ʿĀdī related on the authority of Abū Saʿīd al-Khadrī a tradition that when his mother handed over ʿĪsā, son of Maryam, to the school that one should teach him, the teacher said to him, "Write, Bismillāhi." ʿĪsā said to him, "What is bismi?" The teacher replied, "I do not know." Then ʿĪsā said, "Bā is bahā Allah [\"the glory of Allah\"], and sīn is sanāhu [\"His grandeur\"], and mīm is mulkuhu [\"His kingdom\"], and Allah is the God of gods. Al-Rahmān means Merciful in this world and the next; and al-Rahīm means Compassionate in the next world."¹²

ʿĪsā used to tell his schoolmates what their families were eating and this served to alienate their friendship. He would go to their homes, and ask for them. On being told that only swine were in the house, he would simply say, "Let it be so." The boys in the home would turn into swine. By this his prophethood became recognized. Something similar occurred a little later.¹³

Maryam passed by a group of weavers in her search for ʿĪsā and asked them the way. They misled her. She cried out, "O my Allah, remove blessing from their business, make their community poor and cause them

11. Ibid., pp. 69,70.

12. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Kitāb al-Lāli al-Maḡnūʿa fī al-Aḥādīth al-Mawḍūʿa, Cairo, 1317 A.H., 1.89.11.

13. Zwemer, op. cit., p. 70.

to be despised by the people," And they were astonished at her petitions.¹⁴

Maryam, on one occasion, was sorry to see her host saddened due to the king's levy upon that household that day, at a time when his food stores were diminished. She urged 'Īsā to do something, but his reply contained a warning of future difficulties if he helped the host. After further urging, he had the man gather his containers together and 'Īsā miraculously filled them with good food. When the king had tasted the food and drink, he insisted on knowing the source from which it came. Learning of the miracle-worker, the king implored him to bring his son to life by his intercession. 'Īsā, however, forewarned him of evil results if he did this. As before, the king insisted. The king's people revolted against the son and killed both the king and the prince. As a result of his raising of the dead prince, 'Īsā and his mother¹⁵ were permitted to leave the country.

'Īsā was taken at one time and apprenticed to dyers. His master left on a trip and assigned to 'Īsā the task of dying several garments, each a different color. 'Īsā put them all into the same container, with one color of dye. The dyer, on his return, was amazed when 'Īsā pulled each garment out, being the exact color desired. His master said to the people, "Come and see what 'Īsā has done." So he and his friends¹⁶ believed in him, and these his friends became the apostles.

14. Al-Ghazālī, op. cit., 2.56.18.

15. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 71-74.

16. Ibid., pp. 74,75.

C. His Appearance and Way of Life

ʿIsā is reported to have been light of skin, hair short, head not anointed. Barefoot, he traveled much without any home of his own and without any provisions except his daily bread. Miracles such as are enumerated in the Qurʾān were performed by him. He was essentially an ascetic.¹⁷ Much is made of his walking on water, though this is not mentioned in the Qurʾān.

Shihāb from Sālim Ibn ʿAbdullah from ʿAbdullah Ibn ʿUmar: I heard the apostle say, "While I was asleep I dreamt that I was going round the Kaʿba, when lo, a man with lank hair stood between two men, his head dripping with water. When I asked who it was they said, 'ʿIsā Ibn Maryam.'"¹⁸

His capacity for knowledge was astounding. When he was thirty years old, he knew he was to exhort men to worship Allah and to minister among them. Multitudes loved him. It is reported that he healed everybody, on the sole condition of faith.

Qatāda said that he was told that Salmān the Persian told the apostle that his master in ʿAmmuriya told him to go to a certain place in Syria where there was a man

17. Ibid., p. 68.

18. Guillaume, op. cit., p. xliii. Cf. Muḥammad Ibn Ismaʿīl al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, Leiden, 1862-1908, 60.24.48; 77.68; 91.11,33; Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Ṣaḥīḥ, Cairo, 1283 A.H., 52.116; Mālik Ibn Anas, Kitāb al-Muwattʿa, Cairo, 1279 A.H., 49.2; Ibn Ḥanbal, op. cit., 2.22,39,83, 122,126ff., 144,154,166,281ff.,406,437,528; 3.334; Al-Ḥayālisī, Musnad, Hyderabad, 1321 A.H., No.2575; Ibn Hishām, Kitāb Sīra Rasūl Allah, Göttingen, 1859-60, pp. 266,270.

who lived between two thickets. Every year as he used to go from one to the other, the sick used to stand in his way and everyone he prayed for was healed. He said, "Ask him about this religion which you seek, for he can tell you of it." So I went on until I came to the place I had been told of, and I found that people had gathered there with their sick until he came out to them that night, passing from one thicket to the other. The people came to him with the sick and everyone he prayed for was healed. They prevented me from getting to him so that I could not approach him until he entered the thicket he was heading toward, but I took hold of his shoulder. He asked me who I was as he turned to me and I said, "Allah have mercy on you, tell me about the Ḥanifiya, the religion of Ibrāhīm." He replied, "You are asking about something men do not inquire of today; the time has come near when a prophet will be sent with this religion from the people of the haram. Go to him, for he will bring you to it." Then he went into the thicket. The apostle said to Salma, "If you have told me the truth, you met 'Isā the son of Maryam."¹⁹

According to tradition, the essential theme of the prayer by which he healed the sick consisted of the recognition of Allah's sovereignty and
20
power in heaven and earth.

Al-Ghazālī reports as to his way of life,

Ubayd, son of 'Umar, said, "The Masīḥ, son of Maryam, used to wear hair clothing, and eat wild fruits, and he had no son to die, and no house to be demolished, and he stored up nothing for the morrow. He slept wherever the evening overtook him."²¹

With regard to his fasting and prayer, al-Samarqandī states,

19. Guillaume, op. cit., p. 98. Cf. Muslim, op. cit., 43.143-145; Abū Dā'ūd, Sunan, Cairo, 1283 A.H., 39.13; Ibn Ḥanbal, op. cit., 2.319,406,437,463ff.,482,541; al-Jayālīsī, op. cit., No.2575.

20. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 75,76.

21. Al-Ghazālī, op. cit., 4.159.10.

If you desire the fast of the son of the virgin, meaning 'Isā, son of Maryam, then he used to fast all the time and eat barley bread and wear coarse hair; and wherever the night overtook him he used to arrange his feet in prayer until he saw that the sign of the dawn had arisen; and he never stayed anywhere without praying two prayers in it.²²

His outlook with respect to the world is consistent:

O son of man, weep during the days of your life like him who takes leave of the world and whose desire is raised to the things which are with Allah. Be satisfied with mere subsistence from the world. Let what is coarse and rough satisfy you from it. Truly I say unto you, you remain only your day and your hour.²³

D. His Public Ministry and Miracles

Certain fishermen were busy at their occupation when 'Isā asked them to come and call men to Allah. Their one inquiry was as to whether any prophets were above him. When he admitted that the Arabian prophet was over him, they believed on 'Isā and followed him.²⁴ As to their commissioning, al-Sādī related,²⁵

Yazīd al-Miṣrī told me that he found a document in which was a memorandum of those apostles sent to the countries and kings of the Arabs and non-Arabs and what he said to his companions when he sent them. I sent it to Muḥammad Shihāb al-Zuhrī and he recognized it. It contained the statement that the apostle went out to his companions and said: "Allah has sent me as a mercy to all men, so take

22. Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, Kitāb Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn, Cairo, 1326 A.H., 125.7.

23. Abū Jālib al-Makkī, Kitāb Qūt al-Qulūb fī Mu'āmalat al-Mahbūb wa Wasf Tarīq al-Murīd ilā Maqām al-Tawhīd, Cairo, 1310 A.H., 1.256.18.

24. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 80,81.

25. In Muslim tradition, the "commission" is best placed here.

a message from me, Allah have mercy on you. Do not hang back from me as the disciples hung back from 'Īsā son of Maryam." They asked how they had hung back and he said, "He called them to a task similar to that to which I have called you. Those who had to go a short journey were pleased and accepted; those who had a long journey before them were displeased and refused to go, and 'Īsā complained of them to Allah. Everyone of them was able to speak the language of the people to whom he was sent."²⁶

When the disciples lacked food, it is related that the "Spirit of Allah," the name by which 'Īsā was often called, would provide their need by simply striking the soil. ²⁷ Al-Ghazālī tells a tradition in which 'Īsā not only provides food but teaches a thief a lesson as well:

A man accompanied 'Īsā, son of Maryam, and said, "I will be with you and will accompany you." So they set off and came to the bank of a river and sat down for lunch; and they had three loaves. They ate two loaves, and a third loaf was left over. Then 'Īsā rose up and went to the river and drank, after which he returned, but did not find the loaf; so he said to the man, "Who took the loaf?" He replied, "I do not know." Then he set off with his companion and saw a gazelle with two of her young. The narrator says, he called one of them and it came to him; then he cut its throat and roasted part of the gazelle, and he and that man ate. Then he said to the young gazelle, "Rise up, by the permission of Allah." When it rose and went away, he said to the man, "I ask you by Him who has shown you this sign, Who took the loaf?" He replied, "I do not know." Afterwards they came to a wādī with water in it and 'Īsā took the man's hand and they walked on the water. Then when they came to a desert and sat down, and 'Īsā began to collect earth and a heap of sand, after which he said, "Become gold, by the permission of Allah." It became gold, and he divided it into three parts and said, "A third is for me, a third for you, and a third for him who took the loaf." Then he said, "I am the one who took the loaf." He said, "It is all yours."²⁸

26. Guillaume, op. cit., p. 653.

27. Zwemer, op. cit., p. 81.

28. Al-Ghazālī, op. cit., 3.188.17.

While ʿĪsā supplied the needs of his disciples, he realized it was a situation full of temptation toward a lazy way of life. He said on one occasion that the best of men is he who works with his hands. At another time,

A man asked ʿĪsā, "Who is the best of men?" Then he took two handfuls of earth and said, "Which of these two is the better? Men were created from earth, so the most honorable of them is the most Allah-fearing of them."²⁹

Thus ʿĪsā encouraged his disciples and others to be industrious, at the same time teaching them of the equality they shared as men in the sight of Allah. This is further emphasized,

In a tradition ʿĪsā, son of Maryam, met a man and said to him, "What are you doing?" He replied, "I am devoting myself to Allah." He said, "Who is giving you what you need?" He said, "My brother." ʿĪsā said, "He is more devoted to Allah than you are."³⁰

In the light of these incidents, it is little surprising to hear that the disciples began to make clothes for their living.³¹

There is no place for lack of desire to learn in the life ʿĪsā led. He underlined that true knowledge must be initiated, however, with knowledge of Allah.³² However, true knowledge did not carry with it the

29. ʿUbayd al-Qarīr, Kitāb Nuzha al-Nāzirīn fī Tāʾrīkh man Waliya Miṣr min al-Ḥulafāʾ wa al-Salātīn, Cairo, 1317 A.H., 251.10.

30. Abū ʿAmr Rabbīh, Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-Farīd, Cairo, 1293 A.H., 1.189.14.

31. Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Cairo, 1315 A.H., 1.41.16; al-Samarqandī, op. cit., 168.9; ibid., 161.12; al-Ghazālī, op. cit., 4.190.14; 4.330.7.

32. Ibid., 3.48.14.

limitless faith that one might suppose. Although ʿĪsā could walk on water, he could not walk on air. Muḥammad used this fact to illustrate that no one can arrive at the perfection of Allah. The disciples were continuously desirous to emulate ʿĪsā's ability to walk on water, as the following traditions show:

The disciples said to ʿĪsā, "How is it that you can walk on water and we cannot?" Then he said to them, "What do you think of the dinar and the dirham?" They replied, "They are good." He said, "But they and mud are alike to me."³⁴

So it is seen that a love for the world hindered the disciples from doing that which they sought.

The disciples said, "O Spirit of Allah, we pray as you pray, and we fast as you fast, and we glorify Allah as you ordered us, yet we are unable to walk on the water as you do." Then he said, "Tell me how your love of the world is." They replied, "Truly we love it." So he said, "Truly the love of it spoils religion, but in my opinion it is merely like stone and mud." And in another story it is said, that he lifted a stone and asked, "Which of the two is dearer to you, this or a dinar and a dirham?" They replied, "A dinar." He said, "They are both alike to me."³⁵

This disdain for the money of the world is ʿĪsā's condemnation of materialism. Love for the world is one hindrance, ʿĪsā tells his disciples. Fear of the material element, rather than fear of Allah is

33. Ibid., 4.124.12.

34. Ibid., 3.161.14.

35. Al-Makkī, op. cit., 1.263.5.

36. Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī, Kitāb Ithāf al-Sāda al-Muttaqīn, Cairo, 1311 A.H., 4.289.14.

the other obstacle to their obtaining what they seek after.

Some people said to 'Isā, son of Maryam, "By what thing do you walk upon the water?" He replied, "By faith and certainty." They said, "But we believe as you believe, and we are certain as you are certain." He said, "Then walk." When he said it they walked with him, and a wave came and raised him up, and 'Isā said to them, "What is the matter with you?" They replied, "We feared the wave." He said, "Did you not fear the Lord of the wave?"³⁷

Where does the basis for this fear come from? The following tradition gives this account for it:

'Isā said, "O company of the disciples, truly man is created in the world in four ranks, in three of which he is secure, but in the fourth of which he has evil thoughts, fearing that Allah will abandon him. As regards the first rank, he is created in three darknesses (belly, womb, placenta); then Allah gives him his provision in the depth of the darkness of the belly. Then when he is taken out of the darkness of the belly, he comes to the milk. Then when he gets beyond milk, he comes into the third rank with respect to food from his parents which they acquire for him of what is allowable and what is forbidden. Then if they die, people are kindly disposed to him. One gives him food, another gives him drink, another shelters him, and another clothes him. Then when he comes into the fourth rank and grows up and becomes a man, he fears that he will not be given provision, so he attacks men and betrays their trust and steals their goods, takes their possessions by force out of fear that Allah may abandon him."³⁸

An interesting aspect to 'Isā's creating of birds, according to tradition, is that he created only bats. The bat is the most perfect of

37. Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrakī, Kitāb Tahdhīb al-A'rār, F.38a. Note the contrast in the use of "fear" related to the wave with "fear" of Allah in al-Tha'labī's account, Zawāmir, op. cit., p. 92.

38. Abū 'Uthmān al-Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn, Cairo, 1313 A.H., 167.6.

birds in its abilities. The birds would only fly while men looked at them; when out of sight, they fell to the earth. This, of course, distinguished them from Allah's creative work.³⁹ 'Isā specialized, too, in healing two types of affliction which the physicians around him could not help: leprosy and blindness from birth. One story stands out of 'Isā's ministry to such as these.

It is related that 'Isā passed a man who was blind, leprous, lame, paralyzed on both sides, whose flesh was falling from elephantiasis, but who was saying, "Praise be to Allah who has kept me free from that with which He has afflicted many of His creatures!" Then 'Isā said, "O man what affliction do I see removed from you?" He replied, "O Spirit of Allah, I am better than he in whose heart Allah has not put the knowledge of Himself which He has put in my heart." He said to him, "You have spoken the truth, give me your hand." He gave him his hand, and behold! he became the most beautiful of men in face and the finest in figure, for Allah had removed from him what he was suffering from. So he accompanied 'Isā and worshiped with him.⁴⁰

There are many accounts of 'Isā's raising of the dead.⁴¹ One of the outstanding examples was his raising of Shem from the dead in order that he might relate to the disciples the story of Nūḥ.⁴² In line with this is the raising of Iṣḥāq's wife.⁴³ On one occasion, one of 'Isā's own disciples died,

39. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 83,84.

40. Al-Ghazālī, op. cit., 4.250.12.

41. Al-Ghazālī, Ayyuhā al-Walad, Cairo, 1905, 35.2.

42. Zwemer, op.cit., pp. 88,89.

43. Kamāl al-Dīn al-Damīrī, Kitāb Hayāt al-Hayawān, Cairo, 1292 A.H., 1.251.11.

They grieved bitterly for him and complained of that to Masīh. Then he stood over his grave and prayed, and Allah brought him back to life; and he had on his feet sandals of fire. 'Isā asked about that and he said, "By Allah, I was never disobedient, except that once I passed one who was wronged and did not help him, so I was shod with these sandals."⁴⁴

45

Al-Qushayrī tells of the raising of a carrier of wood. Al-Qurṭubī gives the tale in greater detail.

It is related that 'Isā passed a grave and kicked it with his foot and said, "O you who are in the grave, arise by the permission of Allah." Then a man arose from the grave and said, "O Spirit of Allah, what do you want from me? For I have been standing in judgment for seventy years till I heard the shout, 'Answer the Spirit of Allah.'" 'Isā said, "O you, you have committed many faults and sins, so what did you do?" He replied, "O Spirit of Allah, I was a seller of fuel who carried firewood on my head and ate what was allowable and gave alms." 'Isā said, "Praise be to Allah. A seller of fuel who carried firewood on his head and ate what was allowable and gave alms, and he has been standing in judgment for seventy years!" Then 'Isā asked him about what his Lord said to him in the judgment, and he said, "O Spirit of Allah, one of the rebukes of my Lord was that He said, 'Do you remember the day My servant hired you to carry a bundle of firewood for him, and you took a piece of wood from it and received a splinter from it, and threw it away from its place in the bundle out of your despite for Me, although you knew that I am Allah who looks at your work and your intention?'"⁴⁶

The purpose of these stories seems to be the underlining of the righteous judgment of Allah, a judgment that is not reserved merely for what

44. Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭuṣhī, Sirāj al-Mulūk, Cairo, 1289 A.H., 153.10.

45. Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya fī 'Ilm al-Taḡawwuf, Cairo, 1318 A.H., 65.9.

46. Shams al-Dīn al-Qurṭubī al-Sha'ra'nī, Mukhtaṣir Tadhkira bi Ahwāl al-Mawtā wa Ahwāl al-Ākhira, Cairo, 1308 A.H., 46.2.

men consider to be great issues of importance. The "dead" who is raised serves as a warning with regard to materialism and love for the world.

This is illustrated by the following incident.

It is related that 'Īsā passed by a skull and kicked it with his feet and said, "Speak, by the permission of Allah." It said, "O Spirit of Allah, I was a king at such and such a time. While I was sitting in my kingdom on my throne of state with my crown on my head and my troops and my suite around me, lo! the angel of death appeared to me. Then every limb of mine perished when he appeared, and my soul went out to him. So would that there had been abandonment with respect to those companies! And would that there had been solitude with respect to that society!"⁴⁷

E. The Descent of the Table

In connection with this event, al-Tha⁴⁸labī mentions the sincere nature of 'Īsā in his dealings with others. Of particular emphasis was 'Īsā's tendency never to laugh immoderately, and this characteristic has been brought out strongly in the traditions.

It is related concerning 'Īsā that he said, "Truly Allah hates him who laughs immoderately without reason, and him who walks about without an aim, and talk which comes between jesting and facetiousness."⁴⁹

John and Simon were among the disciples. John never sat in any company without weeping and making those around him weep. Once Simon said to John, "How often you laugh, as though you had ceased from your work!"

47. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, 4.334.2.

48. Zwemer, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-99.

49. *Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, Kitāb Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Cairo, 1312 A.H., 3.48.

John replied to him, "How often you weep, as though you had despaired of your Lord!" Then Allah revealed to the Masīh, "The more attractive of the two natures to Me is John's nature."⁵⁰

Since truth is present in both of these natures, however, the next story contrasts ʿIsā with John and leaves the listener dependent upon his own resources for determining the value of his own nature in the sight of Allah.

ʿIsā laughed much; John wept much. John said to ʿIsā, "You have become exceedingly secure against the subtle deceits, that you laugh so much." ʿIsā replied, "You have become exceedingly unmindful of the subtle and mysterious and wonderful graces and lovingkindness of Allah, that you weep so much." One of Allah's saints was present at this incident. He asked Allah, "Which of these two has the higher station?" Allah answered, "He who thinks better of Me."⁵¹

ʿIsā prayed for the Table and it descended from heaven into their presence. ʿIsā's challenge to his disciples was, "Let the best of you in good works uncover the dish and say grace and eat from it."⁵²

50. Rabbih, *op. cit.*, 3.327.14.

51. A.J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*, London, 1961, pp. 60,61.

52. On "good works" cf. Al-Suhrawardī, *op. cit.*, 1.277.11: "ʿIsā said to the disciples, 'Do not consider men's works as though you were lords, but consider your own works as though you were servants; for people are only of two kinds, tried and preserved. So have pity on those who are tried, and praise Allah for health.'" *Ibid.*, 1.277.13: "ʿIsā said to the disciples, 'It is astonishing how you work for this world, yet you receive provision in it without work; and how you do not work for the next world, yet you receive provision in it only with work.'" Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, 4.258.17: "ʿIsā was asked about the best work, and he said, 'Resignation to Allah and love for Him.'" *Ibid.*, 4.273.11: "The disciples said to ʿIsā, 'What is the best of good works?' He replied: 'That which is done to Allah and in which you seek the praise of no one else.'"

They very sensibly recognized ʿIsā himself to be the most worthy. He arose and prayed for quite awhile, and wept as he prayed. This inclination of ʿIsā toward prayer and fasting is strongly emphasized in the traditions, and may receive our attention at this point.

53

ʿIsā said, "Speak much to Allah and speak little to man."

He sometimes prayed in most unusual circumstances.

It is related in the record that ʿIsā passed a village; and in that village there was a hill, and in the hill there was great weeping and wailing. He said to the villagers, "What is this weeping and this wailing in this hill?" They replied, "O ʿIsā, from the time we settled in this village we have been hearing this weeping and this wailing in this hill." Then ʿIsā said, "O Lord, permit this hill to speak to me."⁵⁴

As to the length of his fasting, this story is illustrative.

It is related that ʿIsā remained for sixty days without eating, engaged in prayer; then he began to think of bread and behold a loaf of bread appeared between his hands; then he sat weeping because he had forgotten his prayers. And behold an old man came to him and ʿIsā said: "Allah bless you, O servant of Allah. Call upon Allah Most High, for I too was in a sad condition and I thought of bread until my prayer departed." Then the old man prayed: "O Allah, if You know any occasion when the thought of bread entered my head when I was praying do not forgive me!" Then he said to ʿIsā: "When anything is brought to me to eat I eat it without even thinking what it is."⁵⁵

The importance of fasting is further detailed.

ʿIsā gave the following injunction to one of his companions, "Fast from the world, and do not cease

53. Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb Hilya al-Awliyāʾ wa Tabaqāt al-Aḡfiyāʾ*, in his biography of Ribah al-Qaysī.

54. Al-Samarqandī, *op. cit.*, 216.19.

55. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyāʾ*, 3.61.6.

from your fast till you die, and be like him who treats his wound with medicine out of fear that it may become worse."⁵⁶

And when you fast, wash your face and anoint your head, that no one other than your Lord may know of it.⁵⁷

‘Isā said, "If a man come to you when he is fasting let him anoint his head and wipe his lips that men may not say he is fasting; and if he gives alms with his right hand, let not his left hand know; and if he prays, let him put a curtain over his door, for truly Allah divines his trouble even as He does our daily food."⁵⁸

The traditions stress the value of prayer, using ‘Isā as the authority⁵⁹ for these admonitions, in a wide variety of circumstances.

In reference to the Table, Allah revealed to ‘Isā, "Surely I⁶⁰ have prepared My Table and My food for the poor, not for the rich."

The rich did not take kindly to this revelation and began to doubt and to cause others to doubt, with such words as, "Do you really think a table came down from Heaven?" ‘Isā assured them, not of the descent

56. Ibid., 4.663.14.

57. Ibid., 4.242.11.

58. Ibid., 3.203.4.

59. Prayer for deliverance: from women, ibid., 3.139.11; from temptation, ibid., 4.221.10; from enemies, friends, afflictions, world, ibid., 1.222.13.

60. Ibid., 4.140.8: "‘Isā said, 'With difficulty will the rich men enter Paradise.'"

of the Table but of their perdition and subsequent deserving of Allah's
⁶¹
 punishment.

F. His "Death" and Raising Up

A mob of Jews charged 'Isā with sorcery and mistreated both him
⁶²
 and his mother. This made 'Isā turn to Allah in prayer and call for
 curses upon the Jews. As a result, these Jews were turned into swine,
 and the others were frightened and agreed that 'Isā should be killed.
 It is related that when 'Isā thought about his own death, his skin used
⁶³
 to drop blood. At such times he would say to his disciples,

O company of the disciples, pray to Allah that He
 may make easy for me this intoxication for I fear
 death in such a way that my fear of it has be-
 queathed it to me.⁶⁴

He urged this prayer to Allah for their own sakes as well:

O company of disciples, call upon Allah Most High
 that He may make light for you this terror, namely,
 death. For I fear death in such a fashion that I
 stand afraid of the same.⁶⁵

When the Jews came together to ask him certain questions, 'Isā told
 them frankly that Allah hated them. Their reaction was violent and they

61. Al-Samarqandī, op. cit., 220.11: "It is related concerning 'Isā, son of Maryam, that he said, 'There is nothing wonderful about one perishing in the way he perishes, but there is something wonderful about one being saved in the way he is saved.'"

62. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 100,101.

63. Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā, 4.325.12.

64. Ibid., 4.332.2.

65. Ibid., 4.324.

threatened to kill him. Gabriel was sent to help 'Isā and took him, placing him for safety upon the roof of a hut.⁶⁶ Allah lifted 'Isā from the roof to His presence. The soldier sent into the hut to kill him could not find him, and the soldier himself was made to resemble 'Isā so that the other Jews on seeing him thought he was 'Isā and killed him by crucifixion.⁶⁷

G. His Descent and Ascension

After tarrying seven days in heaven, 'Isā was sent by Allah back to earth to comfort Maryam Magdalene and, through her, to gather his disciples together and commission them to go throughout the earth calling men to the worship of Allah. Upon the completion of this service, Allah took him up, clothed him with feathers and covered him

66. Was the following conversation at such a time? Shams al-Dīn al-Sha'rānī, op. cit., 124.7: "The following is related on the authority of al-Sha'bī. Gabriel met 'Isā and 'Isā said to him, 'When is the Hour?' Then Gabriel trembled in his wings and said, 'He who is asked about it is no better informed than he who asks. It is burdensome in the heavens and the earth; it will only come suddenly.'"

67. There are many accounts of the crucifixion but they are all agreed as to 'Isā's being raised up to Allah without being crucified at the hands of the Jews, whether he was dead or alive at the time of his being raised. There is quite a lengthy account in a tract by the Brethren of Purity, Risā'il Ikhwān al-Safā, 4.116.9. Cf. Al-Jayālisī, op. cit., No. 2541, 2575 and Guillaume, op. cit., p. 272: "Jabarī, although he treats the subject very fully and gives a great number of traditions, does not seem to have known the story of a Jew who was crucified. Jabarī realizes constantly the confusion in the different contradicting statements current even in his time, and after venturing the above remark, says that Allah knows best how it was." Cf. Elder, op. cit., pp. 242-258.

with light. He flies with the angels around the throne; he is human and
 68
 angelic, earthly and heavenly.

Al-Tha'labī's account ends here, but the accounts by other tra-
 ditionists carry the story of 'Isā further, eschatologically. Abū
 Huraira says,

The apostle of Allah said: All the prophets are brethren. Although their mothers are different, their religion is one, and I am the nearest of all men to 'Isā, because there was no prophet between him and me. And the days will come when he will come down upon you and judge with a righteous judgment, for he will come down to my people; and when you see him you will know him, for he is a man neither tall nor short, between red and white, with dishevelled hair as if it rained from his head. And he will break the cross [69] and kill the swine, and take away the poll-tax; property will be plentiful, and he will grant peace, and fight for the religion of Islām until Allah shall destroy in his day the people of every other faith except Islām, and worship shall be Allah's alone.[70] And in his day Allah will destroy the anti-Masīh, who will be slain by his hand and those of his servants[71] and there will be safety in the land, so that the lion will herd with camels and the leopard with kine, and the wolves with the sheep; and little children shall play with serpents, and they will not harm them. Then 'Isā will tarry in the earth forty years, will marry a wife from the daughters of Ghassan and will have children. Then he will die in Medina, and be buried next to the grave of Omar Ibn Khitāb, and blessed be Abū

68. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 104,105.

69. Al-Bukhārī, 34.102; 46.31; 60.49; Muslim, 1.242-247; al-Tirmidhī, 31.54; Ibn Māja, 36.33; al-Jayālisī, No. 2297,2572; Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, 2.240,272,290ff.,336,394,400,411,437,482ff.,493ff.,538; 3.345,384.

70. On Isā's iḥram, hajj and ʿumra, cf. Muslim 15.216; Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, 2.240,272,290ff.,513,540.

71. On 'Isā's descent and the destruction of Dajjāl, cf. Muslim 52.34,110,116; al-Tirmidhī, 31.59,62; Ibn Māja, 36.33; al-Jayālisī, No. 1227,2504; Abū Dā'ūd, 36.14; Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, 2.166; 4.182,216ff.,390; 5.13.

Bakr and Omar, who will be raised in the resurrection between two prophets.[72]

73

Then, there is the Day of Resurrection :

Related by Anas: The Prophet of Allah said, "In the day of resurrection, Muslims will not be able to move, and they will be greatly distressed, and will say, 'Would to Allah that we had asked Him to create someone to intercede for us, that we might be taken from this place, and be delivered from tribulation and sorrow?' [sic] Then those men will go to Adam, and will say, 'Thou art the father of all men, Allah created thee with His hand, and made thee a dweller in Paradise, and ordered His angels to prostrate themselves before thee, and taught thee the names of all things. Ask grace for us we pray thee!' And Adam will say: 'I am not of that degree of eminence you suppose, for I committed a sin in eating of the tree which was forbidden. Go to Nūh, the Prophet, he was the first who was sent by Allah to the unbelievers on the face of the earth.' Then they will go to Nūh and ask for intercession, and he will say, 'I am not of that degree which you suppose.' And he will remember the sin which he committed in asking the Lord for the deliverance of his son, not knowing whether it was a right request or not; and he will say, 'Go to Ibrāhīm, who is the Friend of Allah.' Then they will go to Ibrāhīm, and he will say, 'I am not of that degree which ye suppose.' And he will remember the three occasions upon which he told lies in the world; and he will say, 'Go to Mūsā, who is the servant to whom Allah gave His law, and whom He allowed to converse with Him.' And Mūsā will say, 'I am not of that degree which ye suppose.' And he will

72. Cf. Herbert, "The Moslem Tradition of Jesus' Second Visit on Earth," *Hibbert Journal*, pp. 30-48, for a Turkish version.

73. Al-Bukhārī, *op. cit.*, 8.1; Muslim, *op. cit.*, 1.259; Abū Abd al-Rahmān al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, Cairo, 1312 A.H., 5.1; Ibn Hishām, *op. cit.*, 270. Cf. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, 3.141.1: "Then Allah revealed to him, 'Your abode is in the dwelling of My mercy. Truly I will give to you in marriage on the Day of Resurrection a hundred hūrīs whom I have created with My hand, and I will give a feast at your wedding for four thousand years, each day of which is like the duration of the present world, and I will command one to proclaim, "Where are those who were ascetics in this world? Visit the marriage of the ascetic in the world, 'Isā, son of Maryam.'""

remember the sin which he committed in slaying a man, and he will say, 'Go to 'Īsā, He is the servant of Allah, the apostle of Allah, the Spirit of Allah, and the Word of Allah.' Then they will go to 'Īsā, and he will say, 'Go to Muḥammad who is a servant, whose sins Allah has forgiven both first and last.' Then the Muslims will come to me, and I will ask permission to go into Allah's presence and intercede for them.⁷⁴

H. Isolated Incidents

It is not possible to locate in time certain occurrences in the life of 'Īsā; yet the inclusion of these is required for a more complete understanding and evaluation of the image of 'Īsā, seen in Muslim tradition.

On several occasions, it is reported, 'Īsā had encounters with Satan. On the reciting of the creed for his epoch,

It is said that the devil (may Allah curse him) appeared to 'Īsā and said, "Say there is no god but Allah." He replied: "The word is true but I will not repeat it after you."⁷⁵

Concerning 'Īsā's asceticism and surrender to Allah,

It is said that Iblīs appeared to 'Īsā and he saw things hanging on him colored with all kinds of dyes. Then he said to him, "What are these hanging things?" He replied, "These are the desires of the children of men." Then he asked, "Is there anything of mine among them?" He replied, "You have often eaten your fill and we have made you too heavy for prayer and for glorifying Allah." He asked, "Is there anything else?" He replied, "No." He said, "I swear to Allah that I will never fill

74. Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-260. Cf. *Mishkāt*, 23.12.

75. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, 3.23.19.

my belly with food." Iblīs said, "And I swear to Allah that I will never advise a Muslim."⁷⁶

‘Īsā attained to the use of a stone for his pillow while sleeping; but the devil came to him and said, "Have you not renounced this world for the next?" He said, "Yes, but what has happened?" Then he said, "Your use of this stone as a pillow means that you are being comfortable in the world; so why do you not put your head on the ground?" Then ‘Īsā threw away the stone and put his head on the ground.⁷⁷

It is related that ‘Īsā went out one day and met Iblīs with honey in one hand and ashes in the other; so he said, "What are you doing, O enemy of Allah, with this honey and ashes?" He replied, "As regards the honey, I put it on the lips of slanderers that they may become eloquent from it; and as regards the ashes, I put them on the face of orphans that men may hate them."⁷⁸

One incident serves to illustrate ‘Īsā's tendency to emphasize the positive on occasion.

It is related that ‘Īsā with his disciples once passed the carcass of a dog. The disciples said, "How noisome is the smell of this dog." ‘Īsā said, "How beautiful is the shine of his white teeth," as if he wanted to rebuke them for abusing the dog and to warn them not to mention anything of what Allah has created except at its best.⁷⁹

This practice was in harmony with his principle,

Some people said to ‘Īsā, "Direct us to some work by which we shall enter Paradise." He said, "Never say

76. Al-Ḥusaynī, *op. cit.*, 7.445.9.

77. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, 4.9.14. Cf. *ibid.*, 3.26, where ‘Īsā throws the stone at Iblīs.

78. Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb Mukāshafa al-Qulūb*, Cairo, 1300 A.H., 41.13.

79. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, 3.100.9. Cf. Nizāmī, *Storehouse of Secrets*, where this story is the first of his five epics. Cf. Arberry, *Aspects*, p. 315.

anything." They said, "We are not able to do that."
So he said, "Then never say anything but what is good."⁸⁰

There are a few references in the traditions indicative of moral weakness on 'Isā's part. Anger is attributed to him.

Yaḥyā said to 'Isā, "Do not be angry." 'Isā replied, "I am not able to cease from anger altogether for I am human." Then Yaḥyā said, "Do not desire property." 'Isā replied, "That is possible."⁸¹

And it is said that there is written in the Injīl, "O son of man, remember Me when you are angry and I shall remember you when I am angry; and be pleased with My help to you for My help to you is better than your help to yourself."⁸²

Yet it is reported that 'Isā realized the necessity to conquer any wrathful spirit:

'Isā was asked, "Spirit of Allah, what is the greatest and most difficult thing in this world and the next?" He replied, "The wrath of Allah." They asked, "And what shall save a man from that?" He answered, "That you master your own wrath and suppress your rage."⁸³

And concerning lustful thought,

Yaḥyā said to 'Isā: "Do not look keenly at what is not yours and your desire will not sin with what your glance has retained. And if you are able not to look at the robe of a woman who is not permitted to you, remember you are only able to do that by the permission of Allah."⁸⁴

80. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, 3.80.6.

81. *Ibid.*, 3.114.16.

82. Al-Samarqandī, *op. cit.*, 73.10.

83. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*, p. 239.

84. 'Ubayd al-Darīr, *op. cit.*, 195.5. Cf. Al-Ghazālī, *Mukāshafa*, 23.2.

This latter tradition recalls a more concrete incident reported:

They saw him coming out of a prostitute's house, then someone said to him, "O Spirit of Allah, what are you doing with this woman?" He replied, "The doctor comes only to the sick."⁸⁵

A conversion is reported below but we are not given the name of the new disciple:

It is related that a robber had been committing highway robbery among the Children of Israel for forty years. 'Isā passed by followed by a pious man of the Children of Israel who was one of the disciples. Then the robber said to himself, "This is the prophet of Allah who is passing with his disciple beside him; if I went down, I should make a third with them." So he went down and began to approach the disciple, but he was despising himself out of respect for the disciple, and saying to himself, "The like of me cannot walk beside this pious man." The disciple noticed him and said to himself, "This man is walking beside me." So he drew himself together and went to 'Isā and walked beside him, and the robber remained behind him. Then Allah revealed to 'Isā, "Tell them to begin their works afresh, for I have nullified his good works because of his self-conceit; and as regards the other, I have nullified his evil deeds because he has despised himself." So 'Isā informed them about that, and joined the robber to himself in his wandering and made him one of his disciples.⁸⁶

The humility and poverty-stricken condition by which 'Isā lived has always been noted in Islamic tradition.

It is related concerning 'Isā that he sat in the shade of a wall of a certain man, who saw him and made him get up, but he replied, "You have not made me arise, but truly Allah made me arise; He does not wish me to delight in the shade by day."⁸⁷

85. Al-Jāhiz, op. cit., 2.91.9.

86. Al-Ghazālī, Ihya, 4.110.18. Cf. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, op. cit. 2.383.

87. Al-Ghazālī, Ihya, 4.163.9.

‘Īsā is presented as being too anxious for meditation upon Allah to allow himself to become negligent through the comforts of this world. Someone said to ‘Īsā, "Why do you not buy an ass to ride?" Then he replied, "I am too dear to Allah for Him to allow me to be occupied with an ass to the neglect of Himself."⁸⁸ This is in keeping with ‘Īsā's attitude toward poverty in general:

‘Īsā said, "Truly I have two friends; he who loves them loves me, and he who hates them hates me: Poverty and Distress."⁸⁹

Consider ‘Īsā al-Masīh, for it is related of him that he owned nothing except one garment of wool which he wore for twenty years and that he took nothing with him on all his wanderings except a cruse and a rosary and a comb. One day he saw a man drinking from a stream with his hands, so he threw away the cruse and did not use it again. He saw another man combing his beard with his fingers so he threw away his comb and did not use it again.⁹⁰

Yet ‘Īsā was convinced that no one existed who was richer than he!

If you wish you may follow him who was the Spirit and the Word, ‘Īsā, son of Maryam, for he used to say, "My garment is fear, my outer garment is wool, my fire in winter is the rays of the sun, my lamp is the moon, my riding animal is my feet, and my food and fruit are what the earth brings forth. At night I have nothing, yet there is no one on earth richer than I."⁹¹

88. Ibid., 4.236.4.

89. Al-Ghazālī, Mukhtasir Ihyā ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, Cairo, 1317 A.H., 246.16.

90. Ibid., 4.167.9. Cf. another account, ibid., 3.140.10.

91. Ibid., 3.146.12 and 4.146.

‘Isā found no pleasure in the world and was free from any love for it; in fact, he could triumphantly claim to have turned the world upside down.

Allah revealed to ‘Isā, "When I consider the secret thoughts of a worshiper and do not find in him love of this world or of the next, I fill him with love of Me and take him under My care."⁹²

‘Isā said, "Truly I do not love a fixed dwelling place and I dislike the pleasure of the world."⁹³

The Masīh said to the disciples, "I am he who has turned the world upside down; so I have no wife to suffer death and no house to be demolished."⁹⁴

‘Isā made use of simile and metaphor in speaking to the disciples or to the crowds. He likened the relationship of the world to the here-⁹⁵ after, to the relationship of the East to the West. Its relationship to the hereafter is also compared to a husband's relationship to his two⁹⁶ wives. ‘Isā addresses the world as "swine."⁹⁷ He further sees the⁹⁸ world in the form of an old hag, having countless husbands. Being

92. Ibid., 4.258.16.

93. Ibid., 4.140.4.

94. Rabbih, op. cit., 1.294.2. Cf. al-Ḥusaynī, op. cit., 8.85; 10.223.7.

95. Al-‘Arabī, op. cit., 4.662.5. Cf. al-Kharkūshī, op. cit., f.257.b.

96. Al-‘Arabī, loc. cit.

97. Al-Makkī, op. cit., 1.244.19.

98. Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā, 3.148.15.

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totally unstable, the world is not safe for building upon. "Therefore
 he who seeks the world is like he who drinks salt water; the more he
 drinks, the more he thirsts."¹⁰⁰

Good works are likened to chains on the neck until the resurrec-
¹⁰¹tion, and to a pregnant adulteress,¹⁰² while those who teach good
 works but do not do them are likened to those wearing monks' clothes but
 possessing wolves' hearts!¹⁰³ Teachers of evil are as stone,¹⁰⁴ and
 some discrimination is called for in teaching wisdom, otherwise such
 teaching is the "hanging of pearls on swine."¹⁰⁵ Laughter without
 reason and sleeping in the morning without any previous night vigil is
 as salt without savor.¹⁰⁶ Gossiping over sin is likened to stripping a
 brother of his garment.¹⁰⁷ Unuseful sciences are compared to unfruitful
¹⁰⁸trees.

99. Ibid., 3.149.11.

100. Ibid., 3.149.5.

101. Al-Jurṭuṣhī, op. cit., 25.13.

102. Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā, 1.48.15.

103. Al-Ḥusaynī, op. cit., 1.229.4. Cf. Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā,
 3.247.1.

104. Ibid., 1.45.14.

105. Ibid., 1.43.4.

106. Al-Samarqandī, op. cit., 70.12.

107. Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā, 2.124.1.

108. Ibid., 1.24.5.

There are four incidents reported by tradition which are parabolic in form and evidently intended to teach by illustration. The first is that of the emaciated ones.

It is related that 'Īsā passed three people whose bodies were wasted and who were pale and said, "What has brought on you that which I see?" They replied, "Fear of Hell." He said, "It is Allah's duty to render secure him who fears." Afterwards he passed from them and came to other three, and lo! they were in greater emaciation and paleness, so he said, "What has brought on you that which I see?" They replied, "Desire of Paradise." He said, "It is Allah's duty to give you what you hope for." After that he passed from them and came to other three, and lo! they were in still greater emaciation and paleness as though mirrors of light were over their faces, so he said, "What has brought on you that which I see?" They replied, "We love Allah." He said, "You are those who are nearest to Allah; you are those who are nearest to Allah."¹⁰⁹

The second is that of the blind man with a lamp.

It is quoted from 'Īsā, son of Maryam, "What is the use of a blind man carrying a lamp while others get light from it? And what is the use of a dark house having a lamp on its roof? And what is the use of your speaking with wisdom and not acting with it?"¹¹⁰

The third is a very brief parabolic expression relating to worship:

"The Masīḥ said, 'O company of the disciples, how many lamps has the wind put out, and how many worshipers has self-conceit spoiled!'"¹¹¹

The fertility symbolism of the fourth one makes it interesting.

109. Ibid., 4.210.6.

110. Al-Samarqandī, op. cit., 156.2.

111. Al-Ghazālī, Minhāj al-Ābidīn ilā Janna Rabb al-Ālamīn, Cairo, 1313 A.H., 63.14.

This is the meaning of the Masīh, son of Maryam, when he had water in his right hand and bread in his left hand, "This is my father and this is my mother." He made the water father, and he made the food mother, because the water of the earth is in the place of the semen with relation to the woman. This brings forth from this, and this becomes pregnant from this."¹¹²

Al-Ghazālī records four beatitudes pronounced by ʿIsā, while

Al-Ḥusaynī records two:

ʿIsā said, "Blessed are those who humble themselves in this world, for they shall be the possessors of thrones on the day of judgment. Blessed are those who make peace between men in this world, for they shall inherit Paradise on the day of resurrection. Blessed are they who are poor in this world, for they shall behold Allah Most High on the day of resurrection."¹¹³

ʿIsā said, "Blessed is he to whom Allah has taught his book; he will not die a proud oppressor."¹¹⁴

ʿIsā said, "Blessed is the eye which sleeps and does not regard transgression but is wide awake for that which is not sinful."¹¹⁵

It is related on the authority of Sālim, son of Abū al-Ja d, that ʿIsā said, "Blessed is he who weeps for his sin, and who stores away his tongue, and whose house contains him."¹¹⁶

112. Ibn Sida al-Mursī, Kitāb al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ fī al-Luḡha, Cairo, 1321 A.H., 13.173.1.

113. Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā, 3.237.6.

114. Ibid., 3.235.21.

115. Ibid., 4.260.1.

116. Al-Ḥusaynī, op. cit., 7.456.3.

‘Isā said, "Blessed are the children of the believer and how they are preserved after him!"¹¹⁷

Further instances of prayer on the part of ‘Isā can be usefully cited. He prayed for physical healing¹¹⁸ and for the raising of a dead person¹¹⁹; he prays for some that they might experience an increase of love for Allah¹²⁰; prayer is offered for rain.¹²¹ He expresses his poverty in prayer¹²² and prays with the purpose of changing the intentions of men.¹²³

In closing this presentation of the ‘Isā of tradition, two prophetic statements are reported by tradition:

O ‘Isā, I am sending a community after you. I shall give them to thank and praise, and strengthen them in patience and reckoning. There will be no vision or knowledge. He said, "O Lord, How will that be their portion without dream or knowledge?" He replied, "I will give to them of My vision."¹²⁴

The disciples said to ‘Isā, "Behold this mosque, how beautiful it is." He replied, "O my nation! O my nation! In truth I say unto you, Allah will not

117. Ibid., 8.440.7.

118. Al-Kharkūshī, op. cit., F.273.a.

119. Al-Jurṭushī, op. cit., 15.7.

120. Al-Ghazālī, Mukāshāfa, 20.3. Cf. Ibn al-‘Arīf, Kitāb Mahāsin al-Majālis, F.49.v.

121. Abū Madyan al-Hureyfiṣh, Kitāb al-Rawd al-Fā’iq fī al-Mawā’iz wa al-Raqā’iq, Cairo, 1328 A.H., 183.7.

122. Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā, 1.222.13.

123. Ibid., 4.326.6.

124. Kitāb al-Jumal, F.49.v.

suffer a stone to remain upon a stone in it, but He will destroy it because of the sins of its people. Truly Allah does not care for gold and silver nor does He care for these stones at which you marvel; but the things which Allah loves most are pure hearts, with them Allah can build up the earth, and if they are not good, they are wasted."¹²⁵

Field is correct in his summarizing of tradition's 'Īsā.

...It will be seen that the Christ of post-Koranic tradition is far more life-like than the Christ of the Koran. The latter is a mere lay-figure, bedecked with honorific titles indeed, such as the "Spirit of God and a Word proceeding from Him," and working miracles, but displaying no character. In the post-Koranic writers, on the other hand, we have His sinlessness, His return to judgment, His humility, His unworldliness, His sufferings, His doctrine of the New Birth....¹²⁶

The distinction drawn above is perceptive. 'Īsā acquires personality and character in the traditions, as we have seen. While this presentation of 'Īsā has not been exhaustive, or inclusive of all extant traditions, it has given a complete picture of this personage as seen in the early centuries of Islām. Some of that picture is derived from the application of creative imagination to Quranic texts; thus the nature and rank of the 'Īsā of the Qur'ān have been discovered for us with more insightful appreciation.

125. Al-Ghazālī, Ihyā, 3.288.3.

126. C.H.A. Field, "Christ in Mohammedan Tradition," Muslim World, Vol. I, 1911, p. 73.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

For many centuries Christianity was the discipline of Arab consciousness, the groundwork of Arab spirituality. To a significant measure it still is. The Arab spirit fed itself and grew on the realm of value that Jesus laid bare before it, until it became ready to face Divinity once more and, through the person of the Prophet Muhammad, to complete its revolution of the human ethos. For the coming contact with God through the Prophet Muhammad was not to repudiate one with the revelations hitherto made from Adam to Jesus. Nor was it to reduce their significance for man's salvation. It is not consistent with God's nature, nor becoming of His mercy, to change His mind and alter today that which He had commanded yesterday. What Jesus, like Abraham and Moses, had brought was true and the truth is one; what he brought was real and the reality of the real is unchangeable. Value never stops to be a value.¹

" We have been warned that differences between religious traditions should not be interpreted too easily as differing answers to the same questions. W.C. Smith may well be correct in holding that "rather their [the religions] distinctiveness lies in considerable part in a tendency to ask different questions."² In respect to our present investigation, the effect of this approach in which Islām asks different questions about 'Īsā than some other religion asks, is to lead us to expect not a deliberate refutation of the position taken by that other religion, but a totally different presentation of 'Īsā's person. There-

1. Farūqī, op. cit., p. 222.

2. James Kritzeck and Bayly Winder, The World of Islam, London, 1960, an essay by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, p. 49.

fore, we dare not simply group references to 'Īsā "as far as possible in the order of the Gospel history," as suggested by Zwemer,³ and we are indeed interested in the chronology of the suras inasmuch as we may observe the expanding dimension of 'Īsā's character and work more accurately with the more accurate chronology. We have this in mind when we propose studying the person of 'Īsā "as the Quran itself represents him⁴ him." This does not mean that we claim that a theologically or historically complete account of 'Īsā is given in the Qur'ān. It does mean, however, that we are not thinking of the Qur'ān as adopting an apologetic point of view every time it states something about 'Īsā in what appears to be a negative manner. In this, we disagree with some⁵ whose work in general is free from this attitude.

3. Zwemer, op. cit., p. 43.

4. Michaud, op. cit., p. 7.

5. Youkim Moubarac, L'Islam, Casterman, 1962, p. 62: "Mais nous ne pouvons clore ce paragraphe sans mentionner parmi les grandes figures prophétiques proposées par le Coran, celle qui est peut-être la plus attrayante malgré les négations qui la corroborent, la plus attachante même, la figure de Jésus, fils de Marie. Le problème de Jésus qui est posé à tout homme se pose réellement dans le Coran et par lui à toutes les générations musulmanes." Gibb, Mohammedanism, London, 1954, p.59: "In the story of Jesus, which is found in a Meccan and in a Medinan version, particular stress is laid on the Virgin Birth, his miracles, and the denial of his divinity or claim to divinity. The crucifixion is rejected as a Jewish fable, another in his semblance having been crucified in his stead." Abd-El-Jalil, op. cit., p. 194: "La physionomie du Christ apparaît, à travers les textes du Coran, comme la plus riche et la plus cohérente de toutes celles des 'messagers' que Dieu a envoyé aux hommes. Cependant les traits si étonnants et si divers qui présentent le Christ comme l'Être le plus privilégié du Coran, ne se fondent pas dans une harmonie telle qu'elle puisse leur conférer, dans ce livre, toute leur signification." Jomier, Bible et Coran, p. 103: "C'est que la personne de Jésus est présentée sous un double aspect

A. The Birth Passages and the Spirit

Three times, 'Isā is designated as a "sign,"⁶ and this designation is usually related to the manner of his birth.⁷ The sign in this case indicates at the same time a miracle; it is the miracle, in fact, which constitutes the sign and is illustrative of it. Miracles have been a part of Muslim faith from the earliest times of Islām.⁸ The Fiqh Akbar II does not give a definition of the term used for sign, āya; Taftazānī explains it by "facts that infringe upon the customary course of things."⁹ Whenever Allah changes His habitual manner in the continuous re-creating of time and space, man and the world, He gives a proof of the vocation of one of His prophets or apostles, and that momentary change¹⁰ constitutes the sign or miracle.

dans le Coran. D'une part, il est parlé d'elle avec un grand respect et sa sainteté est suggérée par des phrases très nettes; mais, d'autre part, le Coran l'évoque également dans un contexte apologétique lorsqu'il veut montrer que Jésus est une pure créature."

6. The references are S.19.21; 23.50/52; 21.91. 'Isā performed miracles as signs, 3.49/43.

7. As in Baydāwī, 1.578.26 and 2.7.9,10; Jabarī, 18.17.19-21; 17.60.29,30; and Rāzī, 6.152.17,18; 6.227.25-33.

8. See A.J. Wensinck, The Muslim Creed; Its Genesis and Historical Development, London, 1965, Fiqh Akbar I, Art.8; Fiqh Akbar II, Art.16; Fiqh Akbar III, Art.22; Aqīda, Art.23.

9. Ibid., p. 224, n.1.

10. Ibid., pp. 224-227, for a good discussion on miracles.

The birth of 'Īsā is a sign, āya, since he is born without a human father.¹¹ Whether the agency be spirit, angel or angelic spirit,¹² the customary order has been interrupted and a sign occurs. There are two major "birth passages": Mecca, S.19.16-23,29/30-33/34; Medina, 3.42/37-47/42,59/52.¹³

The outstanding characters in these two accounts are "Our spirit,"¹⁴ the "angels,"¹⁵ Maryam and 'Īsā. As Masson observes, "The Quran makes no allusion to the mother of the Messiah, outside of the texts regarding the conception, birth, childhood and youth of her son."¹⁶ Apart from Maryam, no woman is designated by name in the Qur'ān.¹⁷ Western orientalist have found "confusion" in the Qur'ān's designation of Maryam as the daughter of 'Imrān, and many Christian polemicists (controversialists) have emphasized this point to show the

11. While āya and mu'jiza both have reference to sign or miracle, the latter has the inherent quality of overwhelming anyone who dares to doubt.

12. The Old Testament condemned to death Hebrew maidens who had intercourse with animals; it had nothing to say about the same relationship with angels, to which event some theologians believe Genesis 6.2 refers. Bayḍāwī refers to angels intermarrying with humans.

13. Cf. infra, Appendix C.

14. S.19.17.

15. S.3.42/37,45/40.

16. Denise Masson, Le Coran et la révélation judéo-chrétienne, Paris, 1958, p. 319: "Le Coran ne fait aucune allusion à la mère du Messie, en dehors des textes concernant la conception, la naissance, l'enfance et la jeunesse de son fils."

17. Jomier, Bible et Coran, p. 70: "Notez que, sauf Marie mère de Jésus, aucune femme n'est désignée par son nom dans le Coran."

"unreliability" of the Qur'ān. Snouck Hurgronje's views are typical of those held by these scholars.¹⁸

In the emigration to Abyssinia (613 A.D.),

The Muslim refugees recited parts of the Koran which praise Christ and the Virgin Mary. It is said that the Negus and bishops thought their belief to be derived from the same sources as those of Christianity.¹⁹

The Medinan passage does indeed extol the virtue and selection of Maryam²⁰

and Ledit sees here "something resembling her Immaculate Conception, in the oriental Christianity of the 7th century."²¹ The name of

Maryam is sometimes given to Muslims, though rarely in Egypt where parents are fearful of a name so much in current usage among Christians.²² Fatima, the beloved daughter of Muhammad, is often associated

18. Hurgronje, *op. cit.*, p. 37: "Confusions between Miryam, the sister of Moses, and Mary, the mother of Jesus... might be put down to misconceptions of Mohammed himself, who could not all at once master the strange material." Michaud adds this note, *op. cit.*, p. 17: "Les commentateurs musulmans expliquent que Marie, mère de Jésus, était fille d'un autre 'Imrān que le père de Moïse et d'Aaron, ou bien que 'sœur d'Aaron' signifie 'descendante, parente d'Aaron'."

19. 'Abd-al-Rahmān 'Azzām, The Eternal Message of Muhammad, New York, 1964, p. 15. The reference is to S.19 and taken from Ibn Ishāq; see Guillaume's translation, p. 152.

20. See S.3.42/37, where Maryam is said to be "chosen, purified, chosen above all the women of the world."

21. Ledit, *op. cit.*, p. 146: "Mais il y a plus que la Virginité de Notre-Dame en Islam; on y rencontre encore l'affirmation de l'absolue pureté de l'âme de Marie, quelque chose qui ressemblerait, dans les chrétientés orientales du VII^e siècle, à son Immaculée Conception, car Dieu pour donner Jésus au monde 'a choisi, purifié et élu Marie entre toutes les femmes de l'univers'."

22. Jomier, Introduction à l'Islam Actuel, p. 210: "Le nom de Marie est parfois donné à des musulmans, très rarement en Egypte où les parents craindraient que leurs filles ne portent un nom courant chez les chrétiens."

with Maryam in Iranian Islām through the sorrows shared by the two

23

women." "Fatima was one of four noble ladies, 'Perfect in faith,' who

have blessed humanity; the others being Asia, the wife of Pharaoh; Mar-

24

yam, the mother of Jesus; and Khadijah, the wife of Muhammad." We

conclude that Maryam, the mother of 'Īsā has a very great place in the

thinking of Islām and, particularly in the Medinan passage, laudable

epithets are applied to her. The fact remains, as has been pointed out

above, that Maryam's importance stems only from her association with

'Īsā.

There are comparable and contrasting elements in these two birth passages. "Our spirit" alone appears to Maryam in the Meccan text, to bestow a son who shall have the book and be a prophet, all by Allah's decree. In the Medinan version, "angels" are seen praising Maryam, but her response is to one person who replies to her, with the angels no longer significant. Maryam receives the tidings of a word from Allah, who shall have the book and be an apostle, again all by divine decree with the addition of the divine fiat, "Be!" The angels praise Maryam

23. Moubareac, op. cit., pp. 166,167,168,169: "Mais il est une figure que des musulmans vèvèrent avec prédilection, c'est la Vierge Marie. Il y aurait plus d'une chose à dire sur les résonnances sociales que doit revêtir en Islam la considération de Marie. Des musulmans humbles et pieux ont de tout temps prié Marie dans les sanctuaires de l'Orient chrétien. Aussi, est-ce dans cette perspective de la Vierge à Ephèse que nous situerons cette simple évocation finale sur le nom de Fatima. Ce nom désigne, on le sait, la fille très aimée de Mahomet. Elle est en grande vénération en Islam et, en particulier, dans l'Islam iranien, son culte y est associé avec celui de Marie, sous le signe de ses douleurs."

24. Hollister, op. cit., p. 16.

in that she is chosen, purified and chosen above all the women of the universe. It is the unnamed person to whom she speaks and who responds to her that we would equate with the "spirit" of the Meccan passage.²⁵

Another text having an important relevance to this event is S.4.171/169:

Oh People of Scripture, do not go beyond propriety in your religion! Only say the truth about Allah! Mesīh, 'Īsā, Son of Maryam, was only the apostle of Allah and His word which He cast into Maryam and a spirit from Him....

This text further elucidates the "bestowing" of 19.19. This bestowing was a "casting" into Maryam.²⁶ This act on the part of the spirit toward Maryam is further spoken of as an "inbreathing" of the spirit himself, in 21.91 and 66.12. These three terms, "bestow," "cast," and "inbreathed," are synonymous in their use in these texts relative to the creation of 'Īsā within Maryam.²⁷

A careful consideration of these terms indicates that the inbreathing is an extension of the spirit himself into Maryam; i.e., in some miraculous way, the spirit passed into Maryam by means of his breathing into her. Logically, that breath of the spirit would have to be a part of the spirit; Allah takes the responsibility for the action since it is by His decree. Note that following the breathing, there is

25. S.3.47/42.

26. Arberry translates this passage, "His Word which he committed to Mary...." Blachère: "jeté."

27. Bayḍāwī comments on S.21.91: "We brought to life 'Īsā in her belly by the breathing of our spirit which is by Our command alone, or in respect to Our spirit, Gabriel."

nothing in the record to show that a spirit remains there at Maryam's side. That breathing marked the end of the interview and marked the vital aspect, the life-giving means, in respect to the conception of 'Īsā.

Following the birth itself, we read in S.19.24, "And he called to her from below her...." The meaning of this has been disputed with respect to the subject and the reading is uncertain.²⁸ Some have taken it to be an angelic voice, as in the Hagar story, probably the angel Gabriel, standing at the foot of the hill, while others have thought it to be the infant 'Īsā. What interests us here is the spirit and his relation to 'Īsā during his lifetime in the world.

Here is a survey of data regarding the appearances (and disappearances) of the spirit and 'Īsā:

1. A spirit transmits Scripture. 29
2. Our spirit appears to Maryam. 30
3. Maryam is inbreathed of the spirit. 31
4. 'Īsā is identified as a spirit. 32

28. Ṭabarī states that the subject may be either Gabriel or 'Īsā, 16.45.10-14. Rāzī says that if the verb is read with a fatha, the subject is 'Īsā; if read with a kasra, it is the angel, 5.548.6ff.

29. Bayḍawī agreeing with most commentators on S.3.47/42, says that this is Gabriel.

30. That is, in the Meccan version. In the Medinan story, "angels" appeared, but even here Maryam addresses and has conversation with one individual. Cf. S.3.42/37 and 3.47/42.

31. S.21.91 and 66.12.

32. S.4.171/169.

5. Following the inbreathing, the spirit is no longer mentioned as being present.

33

6. 'Īsā is later strengthened by the spirit of holiness.

It is proper that we should observe the form in which these manifestations take place:

1. A spirit appears in corporal form to Maryam.
2. A spirit is incarnated, and the spirit in corporal form is no longer present.
3. This incarnated spirit from Allah is strengthened with the spirit of holiness.

The order of appearances in these several forms suggests the potential identity of the spirit with 'Īsā, the inbreathing being the means of transition from the one state to the other. Yūsuf 'Alī makes this reflection on the birth of 'Īsā:

If it were said that the birth of Jesus without a father sets him above the other prophets, the creation of angels without either father or mother would set them still higher, especially as angels do not eat and drink and are not subject to physical laws. But angels are not higher.³⁴

The question of 'Īsā's potential identity with the spirit is of great significance. The fact that most commentators equate the spirit with the angel Gabriel makes it rather difficult to suggest another interpretation which would seek to link the spirit and 'Īsā. However, we respond to Yūsuf 'Alī's comments in the following manner:

33. S.2.87/81,253/254; 5.110/109.

34. Yūsuf 'Alī, op. cit., p. 1337, n.4661.

1. Perhaps the birth of 'Isā was not meant to mark him out as "above" but different from other prophets and apostles, with the possible exception of Adam.³⁵

2. It is generally agreed that 'Isā's miracles surpassed in power those of other apostles and prophets. His miracles, or evidentiary proofs, were clearly "out of the customary order."³⁶

3. If 'Isā were a kind of spirit-being, perhaps an angel, it is understandable that he would not discuss this lest he would prejudice the outcome of his mission and ministry.³⁷

B. Some Reflections on "Spirit" in the Qur'ān

The occurrence of the word, rūh, is evenly distributed throughout the three Meccan periods and Medina. O'Shaughnessy states, "To trace the development of spirit in the Koran requires that each occurrence of the word be considered in the circumstances of time and place

35. See S.3.59/52, "The likeness of 'Isā is the likeness of Adam."

36. The apostles were commanded to eat, S.23.51/53; therefore, 'Isā's eating of food is no proof of his humanity. Could there be some connection with the preceding verse, 50/52? There, provision is mentioned for both Maryam and 'Isā. Maryam's provision in the temple prior to her conception of 'Isā was a necessary provision. 'Isā's eating may be attributed to his obedience.

37. Just as he does not refer to his having been virgin born. S.19.32/33 may not even be considered an indirect reference to his birth.

38. A I: S.78.38; 97.4; 70.4; A II: 26.193; 15.29; 19.17; 38.72; 21.91; A III: 32.9/8; 17.85/87; 16.2,102/104; 40.15; 42.52; Medina: 2.87/81,253/254; 4.171/169; 58.22; 66.12; 5.110/109.

in which the Prophet used it." ³⁹ I agree with that if we are speaking about the circumstances of time and place which are indicated in the Qur'ān itself. ⁴⁰ The word, rūh, spirit, simply means in classical usage, "breath," "wind," "life-breath." ⁴¹ We can reasonably expect, as in any writing, to find some distinctions with regard to the use of this word in the Qur'ān.

In the earliest verses where "spirit" occurs, there are two factors outstanding: (1) rūh is associated with the angels; (2) rūh is represented as involved in their activity. ⁴² Here, I agree with O'Shaughnessy that "the spirit is a definite person and plays, with the angels, an active part, 'standing,' 'descending,' and 'ascending.'" ⁴³

³⁹ 39. O'Shaughnessy, The Development of the Meaning of Spirit in the Koran, p. 12.

⁴⁰ O'Shaughnessy assumes from the outset of his study that (1) there is such a development; (2) there is a "changing use" of the word, rūh, spirit; (3) the Qur'ān's use of the word derives from sources outside the Qur'ān. It is possible to adopt an entirely different set of assumptions: (1) an increasing amount of information is given, not from development but from enlarged capacity of listeners; (2) the word's use does not change, it has always possessed inherently the increased meaning; (3) understanding of the word can be gained from its Quranic use alone.

⁴¹ Edward William Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, London, 1863, Book 1, Part 3, p. 1180.

⁴² S.78.38; 97.4; 70.4.

⁴³ O'Shaughnessy, The Development..., p. 17: "In all three texts the spirit is a definite person and plays, with the angels, an active part, 'standing,' 'descending,' and 'ascending.' In Koran 16.2, the spirit is also definite and is associated with the angels, but his role there is a passive one, since he is 'sent down,' and there is no evidence from the context, except perhaps the association with angels, that

We should keep in mind that although it has been traditional for us to think in terms of only one identified spirit, the possibility must exist of more than one belonging to this class of being. The fact of the spirit descending would involve perhaps some activity on earth as in contrast to activity carried on in the heavens. Moreover, if there exists a class of spirits, or spirit-beings, the class is distinct from the angels in these earliest verses.

44

In S.26.193, we have a reference to "the faithful spirit." This is in the Middle Meccan period and is certainly presented differently than the three previous references and the ones immediately following, in that it is qualified as "faithful." Does it mean that the

45

the spirit is there a personal being. On the contrary, the introduction of the phrase, min amrihi, argues there for the impersonal nature of the spirit."

44. Relating to the personal nature of the spirit, we note that O'Shaughnessy bases his distinguishing the texts, S.78.38; 97.4; and 70.4, from 16.2, on two things: (1) a passive verb form instead of an active; (2) a phrase indicating an order. If this argues for an impersonal being or nature, note that each of the first three texts contains the same passive element: 78.38, where only those may speak to whom permission is given; 97.4, where descent may be undertaken only by permission, and in addition, to the order (amr); 70.4, with a very vague rising up in infinite time (50,000 years). Of these, 97.4 is almost parallel to 16.2.

45. O'Shaughnessy, The Development..., p. 20: "It is clear that Koran 26.193, is dissociated in sense and position both from the companion spirit of the angels in the three texts preceding and from the impersonal creative breath of the rūh verse that follow." O'Shaughnessy is guilty of treating the entire Qur'ān as one context. He would consider any additional information given as a change or evolution of thought. If such information is less "developing" in scope, he insists on re-dating the sura of the Qur'ān so found guilty. This is a dangerous manipulation and an impossible one if we are to see Islām from within the community's perspective of the Qur'ān.

spirit is faithful to Allah? It can probably be assumed that such faithfulness would exhibit itself in obedience to Allah's commands. Following this expression, we have five references in which the word "spirit" is preceded by a possessive adjective.⁴⁶ In all but S.19.17, the possessive is preceded by min,⁴⁷ from or of. It is agreed by most⁴⁸ that the two possible interpretations of min which are relevant are partitive sense and origin. In regard to the instances of inbreathing, the understanding of min will determine whether we shall consider the rūh personal.⁴⁸ (I shall return to these references in my analysis below.)⁴⁹

New information is presented in the next four references.

However, the distinctive phrase, min amr rabbī, "proceeds from the order

46. The references are: S.15.29; 19.17; 38.72; 21.91; 32.9/8.

47. W. Wright, A Grammar of the Arabic Language, Cambridge, 1964, Vol. II, p. 129-139.

48. O'Shaughnessy, The Development..., pp. 30,31: "The opinions of these latter, to be accepted with the restrictions previously expressed, are summed up in Table II. All agree that the spirit in these passages is impersonal, when the min, 'from,' is taken in a partitive sense. But all likewise agree that if the preposition is understood as designating origin rather than participation, the spirit may be a person, Gabriel, from whom as intermediary Allah's breath of life comes to Adam and Jesus." (Footnote 83 adds this: "If the spirit is made a person in these texts, nafakha acquires a purely intransitive sense. The fact that in all other places where this verb occurs in the Koran it is either intransitive or passive seems the only point in favor of what otherwise seems an interpretation based only on Moslem doctrinal prejudices of a later age.") O'Shaughnessy prefers to choose that interpretation confirming the meaning, evident in the Biblical and Christian parallels, of life breath from the Creator animating Adam's body.

49. The references are: S.17.85/87; 16.2; 40.15; 42.52 (16.102/104 is considered a later interpolation).

50

of my Lord," actually only occurs in one text, with varying forms in the other three. The really important factor here is to discover that there exists an association between the spirit and the amr, order. Two other remarks are pertinent here. In S.16.2, mention is made of the angels and they are again seen, as in the early texts, descending with the spirit. S.40.15 speaks of the "raiser of the degrees" who "casts the spirit...on whom He will." This is almost parallel with 4.171/169, where we read of "His word [which] He cast into Maryam." In this latter passage, moreover, the "word" is ascribed as a quality of 'Īsā who is called in the same verse, "a spirit from Him." In the light of this observation, it is hardly accurate to consider these four references as constituting a new development. There is new information, of course, but it is not unrelated to previously given data.

51

In Medina three references are made to 'Īsā being strengthened by the spirit of holiness, one reference to believers being strength-

50. O'Shaughnessy, The Development..., p. 33: "This distinctive phrase is found only in these four suras, neither earlier nor later and no other sense of rūh intervenes." In fact, this exact phrase occurs only once, 17.85/87. S.16.2 states, "the spirit from His amr"; 42.52, "a spirit from Our amr."

51. O'Shaughnessy, The Development..., p. 34: "The question appears to have caused the Prophet some discomfiture, since he considered it sufficiently important to merit an answer in his next revelation." There is, of course, an entirely different explanation. Instead of answering in an impromptu manner, the answer came by way of official communication with full authority. There is no reason whatever to read "discomfiture" into this, unless O'Shaughnessy means to see a Christian parallel here with the manner in which Christ answered some of His questioners.

52. The references are S.2.87/81,253/254; 5.110/109.

ened by a spirit from Him,⁵³ an indication of 'Īsā as a spirit from Him,⁵⁴ and a reiteration of the inbreathing of "Our spirit" into Maryam.

The first question is whether two persons are designated as "spirit" or only one. Is it possible to find among the occurrences of this word functions which can only be ascribed to 'Īsā,⁵⁵ and other functions which can only be ascribed to a being such as Gabriel?⁵⁶ If we accept that 'Īsā is a spirit, then there is quite definitely another spirit besides him explicitly demonstrated in those passages which speak of 'Īsā being strengthened by the spirit of holiness.⁵⁷

To claim, as Zamakhsharī does, that

He is called Allah's spirit and a spirit from Him because he is the possessor of a spirit which has come into being without any part of what is endowed with a spirit, such as semen proceeding from the living father,⁵⁸

is begging the question. Adam, too, was created apart from any parenthood; yet he is nowhere called a spirit from Allah, although the same inbreathing is indicated. The second objection to Zamakhsharī's state-

53. S.58.22, rūh minhu, "a spirit from Him," which was immediately preceded by 4.171/169, in which the identical expression, rūh minhu, occurs.

54. S.66.12.

55. Specifically mentioned as "a spirit" (4.171/169).

56. Traditionally acknowledged as "the spirit."

57. Cf. supra, note 101.

58. Zamakhsharī, on S.4.171/169, 1.315.

ment is semantic in approach; to be a spirit is quite different from being "the possessor of a spirit."⁵⁹

The language of the texts forces us to assume, at least tentatively, the existence of two, distinct spirits. The division suggested by the language of the passages would be as follows: Gabriel (traditionally understood to be the spirit and chosen here in order to differentiate the one spirit from the 'Īsā-spirit) appears as the "faithful spirit" who does not descend himself but brings the revelation down to Muhammad in S.26.193.⁶⁰ Note that he accomplishes this miracle in the same way as 'Īsā performed his, "by the permission of Allah." Gabriel also appears in the references to the general creation of men where the identical expression, "of My spirit," occurs in each case.⁶¹ Lastly, the ministry of the Gabriel-spirit appears in the threefold strengthening of the 'Īsā-spirit. As for 'Īsā, he is unique in that (1) he becomes a spirit incarnated;⁶² (2) he is also called a "word,"⁶³ and is thereby associated with the amr, the throne, and revelation. He appears as the more active of the two spirits and, in keeping with his

59. To argue that we call a man "rich" who possesses riches is a poor analogy. We also call a man a butcher or meatman, when he actually has no meat to butcher, thereby referring to the abiding capacity, skill, or training that is there.

60. This thought is repeated in S.2.97/91, where Gabriel is identified. S.16.102/104 brings together both the notion of the spirit sending down, but not descending himself, and the notion of a strengthening ministry.

61. The references are S.15.29; 38.72; 32.9/8.

62. S.4.171/169.

63. These associations will be further elucidated as we go on.

incarnation in the world, characterized by both descending and ascending, sent down and raised up.⁶⁴ The expressions containing, "Our spirit,"⁶⁵ refer to 'Īsā, as does also the indefinite construction, "a spirit."⁶⁶ In common with the Gabriel-spirit, he does his ministry by permission of Allah, has an association with the descent of revelation, and is more closely connected with a given people: the Gabriel-spirit with Muḥammad and the Arabs; 'Īsā-spirit with Maryam and the Children of Israel. The 'Īsā-spirit is characterized also as an apostle.⁶⁷ While angels are clearly indicated as apostles in various capacities,⁶⁸ 'Īsā is stated to be both spirit and apostle. It may well be that this apostleship to the Children of Israel is the distinctive phase of his mission, as the distinctive phase of Gabriel's mission would be spoken of as "holiness." If it is agreed that Quranic usage

64. The references are S.97.4; 16.2; 19.17; 70.4; 40.15 (where the parallel is close to 4.171/169); 2.253/254 (where being raised in rank seems applied to 'Īsā and recalls 78.38). Cf. 3.55/48 and 4.157, 158/156.

65. The references are S.19.17; 21.91; 66.12.

66. The references are S.42.52 and 58.22. In common with Gabriel, 'Īsā had a strengthening ministry. Note, however, that "a spirit," not, "the spirit of holiness" is spoken of.

67. The references are S.19.19 and 4.171/169, in keeping with his association with the Throne and the descent of revelation (81.19). Note that Gabriel is never clearly identified as an apostle.

68. Angels as mediators of revelation, S.42.51; as apostles, 35.1; as apostles to Ibrāhīm, 29.31/30; as apostles to Lūṭ, 11.77/79,81/83; 29.33/32; as responsible for the Heavenly Record of man's deeds, 43.80; 10.21/22; in relation to death, 6.61; 7.37/35; as Allah's rūḥ, "spirit," to Maryam, 19.19.

must in certain instances intimate the existence of two spirits, then this suggested division of the occurrences is a sensible and logical one. It also preserves the notion of Allah's transcendence.⁶⁹

C. The Amr and the Word

The order observed in the subtitle above is proper because "word" is under the jurisdiction of the amr. However, logically, we should approach the study at hand by first exploring the implications of "word," and then by turning our attention to the amr.

Like parole, word, in French, kalima, word, means much more than a series of letters or a purely physical sense of a vocal sound.⁷⁰ This term has been employed, as O'Shaughnessy says, "to signify both the outward form of expression, the utterance, the word, and the inward power of mind manifested in speech, both of which meanings are inherent in the original meaning of logos...."⁷¹ Special care must be taken by

69. C.G. Mylrea, The Holy Spirit in Qur'ān and Bible, London, 1910, p. 5: "In his commentary on 15.29, and 32.8, al-Baidawi is utterly unable to reconcile absolute divine transcendence as taught in Islam with God's relation to His creation. The reason of this is because al-Baidawi and al-Razi fail to distinguish between the material and the spiritual aspects of the subjects, in their attempt to explain the story of the creation of Adam from earth and God's breathing His spirit into him."

70. O'Shaughnessy, The Koranic Concept..., pp. 18,19: "It is worthy of note, however, that the singular form, kalimah, in accordance with its connotations explained in the first chapter, is never used in the Koran in a purely physical sense of a vocal sound or a series of written letters.... This is not to deny that a purely sensible acceptation is possible, but actually it is not found in the revelation of Mohammed."

71. Ibid., p. 8.

the one investigating such a term as kalima, not to read into it any of the notions of the logos, or in the case of the expression kalimat Allah, "word of Allah," not to see here any concessions (from the non-Islamic viewpoint) or ascription of position attributed to Jesus Christ in Christianity.⁷² The Qur'ān, again, will have to be its own interpreter.

There are nine ways, or environments, by which kalima is recurrent in the Qur'ān.⁷³ There are twenty-six occurrences of kalima, the singular, four instances of the plural, kalim,⁷⁴ and one cognate accusative.⁷⁵ The use of the singular form is distributed in the following manner: Middle Meccan, five texts; Late Meccan, fourteen texts; Medina,

72. Ibid., Foreword: "On the Islamic interpretation of the 'Word of God,' as this term occurs in its sacred book, depends its evaluation of such dogmas as the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the Incarnation and the Redemption and their acceptance or rejection in its doctrinal system. In point of fact it has rejected them..." (Underlining mine) The term, "word of Allah," occurs only twice in the Qur'ān, in neither case referring in any way to 'Isā. Perhaps O'Shaughnessy is speaking of a different phrase.

73. The nine categories or environments are: (1) kalimat Allah, "the word of Allah," S.10.96; 9.40; (2) kalimatunā, "Our word," 37.171; (3) kalima min Allah, "a word from Allah," 3.39/34; (4) kalimatīn minhu, a "word from Him," 3.45/40; (5) kalimatuh, "His word," 4.171/169; (6) kalima rabbika, "the word of your Lord," 11.119/120; 40.6; 10.33/34; 7.137/133; (7) kalima min rabbika, "a word from your Lord," 20.129; 41.45; 11.110/112; 42.13/14,21/20; 10.19/20; (8) construct case, ('adhāb) 39.19/20,71; (fasl) 42.21/20; (kufr) 9.74/75; (taqwā) 48.26; (9) isolated instances, 43.28/27; 23.100/102; 18.5/4; 14.24/29; 14.26/31; 3.64/57.

74. The plural references are S.35.10/11; 4.46/48; 5.13/16; 5.41/45.

75. Reference S.4.164/162.

seven texts. We note that two of the expressions in which kalima occurs are only found in Late Meccan suras: kalima rabbika and kalima min rabbika, "the word of your Lord," and "a word from your Lord," respectively. The four texts using the first of these expressions have to do with warning or promise. The second expression embraces texts having to do with the resolving of doubt or opposition had the word not come. As to the plural form, three texts refer to the distorting of the "speech" which distorting results in a confusion or spreading of doubt among the people. This broken plural, it should be remembered, means more than vocalized sounds in physical word-making. The use of kalim indicates that the sense was being distorted rather than actual words being changed; the other text in which this form is presented pictures "the excellent speech mounting up to Him."⁷⁶ The occurrence of the cognate accusative⁷⁷ portrays Allah "speaking a speech" to Mūsā and one reference indicates "our word" previously given to the mursalūn, "messengers."⁷⁸ There are three references which clearly signify ʿĪsā and identify him as "word."⁷⁹ These all fall in the Medina period. The verb forms and the regular plural do not add materially to the discussion at hand.

76. Kalim. Cf. Supra, note 123.

77. Cf. supra, note 124.

78. S.37.171.

79. Kalima min Allah, 3.39/34; kalima minhu, 3.45/40; kalima-tuhu, 4.171/169.

The aim now is to "gain some approximation of the real meaning the author of the Koran had in mind when he used of Christ the Arabic of Word of God."⁸⁰ The question of whether Muhammad understood the term fully which he was using or not, is irrelevant to our study. The Muslim does not think of Muhammad as the "author" of the Qur'ān. The real question is, in what way or for what reason is 'Īsā referred to as "word"? It is interesting to note that the expression, "word of Allah," does not occur in any passage speaking of 'Īsā; the closest Arabic equivalent would be, kalimatuhu, "His word,"⁸¹ and the structure of the entire sentence gives this expression a very indefinite sense.

Commentators, particularly Zamakhsharī,⁸² Ṭabarī,⁸³ Jalālayn,⁸⁴ and Rāzī,⁸⁵ are the source for the historical support of O'Shaughnessy's position which stresses the "creative command, 'Be!'"

80. O'Shaughnessy, The Koranic Concept..., Foreword.

81. S.4.171/169.

82. Zamakhsharī, Kashshāf, 1.188: "'Īsā is named 'word' because he came into being by the word of Allah and that alone, to wit, His utterance, Be, without any other cause."

83. Ṭabarī, 3.169: "Qatāda has commented on this... 'His word which He cast into Maryam,' that is, His utterance, Be."

84. Jalālayn, Tafsīr, p. 44: "A creature, that is, 'Īsā who is Allah's spirit and is named 'word' because he was created by a word, Be."

85. Rāzī, Mafātīh al-Ghayb, 2.441, 2nd meaning given: "Because he was created by means of Allah's word, Be, without the help of a father."

Jesus, then, is rightly called a 'word,' that is, a creative command or, more explicitly, a 'thing decreed' by a creative command. From this it is clear that the title is applied to him in the Koran by a denomination purely extrinsic; that is, merely by way of indicating the manner of his temporal origin and with no reference to anything inherent in him. 'Word' as expressing a divine activity hypostatized never occurred to the founder of Islam.⁸⁶

This "creative command" occurs eight times in the Qur'ān,⁸⁷ and invariably refers to a new phase in Allah's dealings with mankind: the creation of Adam, the creation of 'Īsā, and the resurrection of the dead.

This latter event is also referred to as a "creation."⁸⁸

One clue as to the meaning of kalīma when applied to 'Īsā is found in the preposition min, "from," which precedes in two texts: S.3.39/34, where it is foretold to Zakarīya, Zachariah, that Yaḥyā, John, will confirm a word from Allah; 3.45/40, where it is announced to Maryam of a word from Him. This use of min only occurs in five other kalīma texts, all of which indicate that the doubt or opposition being⁸⁹ spoken about would have been cleared up had the "word" not come.

For some sovereign purpose, apparently, Allah would have them remain⁹⁰ either opposed or in doubt. Both at the beginning of his life, and

86. O'Shaughnessy, The Koranic Concept..., p. 55.

87. A I: none; A II: 19.35/36; 36.82; A III: 16.40/42; 40.68/70; 6.72; B: 2.111; 3.47/42, 59/52.

88. The references are S.17.49/52-61/63; cf. 21.104; 27.64/65; 34.7; 50/15/14.

89. Cf. supra, note 122, category 7.

90. The references are S.19.29/30, 34/35.

at the end of his time on earth, ⁹¹ 'Īsā encountered Jews who were filled with doubt concerning him. Some have seen in the use of kalima min, "word from," the implication that judgment will fall (while, simultaneously, the doubt or opposition ceases) so that kalima indicates a period of time which must elapse.

Further, there is a distinct contrasting construction found in 3.45/40 and 4.171/169. In the former, it is said to Maryam, "Yubashshiruki bikalimatīn minhu 'smuhu al-masīh...." The question raised here is why is the personal pronoun attached to 'sm, "name," hu, "his," instead of hā, "her," which should normally be required to agree in gender with the feminine noun, kalima, "word"? O'Shaughnessy is correct in saying that the "name, 'the Christ, Jesus, son of Mary,' is attributed, not to the word, but to the masculine person indicated by word. This is clear ⁹² from the masculine pronoun hu, his, modifying 'name' in Koran 3.40." The fact must be underlined that this text points to a distinct person, 'Īsā, with his very distinctive title.

When we turn to the second text, however, we find a personal pronoun, hā, "her," again referring to the kalima, this time "cast" ⁹³ into Maryam. This feminine gender of the pronoun implies that

91. S.4.157/156.

92. O'Shaughnessy, The Koranic Concept..., p. 20.

93. A remote possibility for the use of the feminine form, hā, in S.4.171/169, referring to the "word" in order to avoid ambiguity with the person of Allah to whom the masculine form hu is ascribed six times in the same verse. Further, the feminine pronoun hā is also more consonant with alqā, "cast," and may have thus been used for the sake of euphony.

"word" is there to be taken literally. "Accordingly, Jesus and other beings in the same category are named 'word' because of some relation they have to the term in its original meaning." ⁹⁴ O'Shaughnessy is saying that there must be a class of one or more individuals who can be referred to as "word." This is the concept which was discussed above in reference to a class of "spirit" beings. We now see one of those "spirits" commanded creatively to exist and identified in this passage as both "word" and "spirit." (We shall discuss the capacity for apostle-ship on the part of this class of beings in our next sub-section.) ⁹⁵

Although O'Shaughnessy feels that the language employed in this verse, S.4.171/169, "He cast it to her," is not the ordinary way of indicating the delivery of a message, yet this is the verb used in a variety of very similar situations. ⁹⁶

Lammens takes the position that

Islamism's Prophet understood by this name only that Jesus had served as the organ and intermediary of

94. O'Shaughnessy, The Koranic Concept..., p. 22: "Namely, although 'word' is used of Christ in the foregoing sense in the main clause of Koran 4.171/169, the feminine gender of the pronoun, hā, in the dependent clause following implies that 'word' because of some relation they have to the term in its original meaning."

95. ʿIsā is said to be: (1) the apostle of Allah; (2) His word; (3) a spirit. O'Shaughnessy is right to note the indefinite character of ʿIsā here; (1) he is not the only apostle as seen by the terminal exhortation of the verse to believe in His apostles; (2) the "word" is of an indefinite character because, although there is appropriately a pronoun of recall attached to the verb, there is no allātī, feminine relative pronoun, "which," that is normally required in this construction where the antecedent is definite.

96. The references are S.4.91/93,94/96; 16.28/30,86/88,87/89; 50.37/36; 26.223; 60.1; 73.5; 75.15.

divine revelation and the bearer of God's word to the Children of Israel. This "word" was the revelation sent down to Jesus in the Gospel or Injil, and his message to the Jews, as Mohammed saw it, was limited to confirming the Jewish law and the worship of one God, and to foretelling the coming of another apostle, Mohammed.⁹⁷

O'Shaughnessy rejects this theory. Yet the evidence points in this direction, and the possibility of some correlation between 'Īsā as prophet-apostle to the Children of Israel and 'Īsā as word must not be overlooked. It is suggested, then, that 'Īsā is a word from Allah with particular reference to Israel as a warning and threat of judgment, without which (in keeping with its use in S.10,19/20; 11.110/112; 20.129; 41.45; 42.14/13) their doubts would have been resolved and their opposition ceased. The Qur'ān seems to teach that because of this word, 'Īsā, the Jews in Muhammad's own day were still in that doubt and hostility to the purpose and plan of Allah. In summary, 'Īsā is a word: (1) as spoken into human form by the creative command, Be! This command cannot be ignored and is seen as the medium by which the spirit, 'Īsā, passed into Maryam to be incarnated; (2) 'Īsā was a threat or promise to Israel according to their reaction to his mission; (3) the matters in which they were in doubt would have been resolved had he not come; (4) 'Īsā is the last apostle to be sent to the Children of Israel and thus a "term" is set to their having anyone come to them by way of apostleship. ⁹⁸; (5) as a spirit, 'Īsā participated in the overall

97. Lammens, op. cit., p. 58.

98. The discussion of 'Īsā as apostle will follow later; it was thought that his function as such should be mentioned here.

amr of Allah.

We turn now to the subject of the amr, "matter," "affair,"
¹⁰⁰ "business," "thing," or "order" and "decree." In its verbal form,
'mr occurs seventy-nine times of which Allah is the subject thirty-four
times and Satan twice. Of the twenty-two suras in which the verbal form
occurs, one sura is in the Early Meccan, two in the Middle Meccan,
eleven in the Late Meccan and eight in the Medina period. This distri-
bution is perfectly normal in view of the background against which the
texts are given. It is during the Late Meccan period that the call to
conversion is more noticeable and the "ordering" of Allah is exemplified
in the stories of former prophets, apostles and peoples, as well as, and
by means of these, applied to Muhammad's listeners. There does not
appear to be particular relevance in the use of the verbal form to our
present investigation except in the general sense that if Allah orders
something, His purpose is to realize in history the proper "order" of
things which is constantly potential in the Heavens.

There is, of course, much more relevance to the occurrences of
¹⁰¹ the noun, amr. In its nominal form, amr occurs 153 times in the
singular and thirteen times in the plural. As in the case of the
verbal form, the nominal form is rather evenly distributed through the

99. This relationship of 'Isā to the amr of Allah is discussed below.

100. Lane, op. cit., Book 1, Part 1, p. 96ff.

101. The distribution of suras by periods: A I: 82,79,97; A II: 51,54,44,50,20,26,15,19,38,36,43,23,21,27,18; A III: 32,41,45,17,16,30, 11,14,12,40,28,42,10,34,7,46,6,13; B: 2,64,8,47,3,57,4,65,59,33,24,22, 49,9,5.

Middle and Late Meccan periods and Medina, with texts occurring in three suras of the Early Meccan period. It does not appear that the use of amr can be exclusively assigned to the theme of any one period; rather, its force is general. It is instructive regarding the meaning of amr to observe the passages, or the immediate contexts of the passages in which it occurs. It is used in the context of Allah's sovereignty, judgment, Allah's permission, angels, spirit, the creative command; Be, disputing, destiny, given individuals,

102. A II: 44.5/4; 50.5; 19.64/65; 36.82; 43.79; 18.10/9,16/15; A III: 32.5/4; 41.12/11; 45.12/11,18/17; 16.2,77/79; 30.25/24; 11.123; 14.32/37; 42.52,53; 10.3,31/32; 7.54/52; 13.2,11/12,31/30; B: 2.117/111; 3.109/105,128/123,186/183; 57.5; 65.12; 24.63; 22.67/66.

103. A II: 51.4,44; 54.3,12; 15.66; 50.5; 23.27/28; 21.27; 18.28/27,50/48; A III: 32.5/4,24; 41.12/11; 17.85/87; 30.25/24; 11.40/42,43,43/45,44/46,58/61,66/69,76/78,82/84,97/94,101/103; 14.22/26; 12.41; 40.15; 10.3,24/25,31/32; 34.12/11; 7.77/75,150/149; 46.25/24; 6.8,58,159/160; 13.2,11/12,31/30; B: 2.109/103,275/276; 64.5; 8.42/43; 47.26/28; 3.186/183,128/123; 57.14/13; 65.3,4,8,9; 59.15; 24.63; 9.24,50,106/107; 5.57,95/96. (Blachère places 19.39/40 in Medina)

104. A I: 97.4; A III: 40.78; 10.3; 34.12/11; B: 3.147/141.

105. A I: 79.5; 97.4; A II: 19.64/65; 18.50/48; A III: 16.2,33/35; 13.11/12; B: 2.210/206; 47.26/28; 22.76/75.

106. A I: 97.4; A III: 17.85/87; 16.2; 40.15; 42.52.

107. A II: 36.82; A III: 40.68/70; B: 2.117/111; 3.47/42; 19.35/36 (Blachère).

108. A I: 20.62/65; 18.21/20; B: 8.43/45; 3.152/145; 22.67/66. Submission to amr: 49.9. Disobedience to amr: A II: 51.44; A III: 7.77/75; B: 47.26/28; 65.8.

109. A III: 40.44/47; 42.38/36; 6.159/160; B: 2.275/276.

110. Ibrāhīm: 11.76/78; Nūh: 54.12; 11.40/42; 23.27/28; 10.71/72; Lūt: 15.66; 11.82/84; Yūsef: 12.41,21,102/103; Mūsa: 18.69/68; 28.44; 18.73/72; 20.26/27,32/33,90/92,93/94; 40.44/47; 20.62/65; Sulaymān:

111 truth, 112 regulations, 113 Satan, 114 and return of the amr to Allah.

In the context of Allah's sovereignty, we note particularly that He created seven heavens, each with its amr, S.41.12/11. In 65.12, it is said that Allah created seven heavens and earth with the amr between them descending. This "descending" is one of the three action-symbols we have already observed with the angels and the spirit. S.19.64/65 states that certain beings descend on Allah's amr. Muḥammad states that he has no part in the amr; believers think that if they had a part in the amr, all would be differently ended. But the whole amr belongs to Allah, and the whole amr will return to Allah. The

27.32,33; 34.12/11; 38.36/35; Ṣāliḥ: 7.77/75; 11.66/69; Shu'ayb: 11.97/94; Thāḥūḍ: 51.44; 'Ād: 11.59/62; Maryam: 19.21; Allah and His apostles: 33.36.

111. A II: 43.79; 21.27; 18.28/27; A III: 14.22/26; 40.78; 10.31/32; 35.4; 13.2,11/12; B: 2.109/103; 3.154/148; 4.83/85; 9.48.

112. Medina: 65.1,3,5; 33.37,38; 24.62,63; 5.95/96.

113. A II: 38.36/35; 18.50/48; A III: 12.41; 14.22/26; 34.12/11 35.4; B: 2.210/206; 4.59/62; 59.15.

114. A III: 32.5/4; 11.123; 42.53; 35.4; B: 8.44/46; 3.109/105; 57.5; 22.41/42,76/75.

115. Standing, 78.38; ascending, 70.4; descending, 97.4.

116. In loc. cit. Blachère thinks these are angels. According to the passages cited in note 164 (supra), these could be either angelic or spiritual beings.

117. S.3.128/123,154/148, respectively.

118. References: S.3.154/148 and 13.31/30.

119. S.11.123.

spirit is min amrinā, "from our amr,"¹²⁰ and the angels with the spirit
 are min amrihi, "from His amr."¹²¹ Allah is the ghālib amrihi, "con-
 queror of His amr,"¹²² and the bāliq amrihi, "achiever of His amr,"¹²³
 even as He is the executor of the amr.¹²⁴ The amr is inextricable
 and unchangeable¹²⁶; Allah casts the spirit min amrihi, "from His
amr,"¹²⁷ and prophets are rightly guided bi amrinā, "by Our amr."¹²⁸

In summary, Allah's amr expresses the widest possible, the infinite spectrum of His sovereignty and at the same time the infinite application of that sovereignty in the history of men with attention to the most minute detail. It is predicated of Allah that He Himself is responsible for seeing that the amr is disposed as He wills and that He has a return from the historical investment of each particularized appointment of the amr.

120. S.42.52.

121. S.16.2.

122. S.12.21.

123. S.65.3.

124. S.32.5/6; 10.3,31/32; 13.2. The verbal expression is dabbara al-amr. Blachère disagrees with Arab interpreters who make angels the subject of dabbara al-amr in 79.5.

125. S.50.5.

126. S.54.3.

127. S.40.15 and 17.85/87.

128. S.21.73.

With respect to 'Īsā, the amr plays a vital role in his creation within Maryam. S.3.47/42 states,

And she replied, "How shall I have a child when no mortal has touched me?" He answered, "Thus Allah creates what He will; when He decides a thing, He only says to it, Be! and it is."

We read in 19.21, "Thus it will be. Your Lord says, 'It is easy for Me!...and it was a thing decided.'" In the first of these passages, the Arabic reads, idhā qadā amran, "when He decides a thing," and in the second, kāna amran maqdīyan, "it was a thing decided." If we paraphrase amr to indicate a specific application of Allah's sovereign disposition of His heavenly will upon earth and say, in the first instance: "when He decides a specific application of His will...", and in the second instance: "it was a decided specific application of His will," the link between 'Īsā and the amr becomes well underlined and important.¹²⁹ (note the ease of this matter for Allah.) Further, when we have seen him as spirit and as word, then the descent of the amr from the heavens and the creative command, coupled with his appointment as prophet and apostle to the Children of Israel, it becomes incredible to understand 'Īsā as simply another human messenger, or apostle, among others who have preceded him.

There has been much confusion over the interrelation in the story of 'Īsā between the amr, the creation of 'Īsā,¹³⁰ the creative

129. Compare S.19.21 with 20.26/27; 18.16/15,88/87.

130. Yusufali, "The Personality of Man," Islamic Culture, 1931, Vol. V, p. 549: "I understand khalq to refer to the bringing out of something from non-existence to existence, and amr to refer to organization or direction."

131
 command, whether the "spirit" spoke to Maryam literally or figura-
 132 tively, and the part played by the amr throughout 'Isā's life. 133

There is, no doubt, genuine concern shown over the preservation of the
 134 transcendence of Allah beyond His creation. The thesis presented
 here does not infringe upon that doctrine. The Qur'ān does not present
 the "spirit" class of beings as possessing something of divinity; it
 does portray this class as more closely connected with the world of men
 than angels are.

131. For an example of a modern day extension of thought, see
 Arberry, The Sufi Path of Love, p. 77, quoting Muhammad Iqbal (1357/
 1938): "Thou (Self) only art in the Creator's 'Be!' Thou only art the
 Sign that none may see; then tread more fearlessly the road of life,
 the world's broad plain containeth only thee."

132. W.R.W. Gardner, The Doctrine of Man, Madras, 1913, p. 6:
 "The language of these passages is largely figurative; for whatever they
 mean we cannot understand them to say that God spoke as with a human
 voice. Zamakhehari commenting on 7.171, states that figurative language
 is common in the Qur'an. He uses this very expression, Be, as one of his
 illustrations." Moubareac, op. cit., p. 167: "Sa mère aurait entendu la
 voix de l'ange et par cette audition elle aurait conçu. Une tradition
 musulmane dit finement qu'elle a conçu par l'oreille...La Vierge a si
 bien écouté la Parole de Dieu qu'elle est devenue chair dans son sein.
 Dans le Coran un même vocable ('kun') est employé pour la création d'A-
 dam à l'origine, pour la conception de Jésus et pour la résurrection."

133. Burney, op. cit., pp. 170,200: "The Virgin Mary and her
 son, Jesus Christ (God's blessings on both) were often subject to the
 action of 'amr,' as compared with 'khalq,' in their life, and hence the
 leading events of their life seem, as it were, shrouded in mystery, for
 instance...the birth of Christ, his miracles and his end, all smack of
 mystery because...they were dominated by 'amr' in particular." "Angels
 are subject to 'amr' and animals are subject to 'khalq,' and man holds
 a combination of both up to the highest point...As to genii, they are
 confused between angels and men. The action of 'amr' was, no doubt,
 most prominent in the life of Jesus Christ."

134. De Vaux, Gazali, p. 263: "L'auteur explique comment Jé-
 sus est la vue de Dieu...comment il descend de Marie et de Gabriel, par

D. "Only the Apostle of Allah"

The title of this sub-section is taken from S.4.171/169, where the usual translation reads in part,

O People of Scripture, do not go beyond the proper limit in your religion and say only the truth about Allah. Maʿīh, ʿĪsā, son of Maryam, is only the apostle of Allah and His word which He cast into Maryam and a spirit from Him....

Much has already been said as to the "word" and the "spirit" mentioned in this verse. Our attention is now turned to two items of importance to our investigation of the person of ʿĪsā: (1) the restrictive, ¹³⁵ innamā, "only," and (2) the function of apostle which ʿĪsā fulfills, according to this text.

The particle innamā occurs one hundred and forty-seven times and may be understood in three ways: restriction, declaration and ¹³⁶ emphasis. In a number of instances, where the first sentence contains a negative, the second sentence will be introduced by innamā;

quelle puissance il ressuscitait les morts. A ce propos paraît cette formule d'un aspect tout gnostique: 'Tous les êtres sont des paroles de Dieu qui ne s'évanouissent pas, car ils dérivent tous de la parole: Sois.' Il faut admettre, remarque Ibn Arabi ou bien que Dieu est au-dessus de sa parole et des quiddités qu'elle produit et qu'il les ignore, ou bien qu'il descend dans la forme de l'Être qui dit: Sois; alors cette parole: Sois, n'est que l'essence de cette forme en laquelle Dieu est descendu."

135. Wright, op. cit., 1.285; 2.335.

136. Ibid., 2.80, rem.b: "If the predicate is placed between inna or anna and its noun, the logical accent lies upon the noun; whereas, if the predicate stands after the noun, it receives the logical accent itself." Therefore, if the predicate is understood to begin with ʿĪsā, ʿĪsā receives the logical accent.

here, it is bi-functional in that it is not only restrictive as to the meaning given in the first sentence but it is also corrective of that meaning.¹³⁷ Careful attention must be paid so that the notion of restriction is not carried too far. In the text cited above, various interpretations are possible, dependent on whether we link the word "only" with the notion of apostle only, or also with one or both of the following titles: word and spirit.

I suggest that innamā may be understood in two ways in this text: (1) as a corrective, innamā is looking back to the thought previously given; (2) as a restrictive, it is limiting the term or title of Masīḥ, to the person known as ʿIsā, son of Maryam. In the former use, innamā is employed to underline the truth as to ʿIsā's status as compared with that which certain people were saying about him and thereby going beyond the bounds of their religion. In the latter, we may read the passage in this way,

O People of Scripture, do not go beyond the proper limit in your religion and say only the truth about Allah. The Masīḥ is only ʿIsā, son of Maryam, the apostle of Allah and His word which He cast into Maryam and a spirit from Him....

By this reading, the full impact of innamā falls upon the scope and application of the title, the Masīḥ, and the Qur'ān would be saying that this title can only be applied to ʿIsā, son of Maryam, and not to Allah. This is in keeping with the texts which indicate the error that

137. The references are S.2.168/163,169/164; 4.171/169. Cf. 2.11/10,102/96; 3.178/172. These are just a few of the examples available.

was being committed in connection with the title, the Masīh.¹³⁸ In S.5.75/79 and 43.59, the error being committed was different and thus the correction, by means of an exceptive clause is made. The first of these texts seems designed to guard against the misuse of the title, the Masīh, by linking it immediately to "son of Maryam," and the exceptive force falls upon the apostleship of the Masīh. In the second text, the force of the exceptive falls upon his servanthood.¹³⁹

The function of 'Isā as apostle must now be discussed. First, what are the general facts regarding the apostle and his ministry?¹⁴⁰ There is a close relation between him and his community. The rasūl, "apostle," is a witness, Warner to his own people.¹⁴¹ His message is understandable for he speaks their language.¹⁴² He is from their midst.¹⁴³ He is responsible for the faithful proclamation of the message received from Allah.¹⁴⁴ He is not, however, responsible for the success of his mission, or, if obedient, accountable for those in hell.¹⁴⁵

138. The references are: S.5.17/19,72/76; 9.30.

139. The exceptive is illā. Wright, op. cit., 2.335-344.

140. S.2.143/137; 5.109/108; 10.74/75; 22.78; 40.5; 77.11.

141. S.4.165/163; 20.134; 28.47,59; 39.71.

142. S.14.4; 19.97 (44.58).

143. S.2.129/123,151/146; 3.164/158; 6.130; 7.35/33; 9.128/129; 16.113/114; 23.32/33; 39.71; 62.2.

144. S.5.67/71,109/108; 7.62/60,68/66,79/77; 37.171; 72.27ff.

145. S.11.88/90; 36.17/16; 64.12; 72.23/24; 2.119/113; 3.272/274; 7.188.

‘Īsā is presented in the Qur’ān as both prophet and apostle with reference to the Children of Israel to whom he brought the Injīl.¹⁴⁶

Because of ‘Īsā, "word," the one community of the Children of Israel divides into two factions.¹⁴⁷ While Mūsā had been primarily the rasūl

to the people of Pharaoh, ‘Īsā is explicitly described as the rasūl to the Children of Israel.¹⁴⁸ It is not in our purpose to define the dis-

tinction between the prophet and the apostle as these offices are presented in the Qur’ān.¹⁴⁹ The fact is, ‘Īsā served both as prophet, with

a Scripture--the Injīl, and as apostle identified with the community into which he was brought to live.

E. Angels and the Nature of ‘Īsā

There has not been any suggestion by western scholars or Muslims that ‘Īsā was in a class known as spirit, existing with the angelic beings prior to his incarnation through Maryam. He is, naturally, often referred to as "spirit of Allah," but this is always done in the context of his having been created with the divine inbreathing and not in the

146. S.3.48/43; 57.27; 19.30/31.

147. S.19.37/38; 23.52/54. Cf. 2.113/107,120/114; 3.67/60; 9.30; 5.18/21,51/56,82/85. Jewish opposition (see 4.155/154ff.) gives the occasion for many ‘Īsā passages, such as 3.84/78, 5.59/64. Cf. Guillaume's translation of Ibn Ishāq, p. 268.

148. S.3.49/43; 61.6.

149. There are many who have tried to define the prophet-apostle relationship. For a recent definition, see W.A. Bifuld, "A Prophet and More Than a Prophet," Muslim World, Vol. LIX, 1969, pp. 1-28. Professor Bifuld suggests that the primary connotation of the word nabī in the Qur’ān is not "Book-revelation" but "Children of Ibrāhīm." (Notes 140 thru 148 are taken from that article.)

context of "standing," "descending" from, or "ascending" to the throne
150

of Allah. Almost without exception, however, Islamists recognize
151 that 'Īsā is different with respect to other prophets and apostles.

Hamidullah sees the birth of 'Īsā as the distinguishing trait he pos-
152 sesses, even as other prophets possessed other traits distinguishing them.

There are those who see in 'Īsā a being other than human in nature. MacDonald says, "It is manifestly impossible for the person of Jesus to pass beyond that of a semi-angelic personality; he cannot even
153 be regarded as the first of created beings." Though this is couched

150. Ibn 'Arabī, *op. cit.*, p. 116: "De ce fait, les différentes communautés religieuses se contredirent au sujet de l'identité de Jésus--sur lui la Paix! Certains le considérant en vertu de sa forme humaine terrestre, affirmaient qu'il était le fils de Marie; d'autres, envisageant en lui la forme apparemment humaine, le rattachaient à Gabriel; et d'autres encore, en raison de ce que la vivification des morts émanait de lui, le rattachaient à Dieu, à savoir que c'est lui qui communiquait la vie à celui qui recevait son souffle. Ainsi, à tour de rôle, l'on suppose en lui ou Dieu ou l'ange ou la nature humaine; de sorte qu'il est pour chaque spectateur ce qui s'impose à ce spectateur; il est le Verbe de Dieu, il est l'Esprit de Dieu, et il est le serviteur de Dieu."

151. Roger Arnaldez, *Grammaire et Théologie chez Ibn Hazm de Cordoue*, Paris, 1956, p. 306: "Enfin le Coran distingue bien 'Īsā parmi les prophètes, en reconnaissant les faveurs spéciales que Dieu lui a faites, mais il le laisse au rang de prophète." Cf. Lammens, *op. cit.*, p. 59: "Incontestablement la christologie du Qoran accorde à Jésus une place à part parmi tous les prophètes."

152. Hamidullah, *op. cit.*, p. 423: "Ce genre de trait peut distinguer quelqu'un (être né sans père),--et chaque prophète avait un trait ou un autre qui le distinguait--sans que cela l'établisse au-dessus de l'humanité, au rang de la divinité."

153. MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

negatively, MacDonald sees the possibility of 'Isā being some kind of angelic being. Ibn 'Arabī speaks of "the resurrection breath which Jesus disposed of (by his angelic nature)."¹⁵⁴ Michaud, speaking of the quality of 'abd, "servant," observes that "'abdun, with respect to the son of Mary, has the sense that it possesses throughout the Quran, that¹⁵⁵ of creature, earthly or angelic."

As to what an angel is, a modern catechism states, "An angel is a thought of Allah manifested in human flesh."¹⁵⁶ Mahmud Shaltout says "the Scripture describes angels as supernatural and says that such is their real nature that they do not appear in the material world generally, but only by divine command."¹⁵⁷ Chelhod, speaking of the astonishing descriptions of angels given by Qazwīnī, says, "according to¹⁵⁸ him, there are angels to be found in the image of man." Most

154. Corbin, *L'Imagination Créatrice*, p. 245: "Sinon, pour que l'amant puisse faire exister concrètement, substantiellement, l'objet réel de son amour dans l'être réel qui le lui manifeste (voire à son insu), il lui faudrait une aide surnaturelle, le souffle résurrecteur dont disposèrent Jésus (par sa nature d'ange) et d'autres serviteurs de Dieu."

155. Michaud, *op. cit.*, p. 40: "Mais 'abdun, en relation avec le fils de Marie, a le sens qu'il possède dans tout le Coran, celui de créature, terrestre ou angélique. Bien qu'appliqué à Jésus, 'Abdun n'est pas un emprunt au vocabulaire théologique judéo-chrétien, mais un terme arabe dont le sens ne semble pas discutable et qui signifie la distance séparant Allah unique de toute sa création."

156. "A Moorish Temple Catechism," *Muslim World*, Vol. XXXII, 1942, p. 57.

157. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

158. Joseph Chelhod, *Les Structures du Sacré chez les Arabes*, Paris, 1964, p. 89: "Mais le livre sacré de l'Islam se montre avare de

scholars are agreed that angels are sexless and that they do not eat or
 159
 drink. Angels are declared an article of faith in the Fiqh Akbar
 160
 II.

As to the relationship of angels to prophethood, Ibn Khaldūn
 states:

The third kind are created with the power of passing
 over from humanity, its flesh and its spirit, to the
 angels of the upper region, so that, for a moment,
 they become angels actually, and in that moment witness
 the Heavenly Host in their region, and hear spiritual
 speech and the divine allocution. These are prophets. 161

It may be noted that Ibn Khaldūn is thinking in the direction from earth
 heavenward, that is, that certain men become angels, at least tempor-
 arily. This notion approximates our suggestion that 'Īsā as a spirit
 became man; it is obviously true that much written on the angels is true
 of spirits found by their side in the Quranic texts.

There is some dispute as to which beings are superior, angels,
 prophets (apostles), or ordinary men. The Mu'tazilites say that the

renseignements dès qu'il s'agit de préciser leur nature... Certains au-
 teurs musulmans vont même très loin dans la voie de la matérialité. On
 serait presque autorisé à parler d'anthropomorphisme à la lecture des
 descriptions étonnantes de Qazwīnī. D'après lui, il y a des anges qui
 sont à l'image de l'homme, d'autres à l'image du taureau, d'autres à
 l'image de l'aigle, d'autres à l'image du lion."

159. I.L. Gondal, Islamisme et Christianisme, Paris, 1906;
 F.A. Klein, The Religion of Islam, London, 1906, p. 64; Jones, op. cit.,
 p. 102.

160. Wensinck, op. cit., p. 188, "Fiqh Akbar II, Article 1."

161. MacDonald, The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam,
 Beyrouth, 1965, p. 58.

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angels are superior to the prophets, the Hanifites that the angels
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are superior to ordinary men. Al-Nasafī (537 A.H.) states:

And the Mujtahids sometimes err and sometimes hit the mark. And the apostles of mankind are more excellent than the apostles of the angels; and the apostles of the angels are more excellent than the generality of mankind; and the generality of mankind of the true believers is more excellent than the generality of the angels.¹⁶⁴

Again, alluding to the relationship of the prophet's nature to the angelic, Shahrastānī (548 A.H.) declares:

So, on the side of humanness the prophet partakes of the human species: he eats and drinks, sleeps and wakes, lives and dies, while on the side of prophecy he partakes of the species of angels.¹⁶⁵

In connection with 'Isā himself, Muslim writers betray a certain reticence with respect to his nature. They do this more from a carefulness to preserve the truth of Allah's transcendence and His sovereignty,

162. Edward Sell, The Faith of Islam, London, 1880, p. 151.

163. Ibid., p. 212.

164. MacDonald, Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory, Beirut, 1965, p. 315. Cf. Wensinck, op. cit., p. 201: "The large majority of our friends maintain the superiority of the prophets over the angels. Some of them admit the possibility of the superiority of some of the Faithful as compared with the angels; they do not, however, mention anyone individually. The followers of Tradition do not teach the superiority of the angels over the Prophets except al-Ḥasan ibn al-Faḍl al-Badjalī. The Mu'tazilites are divided on this point. The majority of them are of opinion that the angels are more excellent than the Prophets, they even consider the guardian angels of the fire as being superior to every Prophet...According to the Imāmites the imāms are more excellent than the angels. And the extreme Shī'ites say that they themselves are more excellent than the angels."

165. Rahman, Prophecy in Islam, p. 100, quoted from Nihāyat al-Iqdām, p. 426.

than from any innate desire to derogate from 'Isā's position so highly elevated in the language of the Qur'ān. Thus Mahmud Shaltout writes,

It should be clearly understood that, according to the Quranic texts, the function of the apostles is limited to guiding and educating people through revelation....The apostles are human beings. The Quran asserts that the fact that their messages were divine revelations did not change their human nature or make them into supernatural beings..., they remain human.¹⁶⁶

It is certainly true that the Qur'ān nowhere presents us with the elevation of angel, spirit or man (whether he be prophet, apostle or merely man), to the rank of divinity. The point is, however, that certain writers are able to envisage the breaking through into the human world on the part of angels, or the breaking through into the angelic world on the part of man, without either breakthrough indicating a divine status as to their natures.¹⁶⁷ 'Isā as a spirit, remains pre-eminently a creature as to his status. Ameer 'Alī asserts with regard to 'Isā, "So far from being an angel or the Son of God, the great Teacher, in the sublimity of his character, like all prophets, was eminently human."¹⁶⁸

One cannot escape the conclusion that there is more to 'Isā's nature than merely a human quality in the light of S.43.51/50ff. In

166. Morgan, op. cit., p. 105.

167. Cf. supra, notes 210,214.

168. Ameer 'Alī, Impressions, p. 248. Cf. Jomier, Bible et Coran, p. 110: "Et surtout, nous ne devons pas le dissimuler sous peine d'entretenir une équivoque, le Coran exprime très nettement que Jésus n'est qu'une créature. Le Coran refuse nettement le mystère de l'Incarnation." Cf. Jomier, Introduction à l'Islam actuel, p. 212: "Quoiqu'il en soit, il est clair qu'ici encore le texte refuse que Jésus soit plus qu'un homme."

this passage, Pharaoh is found ridiculing Mūsā for trying to make Egyptians believe, apart from the help of a large group of angels. Muhammad puts forth the example of ʿĪsā as an answer to his own people's query as to who is the better divinity, their gods or ʿĪsā. Verse 59 makes it clear that ʿĪsā is not more than a servant and verse 60 says that "if We wanted to, We would place angels brought forth from you, to succeed you on the earth." Note that the Qurʾān employs very careful language here to indicate ʿĪsā's position vis-à-vis Allah.¹⁶⁹

Some Arabs made a strange comparison between their divinities and ʿĪsā. Were they thinking of him as merely a man? Or, as Rodwell suggests,¹⁷⁰ were they toying with the idea that ʿĪsā was a god they could compare to their own? The Qurʾān's language is equally curious: (1) ʿĪsā is no more than a servant; i.e., not divine; (2) he is an example of power to both the Children of Israel (verse 59) and to the Meccans (verse 57); (3) and, in effect, "We can do the same for you as We did for the Jews and bring forth from yourselves angels."¹⁷¹

Rhetorically we may ask the question, "If Allah were going to send an angel into the world, how would such an angel appear among men?" The answer is found in the Qurʾān, S.6.8,9:

169. Yūsuf Alī, op. cit., p. 138 n.401, where he comments, "Jesus is no more than a man."

170. Rodwell, op. cit., p. 138 n.5.

171. Blachère, on verse 60: "This verse resists all serious attempt to relate it to the context."

...If We had sent down an angel, their judgment would have come on them at once, and they would have had no respite; and if We had appointed an angel, We should certainly have appointed one in the form of a man, and We should have clothed him before them in garments like their own.

The parallels found here with the birth passage in Sura 19 are very interesting. First, a phrase occurs in S.6.8, qudiya al-amru, "the amr would have been decided," which is very similar in construction to that phrase occurring in 19.21, amran magdiyan, "an amr decided." Secondly, we are told that if an angel were sent, he would appear in the form of a man. Thirdly, the angel would be clothed, presumably as a human being. The mention of clothing may be understood to include all those habits characteristic of man in the world. 'Isā ate food and exhibited all those traits belonging to the human race. There are two things in these verses demonstrative of the fact that 'Isā was not an angel sent down, if indeed any had ever been sent. First, if 'Isā had been an angel, the amr, in relation to the Children of Israel, would have been very quickly executed. This means, as we have seen above, that judgment would have fallen upon his people among whom he came and ministered. The Qur'ān does not present us with such an occurrence of judgment. Secondly, he ate food; this is something we have been told angels do not do, though they have the capacity for it. Logically, clothing is no more appropriate for an angel than eating. We have merely indicated the similarities and the dissimilarities between the sending of an angel and the sending of the 'Isā-spirit. There is no doubt a great closeness between the angels and the spirit-class of being, as we have seen.

That closeness is illustrated in another way. S.4.172/170 tells us that "The Masīḥ will not disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels near unto Him." We are told here that 'Īsā and the angels have this in common that they are all servants and that they all accept this without disdain. We know from this verse and S.3.45/40 that 'Īsā and the angels also share the blessedness of being "near unto Him." There is an affinity shared but no identity declared.

We repeat that the Qur'ān nowhere states that 'Īsā is a man. One approximation to that kind of expression is found in 3.46/41, "He will speak to men both in the cradle and of age." The Qur'ān does not even contrast the humanity of 'Īsā against the claims of some that he was Allah. It would have been so easy to say that 'Īsā was merely a man; instead, time after time, he is reduced to creature-status, a "servant," but never characterized verbally as "man." The contrast alone between Muḥammad and 'Īsā may be instructive; the same contrast could be drawn between 'Īsā and any other prophet-apostle:

1. Muḥammad was nothing but a man (S.17.93/95).
'Īsā was nothing but a servant (S.43.59; 4.172/170).
2. Muḥammad was not a witness over his people (17.96/98).
'Īsā was witness over his, while in the world (5.117).
3. Adam was placed in the world as Allah's khalīfa (2.30/28).
'Īsā is as Adam in the sight of Allah (3.59/52).¹⁷²

From S.21.7, the objection may be raised that only men had preceded Muḥammad. However, from verse 5, it is apparent that these

¹⁷². Only Adam and Dāwūd (S.38.26/25) occupied this position of khalīfa; all other references are found in one of the two plural forms, khalā'if or khulafā', and are used in a general way of people.

scoffers were demanding a miracle to substantiate Myhammad's claim to apostleship. Quite obviously, the Qur'ān excludes 'Īsā from this consideration of "men" in verse 7, where the emphasis is laid on revelation instead of miracles. 'Īsā is in a class apart since he did both. Sura 12.109 presents us with a similar situation where again the stress is upon the revelation involved, and not upon the apostles as men. There is another instance where such a clear contrast is afforded that Sura 14.10/12,11/13, is quoted:

They said, "Ye are but men like us; fain would ye turn us from our fathers' worship! Bring us therefore some clear proof." Their apostles said to them, "We are indeed but men like you. But Allah bestoweth favors on such of His servants as He pleaseth, and it is not in our power to bring you any special proof...."

Three factors here should be noted: (1) the apostles speaking here admit their helplessness to produce miracles as they are but men. They nevertheless threw the door open wider for Allah to choose any of His servants and bestow His favor upon them. "Servants" is seen here as a far broader term than "men"; (2) 'Īsā brought abundant, clear proofs (43.63; 2.87/81,253/254; 3.49/43; 5.110); and (3) when specifically challenged--as Muḥammad was being challenged he re--to produce a "Table," he did so (5.112-115).

The evidence is clear; 'Īsā was not a man in the sense that human beings are men. He never lost his creature-status but retained his spirit nature. This was distinct from the nature of angels although he shared with them, as he did with the men to whom he ministered, many apparent qualities. Within the spirit class of beings,

moreover, he is to be distinguished from Gabriel with whom, again, he shared similar traits and duties.

F. Some Muslim Contributions From Diverse Post-Quranic Sources

Modern Literature

When Christ was born, a glory shone
This whole created world upon;
Then chivalry came down to earth
And gentleness, to greet his birth;
A radiance did the lands adorn
When Christ was born.

When Christ was seen in fleshly guise
Rose dawn suffused the night-dimmed skies;
Then earth and heaven danced with light,
The rippling fields were gay and bright,
And all creation shone with sheen
When Christ was seen.

When Christ was given, no threat was heard
Of armed strife, no passion stirred
Within the hearts of warlike men;
A monarch came to earth, and then,
Of earth grown weary, rose to heaven
When Christ was given.¹⁷³

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Thus a modern Muslim sees 'Isā, and he is not alone. Kamel

Hussein's celebrated novel, City of Wrong, is illustrative of the depth

173. Arberry, Aspects of Islamic Civilization, New York, 1964, p. 367.

174. Ahmad Shawqī (d.1932), Al-Shawqiyyāt (2nd ed.), Cairo, Vol. I; 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Judah al-Sahhar, The Messiah Jesus Son of Mary (1952). This novel uses three sources: Qur'ān, Bible and History. The teachings of Christ are quoted from the Gospels; the author shows great admiration and deals with the spiritual relation of Christ to Allah. He supports the tradition that Judas was crucified in 'Isā's place. 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqad, The Genius of Christ (1953). This is a historical survey of Judaism and Christianity; no answer is given to the ending of 'Isā's life. Khālīd Muḥammad Khālīd (of Azhar University), Together on the Road, Muhammad and Jesus (1958). The author gives an evaluation of the ethical and social principles found in the Bible and the Qur'ān.

of thinking attained by some of the contemporary Muslim scholars.

Ameer 'Alī speaks for the consensus of Muslim thinking when he says,

Whilst Islam accepts Jesus as one of the greatest teachers of the world, the Messiah of the Jews, sent to regenerate and reform a backsliding race, it regards him strictly as a human personality. The "Immaculate Conception" is the only mystery it recognizes.¹⁷⁶

Rahman repeatedly evokes an image of 'Isā which underlines the mercy he preached and the nobility and humility which he exemplified. ¹⁷⁷ Against this background, he rebukes Christianity for its provocation of war and destructiveness in the past. Constance Padwick has made a profound study of Muslim prayer manuals. In summing up, she says,

Two trends are noticeable in the prayers of our manuals. The one, based on all the Qur'anic stories of prophets, is to make list-prayers, naming them in a series, especially as exemplars in worship. Fuller meditations are found concerning a few of the prophets, especially Moses, which unfortunately, space forbids us to reproduce. There is singularly little, considering the high place allotted to him in the Qur'an,

175. Hussein, op. cit., p. 53. The author puts this interesting note into the mouth of Caiaphas regarding the death of 'Isā: "Beyond that I do not care whether he is exalted to heaven, exiled to the end of the earth, or crucified--if God has willed he die a violent death. If that befalls him it will be by Divine decree and there's no reversing that. God know more of the unknown than we."

176. Ameer 'Alī, op. cit., p. 244.

177. 'Abd-al-Rahman, The Eternal Message of Muhammad, New York, 1964, p. 67: "Mercy, the foundation of all progress, was preached by Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad; it is, moreover, the message of all the apostles and righteous men of God."

concerning 'Īsā, and the list-prayers tend to break off before reaching him....¹⁷⁸

Islām, then, has not neglected the person of 'Īsā as far as the Qur'ān is concerned. It is indeed true that the Qur'ān may leave its reader, Muslim and Christian alike, with serious questions and may appear to have vast lacunae in its presentation of 'Īsā; but this fact in no way negates the picture that is displayed. After all, there is a great deal less said and a great many more questions left unanswered with respect to Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm, to name only a few outstanding Quranic personages. We cannot agree with Abd-El-Jalil that "later Islam which venerates Christ profoundly will form a strange and unreal image of him."¹⁷⁹

Philosophy

It is suffering which leads to success each time.
So long as Mary did not feel the pains of child-bearing, she did not go to the palm tree. This body is as Mary and each of us has a Christ in

178. Padwick, Muslim Devotion, London, 1961, p. 168. In one collection purchased in Cairo, verses and prayers for Ramadan are given. In one entitled, Majmu'ū tabaraka dhū'l-'ulā, the prayer occurs: "Make us, O Lord, the comrades of Muḥammad and Abraham Thy Friend and 'Īsā Thy Spirit," p. 3. In a prayer entitled "Qanj il-'arsh," compiled by Isma-'īl Ibn Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Qadīrī, the phrase occurs, "'Īsā the Spirit of God." 'Abd al-Qadīr al-Jilānī, in a collection called Al-Fuyudātu 'r-rabbanīyya (Cairo) makes mention of 'Īsā in a prayer entitled, "Wasiyya": "wandering as a pilgrim belongs to the Prophet of God, 'Īsā," p. 38.

179. Abd-El-Jalil, op. cit., pp. 194,195: "Et l'islam postérieur, qui vénère profondément le Christ, se composera de lui une physiologie étrange et irréaliste, sorte de moine errant intemporel et inconsistant; cela, même chez les mystiques qui ont vu en lui le maître de la vie parfaite préparant avec continuité les hommes parfaits qui annoncent l'avènement de la justice triomphante de Dieu."

him; if the pain of love rises up in us, our Christ will be born.¹⁸⁰

It is thus that Mawlana Rumi envisages 'Isā. In his doctrine of "the perfect man," Jīlī takes a different view.

The Christians are right when they say that Christ, Mary, and the Holy Ghost are all manifestations of God, but they are wrong when they limit this manifestation to three persons only.¹⁸¹

Jīlī's conception of the manifestation of Allah is implicit in Rumi's expression of Christ-bearing. On the other hand, attributed to Ibn Rushd is the expression, "the three impostors," referring to MŪSĀ, 'Isā,¹⁸² and Muḥammad. The time of the formation of this legend is uncertain and surely if the quotation is a true one, it must be understood in a philosophical sense. Rahman demonstrates that Muslim philosophers attributed to the leading Greek thinkers a certain divine missionary

180. Corbin, *op. cit.*, p. 252: "C'est la souffrance qui conduit au succès chaque fois. Tant que Maryam ne ressentit point les douleurs de l'enfantement, elle n'alla pas sous le palmier. Ce corps est comme Maryam, et chacun de nous a un Christ en lui (tan ham-cun Maryam ast, va har yaki 'Isa darum); si la douleur d'amour se lève en nous, notre Christ naîtra."

181. M.M. Sharif, A History of Muslim Philosophy, Wiesbaden, 1966, Vol. I, p. 845. 'Abd al-Karīm Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī (767/1365, d. 832/1428), Al-insān al-kāmil. Urdu translation by Fadal Miran.

182. Georges Rivoirès, Visages de l'Islam, Lausanne, 1946, p.236 "Il est difficile de déterminer à quelle époque se rapporte exactement la formation de la légende d'Averroès maître d'impïété, auteur blasphématoire du célèbre mot des 'trois imposteurs,' qui eut la hardiesse de réunir dans une commune injure les trois religions révélées, celles de Moïse, du Christ et de Mahomet."

character. The Muslims saw this mission carried out in actual history
 in 'Isā and, par excellence, in Muhammad.¹⁸³

Eschatology

From the Fiqh Akbar II,

The rising of the sun from the place where it sets, the descent of 'Isā from Heaven, as well as the other eschatological signs according to the description thereof in authentic tradition. It is said that right up to the present day the Hanāfites cling to the old view of Jesus as the vicegerent of God on earth in the last days, to the exclusion of the Mahdi, whom they do not expect.¹⁸⁴

Jomier rightly states that if the Muslims believe in the return of 'Isā before the end of the world, they do not expect any disruption in religious priorities. 'Isā will fulfill a role in the service of Islām.¹⁸⁵

As far as the Shī'ites are concerned, they are not alone in their messianic expectations though they have their peculiar interpretation of these. The Messianic idea was imported into Islām at an early period by Jewish and Christian converts and soon established itself as a part of the Muslim faith.¹⁸⁶ Tradition soon contributed to

183. Rahman, Prophecy in Islam, London, 1958, p. 59.

184. Wensinck, op. cit., pp. 197, 244.

185. Jomier, Bible et Coran, p. 26: "Si les musulmans pensent au retour de Jésus avant la fin du monde, ils n'espèrent de sa venue aucun changement religieux; Jésus jouera seulement un rôle au service de l'Islam." Cf. p. 60: "Notons enfin que ces vues apocalyptiques n'ont rien de messianique. C'est à Dieu seul que tout est rapporté. Lui seul sera le Juge et le Roi en ce jour terrible."

186. R.A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs, Cambridge, 1962, p. 216: "Traditions ascribed to the Prophet began to circulate, declaring that the approach of the Last Judgment would be heralded by a

the concretisation of these beliefs within Islām. However, such eschatological anticipation fitted Shi'ite views admirably to whom "each of the prophets, from Adam to Jesus, was a particular mazhar, a partial reality of that eternal prophetic Reality."¹⁸⁷

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, born in 1835 in Qadian in the Punjab, claimed to be the promised Messiah of the Christians, the prophet and the Mahdi for Muslims and the return of Krishna for the Hindus. A few years following his death in 1908, the community split, the minority going to Lahore and moving increasingly closer to liberal orthodoxy.¹⁸⁸ Thus the Ahmadiyya movement was born,¹⁸⁹ and this is the form of Islām best known in America and Europe today because of its missionary activities.

In official Turkish circles there is a tendency to simplify the Messianic expectation by giving the fullest weight to this traditional

time of tumult and confusion, by the return of Jesus, who would slay the Antichrist (al-Dajjāl), and finally by the coming of the Mahdi, i.e., 'the God-guided one,' who would fill the earth with justice even as it was then filled with violence and iniquity."

187. Corbin, Histoire de la philosophie islamique, Paris, 1964, p. 99: "Chacun des prophètes, d'Adam à Jésus, fut un mazhar particulier, une réalité partielle de cette Réalité prophétique éternelle."

188. Fisher, op. cit., pp. ix,x.

189. Ibid., p. 62, from H.A. Walter, "Review of Religion," Vol. II, p. 412: "It is plainly indicated that someone from among the Muslims will first acquire the characteristics of Mary on account of his perfect righteousness, and be called by that name, and then the spirit of Jesus being breathed into him, he will be called by the latter name. In accordance with those words of the Holy Qur'an, Almighty God first named me Mary, and then spoke of the breathing into me of a soul, and lastly named me Jesus."

saying of Muhammad: "There is no mahdī but Jesus," seeing that 'Īsā must come from the clouds, whereas other mahdis may arise from human society.¹⁹⁰ Indian shī'ites believe in the reappearance of 'Īsā simultaneously with the last of their twelve imāms, and look forward to the amalgamation of the two creeds.¹⁹¹

Jesus will then appear and follow him. He it is who is the Rightly Guided (mahdi), about whom the Prophet gave information that when he appears, Jesus, son of Mary, will descend upon the earth and pray behind him.¹⁹²

To a large extent, Shī'ism adapted the doctrine of Mani. This was a fantastic mixture of the tenets of Christianity with the ancient philosophy of the Persians and the Chaldeans.

Christ appeared among the Jews clothed with the shadowy form of a human body, and during his ministry taught mortals how to disengage the rational soul from the corrupt body. The Prince of Darkness having incited the Jews to put him to death, he was apparently, but not in reality, crucified. On the contrary, having fulfilled his mission, he returned to his throne in the sun.¹⁹³

Thus the Shī'ites gloss S.4.157/156, "They did not kill his soul, his person."¹⁹⁴

190. Hurgronje, op. cit., p. 96.

191. S.Khuda Bukhsh, op. cit., p. 367.

192. J.N. Hollister, The Shī'a of India, London, 1953, p. 98.

193. Ameer Ali, op. cit., pp. xlviil,xlix.

194. Gardet, op. cit., p. 40.

Sufism

In early Muslim mysticism outside Arabia, 'Īsā still occupies a place alongside and only slightly--if at all--inferior to Muḥammad, but gradually the figure of Muḥammad transcends the other. It was only logical that the mystics would find in 'Īsā the ideal of which they sought the realization for themselves. In meditating the Quranic passages referring to him, they found what seemed a perfect fusion between the created and the uncreated. 'Īsā, created by the breath of Allah, is called, "spirit of Allah." Such phrases lent themselves to mystical interpretation.

A very early mystic, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, suggested, "If thou shouldst wish, thou mightest name as a third the Lord of the Spirit and the Word for in his affair there is a marvel." Al-Baṣrī attributed to 'Īsā and Dāwud the austere practices which presently characterized so distinctively the Sufi ascetics, even to the wearing of wool.

195. Gibb, Mohamedanism, p. 131.

196. Hayek, op. cit., p. 136: "Par ailleurs c'est en méditant les versets christologiques du Coran, que les Mystiques sont parvenues à mettre en Jésus l'idéal dont ils cherchaient pour eux-mêmes la réalisation. Dans le Coran en effet, Jésus, qui est créé par le Souffle d'Allah, semblait représenter la plus parfaite fusion du créé avec l'incréé, et avoir résolu l'antinomie des 'deux hommes', par la démission totale de son esprit charnel (nafs) devant l'Esprit divin (rūh). Il y est lui-même appelé rūb Allah, Esprit d'Allah, appellation qu'on retrouve constamment dans nos textes."

197. Arberry, Sufism, p. 34. Cf. Abū Nu'aim, Hilya, Vol. II, pp. 134-140.

198. Ibid., p. 35.

Sīrīn, on the other hand, criticized certain ascetic contemporaries who imitated ʿIsā in the wearing of wool, saying, "I prefer to follow the example of our Prophet who dressed in cotton."¹⁹⁹

Rumi, writing about al-Sistāmī who claimed to be Allah,

Ah! you who smite with your sword him beside himself
 You smite yourself therewith. Beware!
 For he that is beside himself is annihilated and safe;
 Yea, he dwells in security forever.
 His form is vanished, he is a mere mirror;
 Nothing is seen in him but the reflexion of another.
 If you spit at it, you spit at your own face,
 And if you hit that mirror, you hit yourself.
 If you see an ugly face in it, 'tis your own,
 And if you see a Jesus there, you are its mother Mary.
 He is neither this nor that--he is void of form;
 'Tis your own form which is reflected back to you.²⁰⁰

Other mystics, such as Ibn ʿArabī, further develop the Muslim conception of ʿIsā. Ibn ʿArabī considered ʿIsā the seal of Universal Holiness, giving him an unequalled transhistoric role. Pir Jamāl saw the element of love in ʿIsā,

O Master, know that the greatest Name is Love;
 The most noble is Love, because the most ancient is Love.
 The instruction of teachers and the perception of intellects
 And the Holy Spirit and Jesus the Son of Mary--is love.²⁰¹

One of the most outstanding mystics of Islam, al-Hallāj, held that man is essentially divine. Allah created Adam in His own image. He projected from Himself that image of His eternal love, that He might

199. Massignon, Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane, Paris, 1954, p. 153.

200. Nicholson, The Mystics of Islam, London, 1966, p. 133.
 Cf. Whinfield, Masnavi, p. 196.

201. Ibid., p. 47, from "The Sufi Path of Love."

behold Himself as in a mirror. Notice the similarity of language in Jamal and Rumi above. Hence He ordered the angels to worship Adam (S.2.34/32) in whom, according to al-Hallāj, He became incarnate as in 'Īsā.

Glory be to Him who revealed in His humanity
the secret of His radiant divinity, and then
appeared to His creatures visibly in the shape
of one who ate and drank ('Īsā).²⁰²

Al-Hallāj agreed with al-Junaid, seeing in the supreme mystical experience a reunion with Allah. He proceeded to elaborate this, however, by teaching that man may thus be viewed as very Allah incarnate, taking as his example not Muḥammad, as we might expect, but 'Īsā.²⁰³ It is interesting to note that many of the circumstances surrounding the apparent crucifixion of 'Īsā are found surrounding that of al-Hallāj even to a substitute being killed in his place.²⁰⁴

The Brethren of Purity, as de Vaux points out, who popularized the philosophers, went further than these in the practice of syncretism. Without embarrassment they recognized 'Īsā and his disciples as the founders of the apostolic life to which they claimed to be devoted. One probably cannot find among orthodox Sufis any such open admission of dependence.²⁰⁵

202. Ibid., p. 150.

203. Arberry, Sufism, p. 93.

204. Massignon, Al-Hallaj Martyr Mystique de l'Islam, Paris, 1922, pp. 198, 199.

205. De Vaux, Gazali, Paris, 1902, p. 191: "Les Frères de la

We have referred to the several ways by which Islām expresses itself, in an attempt to add to the support which we find in the Qur'ān. Professor Salim, a spokesman for Islām in the modern period, underlines an historical surrender of independent judgment,

Muslims ceased to study the Quran independently. To do so was heresy and heterodoxy....They ceased to make use of their common sense; they lost their power of discretion, their right of private judgment and finally all trace of an enlightened nation, for no fault of their own, except through the evil influence of the slave-mentality, this refusal to do something not done previously by the Ulama of the second and third century Hijra.²⁰⁶

Muhammad Iqbal urges a frank departure from this traditional attitude:

The Ulema of Islam claim finality for the popular schools of Muhammadan Law....But since things have changed and the world of Islam is today confronted and affected by new forces set free by the extraordinary development of human thought in all its directions, I see no reason why this attitude should be maintained any longer. Did the founders of our schools ever claim finality for their reasoning and interpretations? Never.²⁰⁷

Pureté, qui furent les vulgarisateurs des Philosophes, mais qui poussèrent plus loin qu'eux la pratique du syncrétisme, ont sans embarras reconnu le Christ et Ses disciples comme les fondateurs de la vie apostolique à laquelle ils prétendaient eux-mêmes se vouer. Je ne pense pas que l'on trouve nulle part un aveu aussi formel de dépendance par rapport au christianisme chez les Soufis orthodoxes."

206. Sweetman, "Modernism and Polemic in Indian Islam Today," International Review of Missions, Vol. XXVI, p. 193. Advocates of the reinterpretation of Islām are constantly referring to the Muslims' enslavement to the past and this article by Professor Salim appeared in the Muslim Revival, June, 1933.

207. Ibid., p. 191. Quoted from Iqbal's six lectures on the reconstruction of religious thought in Islām.

In our attempt to bring together and relate all Quranic data with regard to 'Isā, it is of the highest importance that we do not construct a framework derived from our own tradition as many have done, ²⁰⁸ an approach which easily obscures whatever is really distinctive in the Qur'ān's presentation of 'Isā.

208. Among such are: Hayek, Le Christ de l'Islem; Parrinder, Jesus in the Qur'an; Zwemer, The Moslem Christ.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE MAJOR CREATION PASSAGES

38.71-76/77 (A II 12)

When your Lord said to the angels:
"I am going to create a man from
clay,

And when I have formed him and
breathed into him something of
My Spirit,

then fall down before him,
prostrating yourselves."

They all prostrated themselves
together
except Iblīs. He became proud and
was of the disbelievers.

7.11/10, 12/11 (A III 19)

We created you, then fashioned
you;

then said We to the angels,

"Prostrate yourselves unto Adam."

And they prostrated themselves.

except Iblīs. He was not of those
who prostrated themselves.

2.29/27-34/32 (B 1)

It is He who created for you all
that is on the earth. Then He
turned toward the heaven which He
fashioned into a sevenfold har-
mony. He is omniscient.
When your Lord said to the an-
gels: "I am going to place a
viceroy upon the earth." "Will
You place there one who will sow
scandal and shed blood, while we
celebrate Your praise and pro-
claim Your holiness?" "Indeed,
what you do not know, I know
altogether!"

And when We said to the angels:

"Prostrate yourselves before
Adam,"
they prostrated themselves,

except Iblīs. He refused, became
proud and was of the disbelievers.

38.71-76/77 (A II 12)

And He said, "O Iblīs, what hindered you from prostrating yourself before that which I created with My own hands?

Did you become proud or are you a superior being?"

He replied, "I am better than he; You created me of fire and You created him of clay."

7.11/10, 12/11 (A III 19)

He said, "What hindered you from prostrating yourself

when I commanded you?"

He replied, "I am better than he; You created me of fire and You created him of clay."

2.29/27-34/32 (B 1)

APPENDIX B

THE "BE" PASSAGES

So! Is not He who created the heavens and the earth capable of creating their likes? He is the omniscient Creator. His command, when He intends a thing, is only to say to it, "Be!" and it is.

S.36.81,62

Our statement to a thing when We intend it is only to say to it, "Be!" and it is.

S.16.40/42

It is He who created you from dust, then from a sperm drop, then from thick blood, then brought you forth, infant, that you might reach your maturity and old age--some of you are recalled to Him in death before that--and attain a fixed term. Perhaps you will reason. It is He who gives life and causes death; and when He decrees a thing, He has only to say to it, "Be!" and it is.

S.40.67/69, 68/70

It is He who created the heavens and the earth; truly a day when He says, "Be," it is.

S.6.72

Innovator of the heavens and the earth! When He decrees a thing, He has only to say to it, "Be!" and it is.

S.2.117/111

She said, "My Lord, how shall a male child be to me when no man has touched me?" He replied, "Thus Allah creates what He will. When He decrees a thing, He has only to say to it, 'Be,' and it is."

S.3.47/42

The likeness of 'Isā before Allah is that of Adam; He created him from dust and then said to him, "Be!" and he was.
S.3.59/52

It is not proper for Allah to acquire a male child. Glory be to Him! When He decrees something, He has only to say to it, "Be!" and it is.

S.19.35/36

APPENDIX C

THE BIRTH PASSAGES

MIDDLE MECCAN

19.16-23, 29/30-33/34

And mention Maryam in the Book, when she withdrew from her people to an eastern place, and she separated herself from them by means of a veil.

We sent Our Spirit to her, and he appeared before her as a well-built man.

She said, "I take refuge with the Most Merciful from you, if you are Allah-fearing."

He said, "I am only the apostle of your Lord that I may bestow upon you a righteous son."

MEDINAN

3.42/37-47/42, 59/52

And when the angels said, "O Maryam, Truly Allah has chosen you, and purified you; He has chosen you above all the women of the world! O Maryam, be devoted to your Lord and prostrate yourself and bow down with others of like mind."

That is from the tidings of things unseen which We suggest to you. You were not with them when they cast their pens to see who would sponsor Maryam, nor were you with them when they disputed about it.

When the angels said, "O Maryam, Allah gives you good tidings of a word from Him whose name is the

19.16-23, 29/30-33/34

3.42/37-47/42, 59/52

She said, "How shall I have a son when no man has touched me, and I have not been unchaste."

He said, "Thus it shall be. Your Lord said, 'This is easy for Me.' And We will make him a sign to the people and a mercy from Us,' and it was a thing decreed.

And she conceived him and withdrew with him to a distant place. Birth pains came upon her by the trunk of a palm tree. She said, "Oh, would that I had died before this and been totally forgotten!"

.....

So she gestured toward him. They said, "How shall we speak with him who is just a baby in the cradle?"

He said, "I am the servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and appointed me a prophet

Masīh, 'Isā, son of Maryam, illustrious in this world and in the next, and of those who are near. He will speak to people in the cradle and when mature, and shall be of the righteous."

She said, "O my Lord, How shall I have a male child when no man has touched me?"

He said, "Thus it shall be.

Allah creates what He will.

When He decrees a thing, He has only to say, 'Be!' and it is.

And He will teach him the Book, and the Wisdom, and the Tawrāt and the Injīl and an apostle to the Children of Israel...."

19.16-23, 29/30-33/34

And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has prescribed for me Prayer and almsgiving as long as I am alive; and to behave properly toward my mother. He has not made me either rebellious or miserable. And peace is upon me, the day I was born and the day I shall die, and the day I shall be resurrected alive."

3.42/37-47/42, 59/52

With Allah, the similitude of 'Isā is that of Adam: He created him of dust, then He said to him, "Be!" and he was.

19.34/35,35/36

That is 'Isā, son of Maryam, the Statement of Truth about whom they are in doubt.

It is not for Allah to acquire a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing, He has only to say to it, "Be!" and it is.

APPENDIX D

THE DEATH PASSAGES

19.31/32, 33/34

And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has prescribed for me prayer and almsgiving as long as I live.

And peace is upon me, the day I was born and the day I shall die, and the day I shall be resurrected alive.

3.54/47, 55/48

They schemed and Allah schemed, but Allah is the best Schemer! When Allah said, "O 'Isā, I am going to recall you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve. Until the Day of Resurrection, I am placing those who have followed you above those who have disbelieved. Afterwards to Me shall be your return, and I shall decide between you with regard to that over which you differ.

4.156/155-159/157

And because of their disbelief, for having said an immense calumny against Maryam and for having said, "We have killed the Masīh, 'Isā son of Maryam, the apostle of Allah." Whereas they neither killed him nor crucified him, it was made to appear so unto them. They who differed about him were in doubt concerning it; they had no absolute knowledge and followed only conjecture. They did not slay him for certain, but Allah raised him to Himself. Allah is mighty! wise! There is no one among the People of Scripture who will not surely believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.

5.117

I only said to them what You commanded me: "Worship Allah my Lord and your Lord." While I lived among them, I was a witness of their actions, but when You took me to Yourself, You were the Watcher over them. You are a Witness of everything.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>A.O.</u>	<u>Acta Orientalia</u>
<u>H.J.</u>	<u>Hibbert Journal</u>
<u>H.T.R.</u>	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
<u>I.C.</u>	<u>Islamic Culture</u>
<u>I.Q.</u>	<u>Islamic Quarterly</u>
<u>I.R.M.</u>	<u>International Review of Missions</u>

<u>J.A.</u>	<u>Journal Asiatique</u>
<u>J.Q.R.</u>	<u>Jewish Quarterly Review</u>
<u>J.R.A.S.</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</u>
<u>M.I.D.E.O.</u>	<u>Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicaine d'études orientales du Caire</u>
<u>M.W.</u>	<u>Muslim World</u>
<u>P.O.</u>	<u>Patrologia Orientalia</u>
<u>R.E.I.</u>	<u>Revue des études islamiques</u>
<u>R.E.J.</u>	<u>Revue des études juives</u>
<u>R.H.R.</u>	<u>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</u>
<u>R.I.E.I.</u>	<u>Revista del Instituto de Estudios Islamicos</u>
<u>R.S.P.T.</u>	<u>Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques</u>
<u>Z.A.W.</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
<u>Z.D.M.G.</u>	<u>Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</u>

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