

Praise for *The Islamic Jesus*

Jesus is about so much more than Islam or Jesus. It's about the very bridge that connects Jews and Christians with the followers of Muhammad. Whether he's a Jewish radical or a Christian Messiah, Jesus is the most beloved prophets in Islam. In this book, Mustafa Akyol calls the Jesus persona and the role it plays in all three religions. Akyol's ground contribution in proving that Judaism and Christianity are not alien to Muslims, but rather intrinsic parts of the entire Islamic tradition.

—Reza Aslan, author of *No god but God* and *Zealot*

Akyol's dialogue is undoubtedly an admirable way of advancing tolerance and understanding. But removing one's 'military boots' and stepping into the shoes of another religious conviction in order to ask 'what can Muslims today?' is the preferred way of this book, which I applaud. Akyol's proposition to discern the Islamic Jesus through the Quranic and hadithal literature uncannily echoes the Orthodox Church's priority to discern the Gospel Jesus through the eastern liturgical tradition."

—John Chryssavgis, Archdeacon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and author of *Bartholomew: Apostle and Visionary*

For Westerners, especially Christians, to gain more insight into the understanding of Jesus—upon whom we place our peace—and also into the Jesus so highly venerated in Islam, he is not divinized as he is in Christianity. He remains a prophet."

—Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Professor of Islamic Studies, George Washington University

Akyol is the kind of public intellectual our fractured world needs. He is rooted in a specific tradition but also capable of engaging others with honesty, clarity, and good will. In this timely and important book, Akyol offers a thoughtful account of an Islamic Jesus and a wonderful resource for anyone interested in Abrahamic dialogue."

—John Barton, PhD, Director of the Center for Faith and Learning, Pepperdine University

» THE ISLAMIC JESUS MUSTAFA AKYOL

"Profoundly about the very bridge that connects Jews and Christians with the followers of Muhammad."

—Reza Aslan, author of *No god but God* and *Zealot*

*How
the King
of the Jews
Became
a Prophet
of the Muslims*

THE ISLAMIC JESUS

MUSTAFA AKYOL

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connected to Judaism and Christianity. At the same time, he challenges readers to consider how earlier religious controversies, and the figure of Jesus himself, might offer guidance for Islam today.”

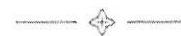
—Gabriel Said Reynolds, Professor of Islamic Studies and
Theology, University of Notre Dame

“*The Islamic Jesus* is a read worth the consideration of those from both the Biblically based faith tradition and the Qur’anic based faith tradition who are serious about their faith. Akyol’s focus on the message of the Christ rather than on the nature of the Christ is a helpful focus towards interaction which can benefit all.”

—Jerald Whitehouse, former Director,
Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations of the
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



THE ISLAMIC JESUS



*How the King of the Jews Became
a Prophet of the Muslims*

MUSTAFA AKYOL



St. Martin's Press
New York

For Riada, the love of my life

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What Mahometans believe concerning Christ and his doctrine were [not] the inventions of Mahomet . . . but they were as old as the time of the Apostles, having been the sentiments of whole Sects or Churches.

—John Toland, *Nazarenus: Or Jewish, Gentile, and Mahometan Christianity*, London, 1718

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CHAPTER FIVE

MARY AND HER BABY

Remember the one who guarded her chastity. We breathed into her from Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for all people.

—The Qur'an 21:31

IN THE WHOLE QUR'AN, WHICH HAS MORE THAN SIX THOUSAND verses, there is only one woman mentioned by name. There is even a long chapter named after her. Even more, there is a longer chapter named after her family. And yet that woman is not Aminah, the mother of the Prophet Muhammad; or Khadijah, his first wife; or Fatima, his daughter, as one could have expected to see.¹ She is rather Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Mary is not just named repeatedly in the Muslim scripture—some thirty-four times, compared to nineteen times in the New Testament. She is also exceptionally praised. “God has chosen you and purified you,” angels tell Mary in the Qur'an. “He has chosen you over all other women.”² Consequently, Mary became highly respected in all Muslim cultures, as her Arabic name, *Maryam*, has been given to countless baby girls. There are shrines in her name in the Middle East, which are visited by not just Christians but also Muslims. Among the Sufis, the mystics of Islam, Mary has enjoyed an even deeper adoration, as a perfect example of devotion to God.

In the twentieth century, a group of Sufis even established an order named *Maryamiyya*, or “the followers of Mary,” whose members include some prominent American academics, such as the Iranian-born philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr.³

Even Mary as she appears in Christian texts and contexts has received Muslim respect. Legend has it that when the Prophet Muhammad smashed the hundreds of idols in the Ka'aba in the year 630, toward the end of his life, he spared only the frescoes of Jesus and Mary. In 1187, when the Muslim ruler Salahaddin reconquered Jerusalem, he destroyed the churches built in the city by the Crusaders—not those built by Eastern Christians, with which he had no problem—but he still spared a Crusader relic: the Church of Saint Anne, which was believed to be the childhood home of Mary. “The preservation of this Church demonstrates the Islamic devotion to Mary,” a Catholic source appreciatively notes, “as the Muslims’ great reverence for Our Lady precluded [them] from destroying her birthplace.”⁴

The Qur'anic story of Mary, which is impressively detailed for a scripture whose main focus is elsewhere, is placed in two separate chapters: the chapter “Mary,” which is accepted to be “Meccan” (revealed in Mecca) and thus relatively earlier; and the chapter “Family of Imran,” which is accepted to be “Medinan” (revealed in Medina) and thus relatively later. There are parallels between the Mary accounts in these two chapters, but also some differences. Moreover, there are both parallels and differences between them and the New Testament and Christian Apocrypha.

Let's begin with the chapter “Mary,” which presents us a storyline that largely resembles the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. The plot begins with “an account of your Lord's grace towards His servant, Zachariah.”⁵ We meet him, whose name is Zakariyya in Arabic, without any introduction, without any explanation. But we are still drawn into his story, when we learn about the secret prayer he gave to God:

When he called to his Lord secretly, saying, “Lord, my bones have weakened and my hair is ashen grey, but never, Lord, have I ever

prayed to You in vain: I fear [what] my kinsmen [will do] when I am gone, for my wife is barren, so grant me a successor—a gift from You—to be my heir and the heir of the family of Jacob. Lord, make him well pleasing [to You].”⁶

In return, to Zachariah’s surprise, God answers his prayers and heralds him a blessed son:

O Zachariah! surely We give you good news of a boy whose name shall be Yahya: We have not made before anyone his equal.

He said: “O my Lord! when shall I have a son, and my wife is barren, and I myself have reached indeed the extreme degree of old age?”

He said: “So shall it be, your Lord says: It is easy to Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing.”⁷

The son promised to Zechariah is John the Baptist, who is named in the Qur’an as *Yahya*.⁸ The word seems to be a derivative of the Syriac name *Yohannan*. Since Zechariah is still surprised by the news of this baby boy, he asks God: “My Lord, give me a Sign.” God says, ‘Your Sign is not to speak to people for three nights despite the fact that you are perfectly able to.’⁹ Notably, the Gospel of Luke also notes this detail, reporting that Zechariah was told, “thou shalt be silent and not able to speak.”¹⁰ But it is the Qur’an which specifies the period as “for three days.”

Angels also call on Zechariah, telling him that his baby boy will be no ordinary son, but will precede someone even more extraordinary: “God gives you news of John, confirming a Word from God. He will be noble and chaste, a prophet, one of the righteous.”¹¹ The noteworthy term here, “Word from God,” is used for none other than Jesus. For John, the Qur’an also notes the following:

[We said], “John, hold on to the Scripture firmly.” While he was still a boy, We granted him wisdom, tenderness from Us, and

purity. He was devout, kind to his parents, not domineering or rebellious. Peace was on him the day he was born, the day he died, and it will be on him the day he is raised to life again.¹²

The emphasis here that John the Baptist “held on to the Scripture firmly” fits the doctrinal line of both Jewish Christianity and Islam: that there is a chain of prophets whose primary mission is to uphold the revealed Word of God. Meanwhile, the Qur’anic emphasis on John being “chaste” seems to resonate with the note in the Gospel of Luke that John drank “no wine nor strong drink.”¹³

That is all that we learn from the Qur’an about John the Baptist. Actually he is not called “the Baptist,” as the concept of baptism never occurs in the Qur’an. Neither do we learn from the Qur’an about John’s encounter with Jesus or his execution by Herod. As is the case with most Old Testament figures, such as Elijah and Job, the Qur’an briefly touches on the story of John the Baptist and highlights only its own key theological message: there has been a chain of prophets, from time immemorial, who all proclaimed the same monotheistic message.

MARY’S PREGOSPEL

To proceed with the Qur’anic story of Mary in its correct chronology, we need to go to the other relevant section, “The Family of Imran.”¹⁴ This is one of the longest chapters of the Qur’an, and a considerable part of it is about the story of Mary. In fact the very name of the chapter is closely related to Mary, because Imran is none other than the father of Mary. This may sound strange, for while the New Testament never mentions the names of Mary’s parents, Christian Apocrypha has established that her mother’s name was Anna and her father’s name was Joachim, from the Hebrew *Yehoyaqim*. Therefore, how *Yehoyaqim* became Imran in the Qur’an has led to a scholarly discussion, to which we shall return.¹⁵

For now, let’s see what the Qur’an says about the family of Imran.

Interestingly, the person we really meet here is not Imran, who is totally obscure aside from the mere mention of his name, but his wife, who is quoted at length:

Imran's wife said, "Lord, I have dedicated what is growing in my womb entirely to You; so accept this from me. You are the One who hears and knows all."

But when she gave birth, she said, "My Lord! I have given birth to a girl." God knew best what she had given birth to: the male is not like the female. "I name her Mary and I commend her and her offspring to Your protection from the rejected Satan."

Her Lord graciously accepted her and made her grow in goodness, and entrusted her to the charge of Zachariah. Whenever Zachariah went in to see her in her sanctuary, he found her supplied with food. He said, "Mary, how is it you have this food?" and she said, "They are from God: God provides limitlessly for whoever He will."¹⁶

Bible readers might be a little surprised with this passage. For unlike the other Qur'anic passages concerning Mary and her kin that we have quoted so far, this one has no parallels in Luke or any other canonical gospel. There are many details here that are simply unknown to the whole New Testament, such as Mary's devotion to God in her mother's womb, Zachariah's guardianship of the young Mary who stayed at a "sanctuary," or the miraculous food with which she was supplied.¹⁷

Yet, lo and behold, all these details are found somewhere else: the apocryphal gospel called the *Protoevangelium of James*.

Also called the Book of James, this document should not be confused with the Epistle of James, which is in the New Testament and to which I have referred many times so far. The *Protoevangelium* is a totally separate document, although it is attributed to the same person: James the Just, the brother of Jesus and the leader of the

"Jerusalem Church." However, scholars have established that the document must have been written in the middle of the second century, and in Greek, only to be falsely attributed to James. It is called *Protoevangelium*, or "pregospel," because it addresses the birth and upbringing of Mary along with the delivery of Jesus in a much more detailed way than the New Testament gospels, whose real focus is the mission of Jesus the adult.

As noted by scholars since the seventeenth century, many details in the *Protoevangelium* unmistakably match with the Qur'anic account of Mary.¹⁸ For example, in the former text, Mary's mother, who is named as Anna, praises God for conceiving an unexpected baby and vows, "If I beget either male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God."¹⁹ This sounds very similar to the vow one hears from the same person, Mary's mother, in the Qur'an: "Lord, I have dedicated what is growing in my womb entirely to You."²⁰ Moreover, in both texts, it is Mary's mother, not the father as was typical, who names the newborn baby.

The *Protoevangelium* also tells us that after the birth of Mary, her mother "made a sanctuary in her bed-chamber, and allowed nothing common or unclean to pass through her."²¹ This, again, sounds similar to the Qur'anic account, which speaks of Mary's "sanctuary." Then, at the age of three, Mary is dedicated by her parents to "the Temple of the Lord," to live and worship there as a kind of nun, and Zachariah becomes her caretaker. But Mary has heavenly caretakers, too, who provide her with miraculous nourishment. The *Protoevangelium* notes this from the vantage point of the third person: "Mary was in the temple of the Lord as if she were a dove that dwelt there, and she received food from the hand of an angel."²² The Qur'an notes this detail by means of a dialogue between Mary and Zachariah. "Mary, how is it you have this food?" asks the latter. She answers, "They are from God: God provides limitlessly for whoever He will."²³

And there is even more. The *Protoevangelium* tells us that when

Mary came of age, Zachariah went out to "assemble the widowers of the people, and let them bring each his rod."²⁴ The point was to organize a drawing of lots to designate the the future husband of Mary, assuming a divine hand behind things. "To whomsoever the Lord shall show a sign," the *Protoevangelium* explains, "his wife shall she be."²⁵ And this occurrence, too, of which there is no hint in the New Testament, is mentioned in the Qur'an, albeit in passing. After telling some other news about Mary, the Qur'an, in a monologue to the Prophet Muhammad, tells him:

This is an account of things beyond your knowledge that We reveal to you [Muhammad]: you were not present among them when they cast lots to see which of them should take charge of Mary, you were not present with them when they argued [about her].²⁶

It is interesting that in this verse the Qur'an does not explain who "they" were. Mary's future husband, Joseph, is not in the scene, as he never appears in the Qur'an, and we don't know anyone else around her other than Zachariah, who is her godfatherly protector. Hence major Muslim exegetes such as Tabari wrote that the casting of lots for Mary was not about her marriage but about her custody at a much younger age. According to his account, some nineteen and twenty-nine scribes of the Torah threw their long pens on the water. Only that of Zachariah floated, and hence he took Mary into his custody.²⁷

What can be said by looking at all these parallels between the Qur'an and the *Protoevangelium*? It can be said safely that the Qur'an is "closely in conversation with the *Protoevangelium*."²⁸ Yet the nature of this conversation can be interpreted in different ways. One can assume a historical connection, arguing that the Qur'an must have "borrowed" elements from this earlier Christian document, as Christian writers have often done. Or one can assume, as the Catholic scholar Sidney Griffith suggests:

the Qur'an presumes in its audience a familiarity with the Christian narrative of the annunciation to Mary as it circulated in the largely oral, intertextual, Christian kerygma as it was preached in Arabia in the late sixth and early seventh centuries.²⁹

No matter how we interpret the parallelism, we should also take a moment to look at which Christian communities might have been using the *Protoevangelium* at the time and in the milieu in which the Qur'an originated. The book was largely unknown to Western Christians until the sixteenth century, but it had been widely used among Eastern Christians since the fifth century, when it was translated from Greek into Syriac. Despite some of its conflicts with the New Testament gospels—like its suggestion that Mary gave birth to Jesus in a cave in the wilderness, not in Bethlehem—it was widely accepted in Eastern churches. A powerful testimony to this is the Chora Church in Istanbul, now a museum, which has breathtakingly beautiful mosaics that date from the thirteenth century and depict the birth and life of Mary exactly as described in the *Protoevangelium*.

But what about Jewish Christians, the usual suspects in our story? Could they have been among those who used and preserved and perhaps transmitted the *Protoevangelium*? The common scholarly answer to this question would be negative, because it has been assumed that far from being Jewish, the author of the *Protoevangelium* actually has a limited and flawed sense of Judaism, its rites and customs. More recent work, however, has challenged this view, arguing that the author of the document is actually well-versed in Judaism.³⁰ Some have suggested that the work was penned to "advance the Christian message of Jesus as the Messiah in a way that resonated with a Jewish audience."³¹ Some even have suggested that, besides Greek, Coptic, and Armenian churches, the book must have been used "above all among the Ebionites."³²

We can suggest, therefore, that the parallelism between the *Protoevangelium* and the Qur'an fits into the parallelism between Jewish Christianity and Islam.

QUR'ANIC ANNUNCIATION

In Christian terminology, "the Annunciation" refers to the announcement by the Angel Gabriel to Mary that she will have a blessed son: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David."³³

This incident, which we learn only from Luke among the four canonical gospels, exists in the Qur'an as well, in both the chapter "The Family of Imran" and the chapter "Mary." The latter, which is more detailed, reads as follows:

Mention Mary in the Book [Qur'an], how she withdrew from her people to an eastern place, and veiled herself from them.

Then We sent Our Spirit to her and it took on for her the form of a perfect man.

She said, "I seek refuge from you with the All-Merciful if you have fear of Him."

He said, "I am only your Lord's messenger so that He can give you a pure boy."

She said, "How can I have a boy when no man has touched me and I am not an unchaste woman?"

He said, "It will be so! Your Lord says, 'That is easy for Me. It is so that We can make him a Sign for mankind and a mercy from Us. It is a matter already decreed.'"

There are several striking aspects of this passage, but the most important is that the Qur'an confirms the virginity of Mary—"no man has touched me and I am not an unchaste woman." But how did Mary, the virgin, exactly conceive Jesus? In two other verses of the Qur'an, which use the exact same expression, we hear God stating: "We breathed into her from Our Spirit."³⁴ The verses do

not explain how this took place, and hence classical Muslim exegetes have offered their various explanations. Some wrote that Gabriel, as God's agent, breathed into Mary's bosom until the Spirit reached her womb. Others wrote that Gabriel blew into the sleeve of Mary or the side of her chemise. Yet any consideration of a sexual relation between Mary and Gabriel has been almost unanimously ruled out by Muslim exegetes.³⁵

One key question here, which would be theologically significant, is whether the Spirit of God impregnated Mary or gave life to an embryo which was already formed, again miraculously, in her womb. A close reading of the related verses show that the latter is the case, making an important difference between the Islamic and Christian christologies—a topic to which we shall return later.³⁶

Another detail in the Qur'anic story of the Annunciation is that immediately before the coming of the angel, Mary "withdrew from her people to an eastern place, and veiled herself from them."³⁷ This unspecified "eastern place," or "a place to the east"—*mashraqa* in its original Arabic—has naturally sparked discussion.³⁸ Suggestions by Muslim exegetes include an area east of Jerusalem, an area in Jerusalem east of the Temple Mount, or merely the easternmost chamber of the Temple itself.³⁹ The latter explanation, remarkably, resonates with an Old Testament emphasis on the eastern side of the Temple: in Ezekiel, we read, "The glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east."⁴⁰ Moreover, a fifth-century Christian writer, Hesychius of Jerusalem, in his homilies, writes of Mary's "Closed door" as "located in the East."⁴¹

If the "eastern place," was somewhere in the Jerusalem Temple, then it would also be easy to explain how Mary "veiled herself," in line with Christian tradition. For the *Protoevangelium of James* says that immediately before the Annunciation, the priests at the Temple said, "Let us make a veil for the temple of the Lord," and Mary got to work spinning it.

QUR'ANIC NATIVITY

After the Annunciation of Jesus, the Qur'an immediately moves on to the Nativity—as the birth of Jesus is called in the Christian tradition. And Mary's drama continues with the following episode in the Qur'an, which, again, may sound quite unfamiliar to Bible readers:

So she conceived him and withdrew with him to a distant place. The pains of labour drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. She said, "Oh if only I had died before this time and was something discarded and forgotten!"

A voice called out to her from under her, "Do not grieve! Your Lord has placed a small stream at your feet. Shake the trunk of the palm towards you and fresh, ripe dates will drop down onto you. Eat and drink and delight your eyes. If you should see anyone at all, just say, 'I have made a vow of abstinence to the All-Merciful and today I will not speak to any human being.'"⁴²

This remarkable passage from the Qur'anic chapter "Mary" includes themes that are totally absent from the New Testament: a "distant place," Mary's agony and stress, a palm tree that relieves her hunger, and a miraculous spring of water that relieves her thirst. Probably, these are all news to Western Christians.

Yet, lo and behold, all these themes are in fact present in a much-forgotten Christian text: The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, which is also called the *Infancy Gospel of Matthew*. This, again, has nothing to do with the Gospel of Matthew found in the New Testament. It is rather an apocryphal work written under the name of the gospel author Matthew; it is believed to have been authored sometime in the early seventh century, or perhaps the eighth or even ninth centuries.⁴³ Much of its content seems to be an edited reproduction of *Protoevangelium of James*, but it has an additional part presenting a

unique version of the flight into Egypt—the escape of Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus from King Herod's massacre of the innocents. And in this version of the flight into Egypt story, on the third day, something interesting happens:

Mary was fatigued by the excessive heat of the sun in the desert; and seeing a palm tree, she said to Joseph: Let me rest a little under the shade of this tree . . . And as the blessed Mary was sitting there, she looked up to the foliage of the palm, and saw it full of fruit, and said to Joseph: I wish it were possible to get some of the fruit of this palm . . .

Then the child Jesus, with a joyful countenance, reposing in the bosom of His mother, said to the palm: O tree, bend thy branches, and refresh my mother with thy fruit. And immediately at these words the palm bent its top down to the very feet of the blessed Mary; and they gathered from it fruit, with which they were all refreshed . . .

Then Jesus said to it: Raise thyself, O palm tree . . . and open from thy roots a vein of water which has been hid in the earth, and let the waters flow, so that we may be satisfied from thee. And it rose up immediately, and at its root there began to come forth a spring of water exceedingly clear and cool and sparkling.⁴⁴

So, here, in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, we have all the themes of the Qur'anic story of the Nativity: Mary feels extremely uncomfortable, she sits down under a palm tree that feeds her with dates, and she is even hydrated by a miraculous spring of water. Yet, alas, there is also a major discrepancy here. The Qur'an uses these themes while telling us how Mary, alone by herself, gave birth to Jesus. But the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* uses them while telling us a much later episode, a time when Jesus was a child fleeing to Egypt with his parents, Mary and Joseph.

This, naturally, led many Christian writers to conclude that the Qur'an "wrongly borrowed" from the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*,

but only by misquoting or distorting it. On the other hand, others recalled that this apocryphal gospel was "composed at a date too late to have had an impact on the Qur'anic text," and also was written in the Latin language somewhere in the Christian West, a medium far removed from the Arabic Qur'an.⁴⁵ Yet one could still assume that it relied on earlier Christian narratives, which may have circulated in the pre-Islamic Near East.⁴⁶

So, it seemed plausible to think that the Qur'an "wrongly borrowed" from preexisting Christian lore. But then came an archeological discovery that added a totally new element to the puzzle. It suggested, in the words of the Belgian scholar of early Islam Guillaume Dye, "what might look like a strange mistake can be explained in a different and much more fascinating way."⁴⁷

A CHURCH WITH A PALM TREE

In 1992 Israeli authorities were constructing a wider road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which are only five miles apart. At a midpoint between the two cities, they unexpectedly came across the remains of an ancient church buried underground. Five years later, the ruins were carefully excavated by the Israel Antiquities Authority, whose archeologists realized that they had found a famed yet lost Byzantine church: Kathisma of the Theotokos, or Seat of the God-bearer.

Since *God-bearer* was the title given to Mary in Eastern Christianity, this church was clearly related to Mary. But exactly how? According to the legend, during the flight into Egypt, Mary, accompanied by her child, Jesus, and her husband, Joseph, rested on a rock located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. That rock gradually became a place of Christian pilgrimage, and an octagonal church was built on top of it in the fifth century—the church that the Israelis accidentally found.

Moreover, in its initial centuries, there was also a spring of water coming from that rock. We know this from a pilgrimage guide writ-

ten sometime between AD 560 and 570, by an anonymous writer known as the Piacenza Pilgrim, who wrote:

On the way to Bethlehem, at the third milestone from Jerusalem . . . I saw standing water which came from a rock, of which you can take as much as you like up to seven pints . . . It is indescribably sweet to drink, and people say that Saint Mary became thirsty on the flight into Egypt, and that when she stopped here this water immediately flowed. Nowadays there is also a church building there.⁴⁸

This, of course, surprisingly reminds us of the Mary stories in both the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* and the Qur'an. But there is even more reason for surprise, for the floor of the Kathisma Church has beautiful mosaics, one of which represents something quite interesting: a large date palm, flanked by two smaller palms, all of which are laden with dates. "Since this is the church's only pictorial mosaic," notes Stephen J. Shoemaker, the American academic who studied the matter in detail, "this is almost certainly a representation of the date palm from which the Virgin Mary was miraculously fed."⁴⁹

So, in summary, at this ancient church called Kathisma, we seem to have a tradition that depicts Mary with a miraculous water spring and a palm tree with dates—the very two elements found in both *Pseudo-Matthew* and the Qur'an. That is truly remarkable.

However, we still do have the problem mentioned before: the Qur'an presents the palm tree and the water spring scene as the setting of the Nativity—the very birth of Jesus. However, *Pseudo-Matthew* depicts the same scene as a moment in the flight into Egypt, which took place *only after Jesus was born*. This major gap still needs an explanation.

To find one, we have to add one more piece of information to the puzzle: the *Protoevangelium of James*, whose parallels with the Qur'an we have seen, also says something about the Nativity of

Jesus. But remarkably, it does not place his holy birth in Bethlehem, as it is located in the gospels of Matthew and Luke and in the popular Christian imagination. It rather places it in the wilderness, somewhere between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Actually, in a cave exactly in "the middle of the road."⁵⁰ In other words, exactly the area where the Kathisma church is.

So, one wonders, could the Kathisma church actually be the place at which Mary gave birth to Jesus?

We can never exactly know, for we only have different accounts of something that happened more than two thousand years ago. But it is interesting that, in the Christian tradition, there are elements that place the birth of Jesus not in Bethlehem but somewhere out of the city, and that also place a palm tree and a water spring in the same vicinity.

No wonder that a deeper look into the Christian folklore surrounding the Kathisma Church reveals that in the very beginning, "the location of the Kathisma church was primitively connected with the Nativity."⁵¹ In other words, it was venerated as the very birthplace of Jesus. Only later, when Bethlehem became established among Christians as the birthplace of Jesus, the significance of the location of Kathisma got reinterpreted, and it evolved into a resting place in the midst of the flight into Egypt.⁵² That is how the birth of Jesus in the wilderness as told in the *Protoevangelium* and Mary's rest under the palm tree as told in *Pseudo-Matthew* got combined and located in the very same place.

This makes Kathisma, in the words of Shoemaker, "the only place in the Christian tradition where the two legends that were the Qur'an's sources meet."⁵³ From this, he concludes that the Kathisma traditions must have "influenced the formation of the Qur'anic traditions of the Nativity."⁵⁴ However, one can think the other way around too. One can take "the correspondence of the Qur'an with the traditions of the Kathisma shrine," in Shoemaker's words, as "a happy coincidence."⁵⁵ Or, perhaps, even a confirmation. It depends on toward which direction one is willing to take a leap of faith.

On the other hand, Shoemaker's thesis is not without problems—and critics.⁵⁶ First of all, Israeli archeologists have actually found on the Bethlehem road not one but two churches within a couple of hundred meters of each other, which might have narratives of their own. Moreover, Christian sources about Mary's birthgiving are quite diverse, and some even see echoes of the Qur'anic story in the New Testament's Book of Revelations.⁵⁷ Finally there is another verse of the Qur'an, which reads, "We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign; We gave them shelter on a peaceful hillside with flowing water."⁵⁸ Whether this refers to the Nativity or a later episode—such as flight to Egypt—is unclear.

Therefore, the question of how the Qur'anic account of the Nativity fits into Christian accounts and archeological findings is not entirely answered. But it seems certain that the Kathisma Church is an important piece in this puzzle.

"SISTER OF AARON"?

When we go back to the Qur'anic story of Mary, we see that the birth of Jesus was only the beginning of her ordeal. For now she had to go back to her people, a morally judgmental society, to put it lightly, with a fatherless baby in her arms. No wonder her situation immediately caused reactions, as we read in the Qur'anic chapter "Mary":

She brought him to her people, carrying him. They said, "Mary! You have done an unthinkable thing! Sister of Aaron, your father was not an evil man nor was your mother an unchaste woman!"⁵⁹

Note a curious expression here that has raised much controversy: "sister of Aaron." There is only one Aaron in the Qur'an, as in the Old Testament, and he is the brother of Moses. So, Mary, who lived more than a thousand years later, could certainly not be a sibling to Aaron. Meanwhile, Aaron did have a sister, whose name

was Miryam. This led to accusations that the Qur'an "confused" the two women, Miryam and Mary, whose names sound all too similar.

In return, Muslim scholars have argued either that Mary had an otherwise unknown brother named Aaron or, more persuasively, that being a "sister of Aaron" can merely mean being a descendant of Aaron—which Mary arguably was.⁶⁰ After all, Jesus was proclaimed to be the "son of David" as well, which implied not direct sonship but lineage. Suleiman A. Mourad, who supports this argument, also adds:

The expression sister of Aaron, moreover, occurs in the Qur'anic reference to the questioning of Mary in the Temple. It is especially appropriate in this context for the questioners, the Temple's priests, to magnify Mary's moral transgression (her pregnancy) by appealing to her ancestor Aaron, whose descendants are the only Israelites qualified to serve in the Temple, where Mary herself was raised. In other words, Mary as a descendent of Aaron is expected to keep the purity of the sanctuary, rather than defile it by supposedly committing the shameful act that would lead to a pregnancy. Here too, there are no grounds on which to argue that the Qur'an is identifying Mary as literally the sister of Aaron.⁶¹

Yet the puzzle here is not limited to Mary's being the "sister of Aaron." There is also the question of Imran and Imran's wife, who appear in the Qur'an as Mary's parents. The problem is that Imran seems to be a reference to the biblical Amran, who was the father not of Mary but of Moses, Aaron, and Miryam. As a result, there is an additional claim of the Qur'an being "confused" about biblical characters and their relations.

However, there is an alternative explanation to this riddle that seems to put everything in place: that the Qur'an merely employs "typology," which is "an approach of Scripture whose basic principle is to see former characters or events as prefiguring, announcing, later figures or events."⁶² This approach is used in the Christian tra-

dition as well and, remarkably, we even have a case of it being used to connect Mary and Aaron. It is in the *Lectio of Jeremiah*, a very short and largely unknown document that dates from the first decades of the seventh century and was used in liturgical celebrations in Jerusalem. The text quotes oracles from the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah, who uses the Ark of the Covenant as a metaphor for the crib of the infant Jesus. In one place, it reads:

And the prophet [Jeremiah] said: "His coming will be a sign for you, and for other children at the end of the world. And nobody will bring forth the hidden Ark from the rock, except the priest Aaron, the brother of Mary."⁶³

"Aaron, the brother of Mary" clearly resonates with the Qur'anic "Mary, sister of Aaron." Guillaume Dye, the scholar who brought this "fascinating yet much neglected text" to attention, argues:

The *Lectio of Jeremiah* always speaks of Mary, and not Miryam, and since the author is patently a (clever) monk, he would not mistake Miryam for Mary. The formula priest brother of Mary is an addition of the *Lectio*. Its typological and symbolic signification is obvious.⁶⁴

To this, Dye also adds that the *Lectio of Jeremiah* was read at the Kathisma Church near Jerusalem as a liturgical text. Then, by recalling the parallels between the Kathisma Church traditions and the Qur'an's story of the Nativity, he suggests that the *Lectio of Jeremiah*, in terms of identifying Mary, might well be "the source of the Qur'an." However, from the Muslim point of view, it could be taken as a confirmation of the Qur'an as well—that the Qur'an's typological identification of Mary as "the sister of Aaron" was not without any historical basis.

Moreover, there is one more possibility as to why the Qur'an identifies Mary as "the sister of Aaron"—and it is fascinating as well.

First, note that the Qur'an calls Mary "the sister of Aaron," but not of Moses, which may reflect an emphasis on an Aaronid lineage of Mary. This, by extension, would mean that Jesus was of Aaronid descent as well. That, naturally, would conflict with Jesus' Davidic descent, which traditionally has been accepted as a basis of his claim to Messiahship. For most Jews believed that the Messiah would be a "son of David."

Yet some Jews had an alternative view: They believed that the Messiah would be from the line of Aaron. The earliest source in which this idea can be found is the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran, believed to be used by the Essenes, the ascetic Jewish sect of the time of Jesus. But, lo and behold, a branch of the Elchasaites, a later Jewish Christian sect, also believed that Mary was "from the tribe of Levi, from which the priests came."⁶⁵ They believed, in other words, that Mary was from the bloodline of Aaron.

So, the Qur'an's designation of Mary as "the sister of Aaron" may perhaps be a reflection of "the idea of an Aaronid Messiah." And this would be yet another parallel between Jewish Christianity and Islam.⁶⁶

AN ARTICULATE NEWBORN

When you read the Qur'an and the New Testament side by side and focus on the Nativity, you will see one significant difference in the cast of characters: Joseph. According to the gospels, he becomes engaged to Mary before the Annunciation and marries her soon after, whereas he never appears in the Qur'an. That is why Muslims are often surprised to learn that Christians believe that Mary had a husband. For the plain impression one gets from the Qur'an is that Mary was always single, always unmarried. A Christian scholar even sees a "subtle ascetic hint" here, in the sense that "no male figure is needed to be closely associated with Mary because God sufficiently meets her needs."⁶⁷

Yet the absence of Joseph from the Qur'an leads to a question: How could Mary prove that her fatherless son was not an illegitimate child? How could she prove that she had not "done an unthinkable thing," as she was accused of by her people when they saw a baby in her arms?

The canonical gospels that narrate the birth of Jesus—Matthew and Luke—do not deal with this question, for the presence of Joseph solves the problem. Although Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus, he appears as such and hence Mary is saved from any suspicion. In the Qur'an, however, the single-mother Mary immediately receives the stigma of unchastity. Moreover, as we also learn from the Qur'an, at the very moment of Jesus' birth, Mary takes a vow of silence ordered by God: "today I will not speak to any human being."⁶⁸ So, the poor woman is accused of fornication and cannot even speak to defend herself. That is a dangerous situation, especially in a society where the penalty for fornication can be no less than stoning.

That is why Mary is saved from this stigma only through a miracle—a miracle by the very newborn Jesus. As the Qur'anic chapter "Mary" tells us:

She pointed towards him. They said, "How can a baby in the cradle speak?"

He said, "I am the servant of God, He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. He has made me blessed wherever I am and directed me to do prayers and give alms as long as I live, and to show devotion to my mother. He has not made me insolent or arrogant. Peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die and the day I am raised up again alive."

That is Jesus, son of Mary, the word of truth about which they are in doubt.⁶⁹

A baby Jesus who speaks in his cradle . . . For Bible readers, again, this may be a very unfamiliar theme. In fact, this was brought up as

an argument against the Qur'an by medieval Catholic Christians. Since no Christian had heard about this story, they argued, it must be a myth.⁷⁰ In return, the Muslim exegete Fakhraddin al-Razi discussed why "Christians have denied that Jesus spoke in the cradle," despite this being "one of the most astonishing and most unusual events." He argued that perhaps the miracle had taken place in the presence of only a few people, who could have decided to conceal it, only to be disclosed by another miracle, which is the revelation of the Qur'an.⁷¹

However, this astonishing and unusual theme of the baby Jesus speaking from his cradle *does* exist within the Christian tradition—in an apocryphal and much-forgotten text: the *Syriac Infancy Gospel*, which is also known as the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*. This document is believed to be a seventh-century invention popular among Syrian Nestorians. It is in the same genre as the *Protoevangelium of James* and the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, and in fact borrows from them heavily. Like them, it is an infancy gospel, focusing on the life of the baby and the child Jesus. And like them, it tells many miracle stories about Jesus, one of which is reported right at the beginning of the text:

Jesus spoke . . . when He was in His cradle, said to His mother: I am the Son of God, the Logos, whom you have brought forth, as the Angel Gabriel announced to you; and my Father has sent me for the salvation of the world.⁷²

Clearly, this passage is quite different from the Jesus-in-the-cradle story in the Qur'an. Here the newborn Jesus speaks to his mother. But in the Qur'an, he speaks to the Jews who question the chastity of his mother. Here the newborn Jesus says, "I am the Son of God, the Logos." But in the Qur'an, he says, "I am the servant of God . . . He made me a Prophet." Both texts, in other words, make Jesus speak from the outlook of their respective christologies.

The rest of the *Syriac Infancy Gospel* is also quite dissimilar to

the Qur'an. But still it is the only source in the Christian tradition that depicts an infant Jesus who speaks in his cradle. In the Qur'an, however, we see this as an important and emphasized theme. Besides the passage just quoted from the chapter "Mary," we also hear about an incident in the chapter "Family of Imran," from the mouth of the angels:

Mary, your Lord gives you good news of a Word from Him. His name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, of high esteem in the world and the hereafter, and one of those brought near. He will speak to people in the cradle, and also when fully grown, and will be one of the righteous.⁷³

Also, in the Qur'anic chapter "Table," we hear God himself calling to Jesus: "Jesus, son of Mary, remember My blessing to you and to your mother when I reinforced you with the Holy Spirit so that you could speak to people in the cradle and when you were fully grown."⁷⁴

All this emphasis in the Qur'an about Jesus' speech in the cradle, a theme that never appears in the New Testament and only once in the *Syriac Infancy Gospel*, is curious. "Why would Islam have Jesus speaking from the cradle," hence asks a modern-day Evangelical source, detecting "an agenda here."⁷⁵ The agenda, it adds, must be to make Jesus himself renounce trinitarian christology, which is probably not off the mark. However, the adult Jesus could also do that, as we already see in other verses of the Qur'an.

The real "agenda," I believe, in line with some traditional Muslim exegetes, is to defend Mary against accusations of unchastity.⁷⁶ This seems to be quite an important matter for the Qur'an, for in a separate chapter we also see that certain Jews are condemned for "their utterance of a monstrous slander against Mary."⁷⁷ That may be a reference to an ancient Jewish rumor that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier named Pantera.⁷⁸

Moreover, the newborn Jesus who speaks from the cradle not only defends his mother, but also affirms his God-given mission to

"show devotion to my mother"—or "cherish my mother," in other translations. This is a powerful statement, which seems to diverge from a puzzling attitude one finds in the New Testament: there, especially in the Gospel of Luke, there is a subtle tendency to portray Jesus as distant from his family. When a woman is impressed by Jesus and proclaims, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you," he responds: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."⁷⁹ And when Jesus is told in a crowd, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you," he answers: "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."⁸⁰ In the fourth gospel, there is an even colder episode, in which Mary asks for Jesus' help at the wedding in Cana but gets the response: "Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come."⁸¹

For sure, Christian scholars have offered nuanced interpretations of these passages, and have also pointed out Jesus' care for his mother at the Crucifixion, committing her to the care of his disciple John.⁸² Others, however, see in the same passages a tendency to "marginalize the family of Jesus"—as a backdrop of the tension between Paul and James.⁸³

In contrast to the latter view, the Qur'an does not mention the siblings of Jesus, but still puts an unmistakable emphasis on Jesus' love for and devotion to his mother. This, at the very least, seems to be an example of the ideal parent-child relationship of the Qur'an, which is defined by mutual love and the child's gratitude to the parents, especially the mother. "We have instructed man to be good to his parents," a verse reads. "His mother bore him with difficulty and with difficulty gave birth to him; and his bearing and weaning take thirty months."⁸⁴

VIRGIN MARY, UNDIVINE JESUS

Most Muslims in the world today may not be aware of all the details of the Qur'anic story of Mary, but they probably know its gist:

that the birth of Jesus was a virgin birth and that Jesus was conceived miraculously, without a father. This has been a universally accepted credo since the beginning of Islam, and has been taken seriously and respectfully. Reportedly, Caliph Umar, a companion of the Prophet and his second "successor," or caliph, as the leader of the Muslim community, once rebuked a man who named his son Isa, or Jesus, and then kept calling himself Abu Isa, or "the father of Jesus." Apparently Umar was angry because he felt that a human being calling himself "the father of Jesus" could be denigrating Jesus.⁸⁵

Throughout Muslim history, almost all interpreters of the Qur'an took the virgin birth story as a literal fact. A twentieth-century exegete even dubbed it as "the strangest event that humanity throughout its history has ever witnessed."⁸⁶ A handful of modern-day Muslim exegetes tried to offer naturalistic interpretations of the virgin birth, while affirming Mary's chastity, yet this view has not gained much popularity.⁸⁷ Hence today, the standard Muslim view is that Jesus, of course, was born without a biological father.

Two American Baptist ministers appreciate this point in their coauthored book of apologetical theology. "Ironically," they note, "Muslims extend more respect to Jesus as a high prophet than do most liberal 'Christians.'" Those liberal Christians reject the virgin birth, they add, unlike the Muslims who really do believe in it.⁸⁸

However, the same Qur'an that strongly affirms the virgin birth also emphatically denies what many Christians see as its logical outcome: the divinity of Jesus. In a very commanding passage, the Qur'an calls on Christians to actually stop seeing Jesus as divine:

Those who say, "God is the Messiah, son of Mary," are unbelievers. Say: "Who possesses any power at all over God if He desires to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone else on earth?" The kingdom of the heavens and the earth and

everything between them belongs to God. He creates whatever He wills. God has power over all things.⁸⁹

Christians may find the Qur'anic fine-tuning here—affirmation of virgin birth coupled with the renunciation of Jesus' divinity—a bit odd. It has even been suggested as an inconsistency in the Qur'an.⁹⁰ That is because, in the Christian imagination, belief in the virgin birth and belief in the divinity of Jesus often go hand in hand. Once you accept the former, you also accept the latter.

However, the Qur'anic position on this matter has a precedent within Christianity as well—within, not too surprisingly, Jewish Christianity. We know this from the church father Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote in the early fourth century that the Ebionites were divided into two groups. The first one held that Jesus was “a plain and common man” and “the fruit of the intercourse of a man with Mary.” But the second group, Eusebius explained, “did not deny that the Lord was born of a virgin and of the Holy Spirit.” Nevertheless, he added, they “refused to acknowledge that he pre-existed, being God, Word, and Wisdom.”⁹¹

Similarly, Origen, writing a century before, noted that some Jewish Christians “admit [Christ's] birth from Mary and the divine Spirit, [but] they deny His divinity.”⁹² That is why Gentile Christians rebuked Jewish Christians “for their low view of the person of Christ.”⁹³ Other church writers, Epiphanius and Jerome, also noted that some Jewish Christians accepted the virgin birth whereas others denied it. They also suggested that the first group was called “Nazarenes,” the latter “Ebionites,” raising the possibility of a diversity of views among Jewish Christians as well.⁹⁴

Therefore, the Qur'an's stance on the virgin birth seems to be yet another example of the doctrinal connection between Jewish Christianity and Islam—the two main traditions on earth that affirm that Jesus was indeed “incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,” as said in the Nicene Creed, but that he was *not* “very God of very God, begotten, not made.”

MARY AS GOD?

Besides the divinity of Jesus, the Qur'an seems to refute another theological claim as well: the divinity of Mary. We see this in a very interesting rhetorical conversation in the Qur'an, where God questions Jesus, apparently in the afterlife, about what happened back on earth:

When God says, “Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, ‘Take me and my mother as two gods alongside God?’” he will say:

“May You be exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say. If I had said such a thing You would have known it. You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You. You alone have full knowledge of things unseen.

“I told them only what You commanded me to: ‘Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’ I was a witness over them during my time among them. Ever since You took my soul, You alone have been the watcher over them.

“You are witness to all things. And if You punish them, they are Your servants. If You forgive them, You are the Almighty, the Wise.”⁹⁵

There are two remarkable points in this passage. First, it makes Jesus speak against the doctrine of the very people who claim to follow him—the Christians. This is the only example of such polemic in the Qur'an, in which somebody whom the Qur'an identifies as a prophet disavows the theology of his followers.⁹⁶ The same cannot be seen with Abraham, Jacob, or Moses, probably because their image among the Jews as mortal prophets is not in conflict with the austere monotheism of the Qur'an.

The second and more curious point in the Qur'anic passage is the line about Mary, in which Jesus is asked whether he told people, “Take me and my mother as two gods alongside God.” With this line, the Qur'an seems to target the divinization of both Jesus and

Mary. However, Christians, at least the ones we know of, do not see Mary as divine. Hence, for centuries they have objected to this accusation by the Qur'an. Many Christian or Orientalist critics of the Muslim scripture argued that its author "misunderstood" the Christian doctrine. Since the Qur'an, in a separate verse, also seems to condemn the doctrine of the Trinity—or the idea that "God is the third of three"—the argument went further: that the Qur'an's author got the doctrine of the Trinity scandalously wrong, assuming that it refers to a triune family of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and Mary the Wife.⁹⁷

Yet there are two counterarguments to this argument. The first of them comes from the Qur'an itself, from a verse that reprimands both Jews and Christians for their theological errors:

They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides God, and also the Messiah, son of Mary. Yet they were commanded to worship only one God. There is no god but Him. Glory be to Him above anything they associate with Him.⁹⁸

What is notable here is that the veneration of "rabbis and monks" is rebuked along with the veneration of Jesus, and in the very same line. The accusation is that these clerics are taken by Jews and Christians as "lords." The term here, *rabb*, does not equal "god," *ilah*, but the two concepts are closely related. No wonder taking someone other than God as "lord" is portrayed as the opposite of "worshipping only one God."

Yet how could Jews and Christians take their "rabbis and monks" as "lords," although they certainly don't claim that? According to a hadith (saying attributed to Muhammad), this very question was posed to the Prophet, and he gave an explanatory answer: "They [rabbis and monks] prohibited the allowed for them [Jews and Christians], and allowed the prohibited, and they obeyed them. This is how they worshipped them."⁹⁹ So, in the Qur'an's conceptual universe, accepting someone as a god apart from God can happen

without formally declaring them as gods but still venerating and obeying them at a level that is only appropriate for God. The Qur'anic accusation against Christians that they took Mary as a god "alongside God" can be understood in this sense, especially in light of the tradition of veneration of Mary found in Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern Christianity—although not in Protestantism. No wonder Martin Luther accused Catholics of having lapsed into "idolatry" for praying to Mary.¹⁰⁰

We should also recall that the veneration of Mary raised controversy among Middle Eastern Christians as well. In the fifth century, the Nestorian Church, popular in Syria, Iraq, and eastern Anatolia, refused to call Mary *Theotokos*, or "God-bearer," and gave her the more modest title, *Christotokos*, or "Christ-bearer." This dispute, along with a controversy on the nature of Christ, led to the condemnation of Nestorianism as a heresy at the First Council of Ephesus in 431 and at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Hence it has been argued that this controversy between Nestorians and other churches is behind the Qur'an's denunciation of Mary's divinity.¹⁰¹

The second argument to support the Qur'an's denunciation of Mary's divinization as not so off the mark is that there were non-orthodox Christians at the time who really did worship Mary. We know this thanks to Epiphanius of Salamis, who in his late-fourth-century work *Panarion* condemned a plenitude of heretics including the Collyridians, who "came to Arabia from Thrace and northern Scythia." This was a sect composed mainly of women, he explained, who presented "small cakes" to the Virgin Mary as sacred offerings. To argue against their heresy, Epiphanius had to remind his readers that "Mary is not God and does not have her body from heaven but by human conception."¹⁰² Arguably this fourth-century trace of the Collyridians was just "the tip of the Marian iceberg," and, in fact, "there was an organized and widespread Marian religion during the first centuries of the Christian era."¹⁰³

So, in summary, the Qur'an's position on Mary is to condemn such a "Marian religion" at one extreme and condemn the denigra-

tion of Mary as an unchaste woman at the other. The Islamic take on Mary elevates her to the highest possible human level—a woman “over all other women”—but also opposes any possible deviation from Islam’s passionate monotheism.

But what about Mary’s son? How does this passionate monotheism deal with him? What does it say about his identity and mission? Now is the time to look deeper into these questions.

CHAPTER SIX

THE QUR’ANIC JESUS

The Qur’anic portrait of Jesus is not so remote from the New Testament as might seem to be the case at first glance.

—Hekki Räisänen, Finnish biblical scholar¹

THE QUR’ANIC STORY OF JESUS IS REMARKABLY CONCISE WHEN compared to the New Testament story. In the Qur’an, one never learns about the temptation in the wilderness, the preaching in Galilee, the cleansing of the Temple, the agony at Gethsemane, the trial at Pilate’s court, the drama of the crucifixion, or the joy of the Resurrection. Such themes about Jesus’ life and ministry simply do not exist in the Qur’an, and for a simple reason: Jesus is not the main character of the Qur’an.

As a matter of fact, the Qur’an has no main character—other than God himself. Everything else is given attention only with regard to its relationship with God. Among humans, the most noteworthy ones are the prophets, who, by divine revelation, are “sent” to their peoples to call them to believe in God and follow his commandments. In fact, the usual Qur’anic word for prophet, *rasul*, literally means “the one who is sent.” The other Qur’anic word for prophet, *nabi*, means “news giver.”

According to a hadith, the number of all the prophets sent to

- the facts against the "late Qur'an" hypothesis, also see: Asma Afsaruddin, *First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications, 2007), pp. xiv–xvi.
58. Yehuda D. Nevo, "Towards a Prehistory of the Qur'an," in *What the Koran Really Says*, ed. Ibn Warraq (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), pp. 131–170.
 59. Facsimile 1.24, the last two sentences. Nevo himself used here the term "Lord of Creation," but I prefer the translation "Lord of the Worlds," as it is more precise regarding the Arabic *Rabb-ul alameen*. See: Nevo, "Towards a Prehistory of the Qur'an," pp. 135, 160.
 60. Nevo, "Towards a Prehistory of the Qur'an," p. 148.
 61. Ibid., p. 150.
 62. Gerald Hawting, *Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 40.
 63. Both Pseudo-Cyril quotes are from Patricia Crone, "Jewish Christianity and the Qur'an (Part Two)" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* (April 2016): 3.
 64. Guillaume Dye, "Jewish Christianity, the Qur'an, and Early Islam: Some Methodological Caveats," paper presented at the Eighth Annual ASMEA Conference Washington, October 29–31, 2015, at the workshop "Jewish Christianity and the Origins of Islam." Quoted with the author's permission.
 65. Dye points to Neal Robinson, whose work seems to indicate a longer list of heresies that might have influenced Islam: Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Tritheism, Antideco-Marcianites, Ebionites, Elkasites, Manichaeism, Gnosticism, let alone Judaism. Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 19–21.
 66. The phrase "Jurassic Park for ancient 'heresies'" was coined by Jack Tannous in "Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2010), p. 396. I owe its usage here to Dye, who referred to Tannous in "Jewish Christianity, the Qur'an, and Early Islam."
 67. Samuel Zinner, *The Abrahamic Archetype: Conceptual and Historical Relationships between Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Bartlow, UK: Archetype Books, 2011), p. vii.
 68. The original article by Martiniano P. Roncaglia is "Éléments Ébionites et Elkésaites dans le Coran," *Proche Orient Chrétien* 21 (1971): 101–126. Translated by Susan Boyd-Bowman as a chapter of *Koranic Allusions: The Biblical, Qumranian, and Pre-Islamic Background to the Koran*, ed. Ibn Warraq (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2013), p. 367.
 69. Ibid., p. 368.
 70. Qur'an 5:47–48, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized.
 71. For Murjia, see my book *Islam without Extremes* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), pp. 83–85. For the condemnation of Murjia by ISIS, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, see my article "A Medieval Antidote to ISIS," *New York Times*, December 21, 2015.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. In fact, Muslim tradition apparently could not accept that Mary is "above all women," even in light of the Prophet's teaching. Hence came the hadith that made Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad, equal with Mary. "The best of the women of her time was Mary daughter of 'Imran and the best of the women of her time was Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid" (emphases added). Abu al-Fida' Isma'il Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1385), pp. 37ff.; quoted here from Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 63. I personally find this hadith very doubtful because of its clear contradiction of the Qur'an and its apparent intention of overpraising the Prophet and his family, which is a post-Qur'anic trend.
2. Qur'an 3:42, Bewley translation.
3. For more on the Maryamiyya order, see *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Mark Sedgwick (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 147–160.
4. "God's Plan for Peace between Christianity and Islam," <http://www.catholica-pologetics.info/apologetics/islam/Godsplan.htm>. Accessed on April 7, 2016.
5. Qur'an 19:2, Haleem translation.
6. Qur'an 19:2–6, Haleem translation with Arabic words anglicized.
7. Qur'an 19:7–9, Muhammad Habib Shakir translation. Hereafter cited as Shakir translation. Taken from Terry Kepner (ed.), *Three Translations of the Koran Side by Side: Hafiz Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, Muhammad Habib Shakir* (Bennington, NH: Flying Chipmunk Publishing, 2009).
8. One controversy over this Qur'anic passage is whether verse 19:7 defines *Yahya*, or John, as having "a name we have given to no one else before" (Bewley translation). This is a common translation, which has raised objections from Christian polemicists that it is a gross mistake, for there are other Johns in the Old Testament. However, the word translated as "with the same name," *samiy*, does not necessarily mean that. It occurs only twice in the Qur'an, in this verse and in 19:65. In both instances, the early and prominent Muslim exegete Ibn al'Abbas took it to mean "similar." Hence he wrote that what is meant here is that there had never before been a boy similar to John in the sense of being born to an aged father and a barren mother. See Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, p. 65. I prefer that explanation, and hence opted here for the Shakir translation that relies on it.
9. Qur'an 19:10, Bewley translation. The same incident is also reported in chapter "Family of Imran," with some slight difference: "He said, 'My Lord, appoint a Sign for me.' He said, 'Your Sign is that you will not speak to people for three days, except by gesture. Remember your Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and after dawn'" (3:41).

10. Luke 1:20.
11. Qur'an 3:39, Haleem translation.
12. Qur'an 19:12–15, Haleem translation. It is worth noting that the Qur'an expression quoted from John here, "Peace was on him the day he was born, the day he died, and it will be on him the day he is raised to life again," is also quoted in the same chapter from Jesus almost verbatim: "Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again" (19:33).
13. Luke 1:15.
14. The origin of the names of Qur'anic suras, or chapters, is disputed among Muslims. Some believe that they were given by the Prophet Muhammad himself, even with the guidance of Angel Gabriel, but others think that the Muslim tradition later chose names for each sura by simply taking words from their contents. I accept this latter argument.
15. See pp. 119–122 in this book.
16. Qur'an 3:35–37, Haleem translation; I have changed the word *provisions* here to *food*, as preferred by most other translations.
17. Muslim exegetes have debated what this miraculous food Mary found in her sanctuary was like. Some suggested, "it was summer fruits in winter, and winter fruits in summer." According to others, it was grapes out of season. See Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The House of 'Imran*, vol. 2 of *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 100.
18. The first known work that highlighted the parallels between the Qur'an and the *Protoevangelium of James* is from the seventeenth century: Heinrich Sike, *Evangelium infantiae, vel liber apocryphus de infantia servatoris* (Trajecti ad Rhenum [Utrecht]: F. Halma et G. van de Water, 1697). Another, more recent pioneering work is Wilhelm Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum* (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 1922). Since 1922, various academic articles have addressed the issue.
19. *The Protoevangelium of James* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. 8, ed. Alexander Roberts, Sir James Donaldson, Arthur Cleveland Coxe, and Allan Menzies (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886), p. 362.
20. Qur'an 3:35, Haleem translation.
21. *The Protoevangelium of James*, p. 362.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 363.
23. Qur'an 3:38, Haleem translation, only "provisions" is replaced with "food."
24. *The Protoevangelium of James*, p. 363.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Qur'an 3:44, Haleem translation.
27. Tabari, *Jami' al-bayan fi ta'wil al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, pp. 241, 244, and 246.

- Taken here from Ömer Faruk Harman, "Meryem," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of Islam), vol. 29 (Ankara, Turkey: Türk Diyanet Vakfı, 2013), p. 240.
28. Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Subtext* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 144.
 29. Sidney H. Griffith, "The Gospel, the Qur'an, and the Presentation of Jesus in al-Ya'qūbī's Ta'rikh," in *Bible and Quran: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, ed. John C. Reeves (Boston: Brill, 2004), p. 136.
 30. See: Megan Nutzman, "Mary in the Protevangelium of James: A Jewish Woman in the Temple?," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 53 (2013): 551–578. Nutzman argues: "The author of Prot. Jas., while demonstrably Christian in his presentation of Jesus, was also familiar with interpretations of the Torah circulating among his Jewish contemporaries." On the particular issue of Mary's presence at the Jewish Temple, which has been seen as historically improbable, she argues: "Rather than betraying an ignorance of Judaism, Mary's relationship to the temple artfully weaves together the unique position in the Jerusalem temple allotted to accused adulteresses, to girls who wove the temple curtains, and to female Nazirites" (p. 552).
 31. *Ibid.*, pp. 556ff. Bellarmino Bagatti, a Franciscan priest and archeologist, also argues that the *Protoevangelium* was "designed to promote Jewish Christianity in Palestine." Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1969), p. 11, quoted here from Edwin K. Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus: Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), p. 324.
 32. Oscar Cullmann, "Infancy Gospels," in *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writings*, vol. 1, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge, UK: J. Clarke, 1991), p. 425.
 33. Luke 1:31.
 34. Quote above: Qur'an 19:16–21. Quote here: Qur'an 21:91 and 66:12, Haleem translation.
 35. See Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, p. 162.
 36. For an evaluation of the Qur'an's terminology on the creation of Jesus in Mary's womb, see: Crone, "Jewish Christianity and the Qur'an (Part Two)," p. 9.
 37. Qur'an 19:16, Haleem translation.
 38. In his popular 1930 translation of the Qur'an, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, Marmaduke Pickthall in fact translated the word as "a chamber looking East." Taken from Terry Kepner (ed.), *Three Translations of the Koran Side by Side: Hafiz Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, Muhammad Habib Shakir* (Bennington, NH: Flying Chipmunk Publishing, 2009).
 39. Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 156ff.

40. Ezekiel 43:4.
41. Hesychius is quoted by Guillaume Dye, "The Qur'an and Its Hypertextuality in Light of Redaction Criticism," paper for the Fourth Nangeroni Meeting, *Early Islam: The Sectarian Milieu of Late Antiquity?* Early Islamic Studies Seminar, Milan, June 15–19, 2015, p. 5.
42. Qur'an 19:22–27, Bewley translation.
43. Some give a date for Pseudo-Matthew between AD 600 and 625; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction* (London: T. and T. Clark, 2003), p. 78. The New Testament scholar Dan Wallace dates it much later, to the eighth to ninth century AD (Daniel Wallace, Ed Komoszewski, and James Sawyer, *Reinventing Jesus* [Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006], p. 156).
44. *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, trans. Alexander Roberts, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. 8 (New York: Cosimo, 2007), p. 377.
45. The quote is from Hosn Abboud, *Mary in the Qur'an: A Literary Reading* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 56. Stephen J. Shoemaker makes the same observation in "Christmas in the Qur'an: The Qur'anic Account of Jesus' Nativity and Palestinian Local Tradition," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 28 (2003): 19.
46. Shoemaker points to these narratives as the ancient traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption, preserved by several Syriac fragments copied in the later fifth century, in "Christmas in the Qur'an," p. 19.
47. Dye, "The Qur'an and Its Hypertextuality in Light of Redaction Criticism," p. 6.
48. Antoninus Placentius, *Itinerarium*, in *Itineraria et alia Geographica*, ed. P. Geyer, Corpus Christianorum, Corpus Latina 175 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1965), p. 137; quoted here from Shoemaker, "Christmas in the Qur'an," p. 22.
49. Shoemaker, "Christmas in the Qur'an," pp. 33–34.
50. *Protoevangelium of James*, 17.
51. Shoemaker, "Christmas in the Qur'an," p. 27.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., p. 38.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 36. Shoemaker uses all this data to offer a late-origins thesis for the Qur'an—that the Qur'an's narrative about Mary was written when its presumed authors went out of Arabia and encountered the Jerusalem-based traditions about Kathisma. However, he grants: "It must be admitted that we have not completely eliminated the possibility that these two Christian traditions were somehow known to Muhammad, who combined them independently in the Hijaz, as the traditional understanding would have it." Ibid., p. 39.
56. The most detailed criticism of Shoemaker's thesis on the Kathisma Church

- comes, to my knowledge, from Patricia Crone's post-humorous article: "Jewish Christianity and The Qur'an (Part Two)," pp. 16–19. First, Crone rejects the argument that "Muslims must have picked up the story of Mary and the palm tree after the conquests," reminding readers that Quraish, the tribe of the Prophet, could well be acquainted with the Kathisma traditions. She also reminds that there are two churches involved, so that Shoemaker's thesis about the "conflation" of two separate legends by the Qur'an does not have to be the case.
57. The relevant passage is Rev. 12:1–6. It is Patricia Crone's argument that the woman suffering birth pains here is "the main inspiration behind the Qur'anic account" of Mary. (Ibid., p. 18.)
58. Qur'an, 23:50, Haleem translation.
59. Qur'an 19:28, Bewley translation, with Arabic words anglicized.
60. From which Jewish tribe Mary came has been disputed, but there are grounds to consider her a Levite, which would make her a descendant of Aaron. The Gospel of Luke 1:5 says that Mary was the cousin of Elizabeth, who was a descendant of Aaron the high priest. This suggests at least a possibility that Mary too was a Levite.
61. Suleiman A. Mourad, "Mary in the Qur'an: A Reexamination of Her Presentation," in *The Qur'an in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 163–174.
62. This comment comes from Guillaume Dye, of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, who adds, regarding the problem of the Qur'anic conflation of Mary and Miriam: "It is certainly fair to say that typology is one of the most widespread exegetical devices in Christianity. It can easily be combined with allegoric exegesis, which considers Biblical characters, places or episodes (i.e., concrete, material entities) as symbols of abstract or spiritual notions. So, when the Qur'an states that Mary is Aaron's sister and 'Imrân's daughter, it does not state that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is Aaron's biological sister and 'Imrân's biological daughter, but it claims that she is prefigured, one way or another, by the 'family of 'Imrân,' especially Aaron and Miryam (obviously, the homonymy on Maryam plays a role, but it does not entail that the main parallel is between Mary and Miryam). In other words, it is not simply a connection to Aaron's lineage." Dye, "The Qur'an and Its Hypertextuality in Light of Redaction Criticism," p. 9.
63. Ibid., p. 13. Emphasis added.
64. Ibid., p. 14.
65. Patricia Crone makes this argument about the Qur'an's implicit reference to an "Aaronid Messiah" in her "Jewish Christianity and The Qur'an (Part Two)," pp. 11–14. The direct quote here is from the same article, p. 13.
66. Ibid., p. 12.
67. Jonathan M. Reck, "The Annunciation to Mary: A Christian Echo in the Qur'an," *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014): 370.

68. Qur'an 19:22–27, Bewley translation.
69. Qur'an 19:29–34, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized.
70. The Catholic Christian view, as Neal Robinson puts it, was that, "despite their great number and the diversity of the countries in which they lived, [Christians] knew nothing of this miracle and had no record of it in their scriptures," *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, p. 9.
71. Mahmoud Ayoub, *The House of 'Imran*, pp. 137–138.
72. "The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour," trans. Alexander Walker, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 8, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886). Full text available at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0806.htm>. Accessed on July 14, 2016.
73. Qur'an 3:45–46, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized.
74. Qur'an 5:110, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized.
75. Emir Fethi Caner and Ergun Mehmet Caner, *More Than a Prophet: An Insider's Response to Muslim Beliefs about Jesus and Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2003), p. 49.
76. One of the towering traditional exegetes of the Qur'an, Razi, with reference to other Muslim theologians, had argued that "Jesus's speaking in the cradle was only for the purpose of asserting his mother's innocence." See Ayoub, *The House of 'Imran*, p. 138.
77. The Qur'anic verse is 4:156, Bewley translation.
78. The earliest reference to Pantera is probably from the church father Origen, who mentions him regarding a Jewish polemic that was intended to discredit the virgin birth (*Contra Celsum* 1:32–33). Also, there are several Talmudic references to Jesus' attribution as "son of Pantera" (*Rab. Qoh* 1:8; *Hul.* 2:22f.) and polemical accusations of Mary's immorality (*Sanh.* 67a; *Šabb.* 104b). Meanwhile, it is also possible that the "monstrous slander against Mary" may have had other explanations. The Muslim traveler and chronicler Ali b. Husayn al-Mas'udi (d. 956) held that "Jews spread the rumor that Zechariah had sexual relations with Mary." Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, p. 45.
79. Luke 11:27–28.
80. Luke 8:20–21.
81. John 2:4.
82. See: John 19:26–27.
83. One such scholar is James D. Tabor, in *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), p. 248.
84. The rest of the Qur'anic passage reads: "Then when [the child] achieves his full strength and reaches forty, he says, 'My Lord, keep me thankful for the blessing You bestowed on me and on my parents, and keep me acting rightly, pleas-

ing You. And make my descendants salihun. I have made tawba to You and I am truly one of the Muslims'" (46:15).

Disobedience to parents is commanded only when they try to pull their children away from God—even then, a "courteous" break is advised: "We have instructed man concerning his parents. Bearing him caused his mother great debility and the period of his weaning was two years: 'Give thanks to Me and to your parents. I am your final destination. But if they try to make you associate something with Me about which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. Keep company with them correctly and courteously in this world but follow the Way of him who turns to Me. Then you will return to Me and I will inform you about the things you did'" (31:14–15, Aisha Bewley translation).

Meanwhile, another type of intrafamily tension occurs when the parents call their child to God but the latter refuses. The Qur'an depicts such sons or daughters in a very negative light: "But what of him who says to his parents, 'Fie on you! Do you promise me that I will be resurrected when generations before me have passed away?' They both call on Allah for help: 'Woe to you! Have iman! Allah's promise is true.' But he says, 'This is nothing but the myths of previous peoples'" (46:17, Bewley translation).

85. The story is narrated in the hadith collection of Abu Dawud, "Al-Adab," in *Sunan Abu Dawud*, 64; here it is taken from Zeki Saritoprak, with his commentary included, *Islam's Jesus* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida Press, 2014), p. 8.
86. The exegete who made this comment is Sayyed Qutb, who has become somewhat notorious for this role in the making of a radical political Islam. Yet his scholarly work on the Qur'an *tafseer* (exegesis) should not be underestimated. The quote is from Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, 4:2304–2306, quoted in Saritoprak, *Islam's Jesus*, p. 9.
87. Such modernist commentators include the Pakistanis Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Gulam Ahmed Parwez, the Egyptian Tawfiq Sidqi, and the Indian Muhammad Ali. Ahmad Khan argues that the statement that "Mary guarded her chastity" does not mean that she never had intercourse with any man, but "it means that she only had intercourse with her husband." He and others try to interpret the story without any supernatural element. Muhammad Ali interprets the medieval Muslim biographer of the Prophet Ibn Ishaq's saying that Jesus was formed in the womb like every other child of Adam to mean that "Jesus was conceived by a woman in the manner in which all women conceive. Then she was delivered of him as women are delivered of their children." He reaches the conclusion that Jesus was the legitimate child of Joseph and Mary, as against Jewish slanders of illegitimacy. See Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Quran* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013), chapter 7, "The Annunciation." In Turkey, too, a modernist/leftist exegete, İhsan Eliacik, in his general approach of offering natural explanations for the apparent miracles in the

- Qur'an, offers a self-admitted "speculation" on this matter: Mary might have had a sexual dream that might have triggered a biological reaction in her body that somehow led to her being "impregnated by herself," *Yaşayan Kur'an [The Living Qur'an]*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: İnşa Yayınları, 2007), pp. 143–144.
88. The comment is from Emir Fethi Caner and his brother Ergun Mehmet Caner. Both writers, converts from Islam and of Turkish origin, are quite critical of the Muslim faith. The quote is from their polemical book opposing Islam, *More Than a Prophet: An Insider's Response to Muslim Beliefs about Jesus and Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2003), p. 49.
 89. Qur'an 5:17, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized.
 90. In the words of biblical scholar Heikki Räisänen: "Many Western critics have accused Muhammad of inconsistency: since he rejects the divinity of Jesus, he ought not to have accepted the Virgin Birth either (or vice versa). This charge is groundless, however. Muhammad made it quite clear how the Virgin Birth, as he understood it, should be integrated into his uncompromisingly monotheistic view." "The Portrait of Jesus in the Qur'an: Reflections of a Biblical Scholar," *The Muslim World* 70, no. 2 (April 1980): 126.
 91. Eusebius Pamphilus (Eusebius of Caesarea), *Church History* 27, "The Heresy of the Ebionites," full text available at: http://biblehub.com/library/pamphilus/church_history/chapter_xxvii_the_heresy_of_the.htm/. Accessed on July 14, 2016.
 92. J. Gresham Machen, *Virgin Birth of Christ* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 1987), p. 21.
 93. Ibid.
 94. Ibid., p. 22.
 95. Qur'an 5:116–118, Haleem translation.
 96. Gabriel Said Reynolds points this out in his 2016 online lecture series titled "Introduction to the Quran: The Scripture of Islam." Available at <https://www.my-mooc.com/en/mooc/introduction-quran-scripture-islam-notredamex-th120-2x/>.
 97. The verse that seems to target the doctrine of the Trinity reads: "Those who say that God is the third of three are unbelievers. There is no god but One God. If they do not stop saying what they say, a painful punishment will afflict those among them who are unbelievers" (5:73). But one curious detail here is that the word *Trinity* does not exactly suggest "God is the third of three." So there have been many discussions on this verse, on whether it presents the Trinity correctly, or whether it targets an unorthodox form of it that would be heretical for mainstream Christians as well.
 98. Qur'an 9:31, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized.
 99. The prominent Muslim exegete Ibn Kathir mentions this hadith in his *tasfeer* and specifically for this verse.

100. *Luther's Works*, vol. 47 (St. Louis, MN: Fortress Press and Concordia, 1957), pp. 45ff.
101. Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, p. 20.
102. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 78.23.10.
103. The suggestion is Geoffrey Ashe's; I refer to it via Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 43.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Heikki Räisänen, "The Portrait of Jesus in the Qur'an: Reflections of a Biblical Scholar," *The Muslim World* 70, no. 2 (April 1980): 129.
2. Qur'an 2:136, Bewley translation.
3. Qur'an 2:253, Haleem translation.
4. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013), p. 16.
5. Al-Tabari, *Jami' al-bayan*, 3:269–270, cited in Asma Afsaruddin, "The Messiah 'Isa, Son of Mary: Jesus in the Islamic Tradition," in *Nicholas of Cusa and Islam: Polemic and Dialogue in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Ian Christopher Levy et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 185.
6. Qur'an 3:49.
7. Qur'an 3:50–51, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized.
8. The occasions are 3:51, 5:72, 19:36, and 43:64.
9. John 20:17, New International Version. Emphasis added.
10. Qur'an 43:63, Bewley translation.
11. Qur'an 2:253, Haleem translation.
12. Qur'an 17:101, Bewley translation. The Qur'an does not name these miracles one by one altogether, but they are mentioned in different verses of the Qur'an. See 7:133, 27:12, and 26:63. The full list here was given by the traditional Muslim exegete Tabari. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, vol. 3 (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001–2006), s.v. "Moses," p. 422.
13. Qur'an 3:49, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized.
14. Qur'an 5:109–110, Bewley translation with Arabic words anglicized and "tribe of Israel" reworded as "Children of Israel."
15. On how Jesus' miracles have been interpreted by Muslim scholars, see: Kate Zebiri, "Contemporary Muslim Understanding of the Miracles of Jesus," *The Muslim World* 90, no. 1–2 (March 2000): 71–90.
16. Matthew 6:19.
17. One of the early scholars, Ismail ibn Abd al-Rahman Suddi, a famous *muhad-dith* (transmitter of hadiths), wrote, "He [Jesus Son of Mary] used to tell the boys who were with him in school what their parents did and what they put