CONTEMPORARY SUNNI AND AHMADIYYA VIEWS OF JESUS IN GHANA IN THE LIGHT OF FOUR PRE-MODERN ISLAMIC SOURCES

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Abstract

This thesis examines contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Ghana in the light of four pre-modern Islamic sources, namely, the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. Overall, seventeen treatises comprising eleven Sunni and six Ahmadiyya works are examined in this thesis.

Chapter 1 is about the background to the thesis. Chapter 2 explores the person of Jesus from the perspective of four pre-modern sources in Islam. Chapter 3 examines the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the divine sonship of Jesus etc from the standpoint of the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya works. Chapter 4 investigates the death of Jesus from the perspective of the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya works. Chapter 5 summarises the previous four chapters.

The first finding of this thesis is that there is substantial theological agreement between the contemporary and pre-modern sources in terms of their representation of Jesus. However, the one fundamental disagreement is that the Ahmadiyya polemicists reject the substitution hypothesis espoused by all the pre-modern sources which posits that Jesus survived death by crucifixion through a miraculous intervention by God resulting in the death of an unnamed

substitute. Using Qur'anic, biblical and extra-biblical evidence, the Ahmadiyya polemicists argue that Jesus was crucified, that he swooned on the Cross and was taken down and buried. This theory continues that Jesus came out of the tomb on the third day and travelled to the regions around India where he died many decades later.

The second finding is that there are stylistic and methodological differences between the pre-modern sources examined in Chapter 2 and the contemporary sources examined in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Chapter 2 shows a philosophically rigorous, theologically sophisticated and rationally robust critique of traditional Christology. By contrast, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 are largely an aggregation of theological arguments against traditional views of both the divinity of Jesus and his death by crucifixion.

Finally, this thesis concludes that the contexts of the pre-modern and contemporary sources, the lack of appreciation of the nuances of traditional Christology by the contemporary polemicists and the needs of the Ghanaian readers may partly account for the differences in the pre-modern and contemporary sources that are examined in thesis.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains original research work done by me. All information in this thesis has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this thesis.

Name: Stephen Akpiok-bisa Agilinko

Date: 1st September 2016

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Stephen Akpiok-bisa Agilinko

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dear wife, Diana, my children, Dr. Bertrand Agilinko and his wife Mrs. Mavis Agilinko, Dr. Joshua Agilinko, Caleb Agilinko, Rhoda Agilinko and Reuben Agilinko in recognition of their encouragement and support while I was researching and writing this thesis.

I also dedicate this thesis to my *Alma Mater*, the Christian College, Ghana, where I trained for Christian ministry. I would like to express my gratitude to the late Mrs. Juliana Senavoe, the late Mr. William Chapman, Mr. John Kojo Ntsiful, Dr. Samuel Adobofuor, Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Asante, Mrs. Abena Forsuah Yeboah, Mr. Martin Obeng, Mr. Joseph Kontoh Manu, Mr. Oti Appiah etc.

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Stephen Akpiok-bisa Agilinko

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Secondly, I thank West Green Baptist Church, among whom I have exercised pastoral leadership since July 2004. I would like to thank the Elders who willingly provided leadership during the times I was away in Ghana collecting materials for this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the thesis

This thesis examines contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Ghana in the light of four key pre-modern sources in Islam, namely, the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and the earliest Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition about Jesus. These sources contain the earliest historical record about Jesus in the Islamic tradition. Hence, these sources will be used as the basis to assess the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 respectively.

Jesus has been recognized as a key prophetic figure in Islam since earliest times. He has also been revered by Muslims of all theological persuasions throughout the last fourteen centuries both as a prophet (*nabi*) and a messenger (*rasul*) of God. Jesus is respected among Muslims both as the epitome of total submission to God and religious piety. He is an important eschatological figure in Islam in the sense that Sunni Muslims believe, on the basis of Qur'an 43:61 and 4:159 that the coming of Jesus to the earth a second time will portend the arrival of the Last Day.[1]

Altogether, four factors provided the motivation for this thesis. Firstly, the enduring significance of the person of Jesus in the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue over the past fourteen hundred years was one key factor that inspired this researcher to conduct this research in order to find out why this is the case. For example, this researcher has wondered why discussions about the

[1]Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 78.

person of Jesus are among those that have engendered so much theological disagreement in Muslim-Christian dialogue.

This researcher has also wondered why Christology has spawned large volumes of polemical literature by Muslim and Christian scholars over the last fourteen centuries. The most scholarly of the Muslim anti-Christian polemical literature that date back to the eighth century C.E. will be examined in this thesis.

The British scholar, David Thomas, has rightly observed that classical Muslim scholars wrote about the divinity of Jesus because they sought both to defend the insistent emphasis on the oneness and the utter otherness of God (*tawhid*) in the Qur'an and demonstrate that Christians were theologically wrong in holding the view that Jesus, a man, was also divine.[2]

Secondly, the work of itinerant Muslim preachers in Ghana who aimed to proselytize non-Muslims including Christians in the late 1980s also inspired this thesis. It is worth noting that some of the *da'wah* preaching events that were organized by the itinerant Muslim preachers were attended by this researcher. From 1986 until 2001, this researcher lived in two towns in Ghana where Muslim preachers engaged Christians in debates about the divinity, crucifixion, death of Jesus etc.[3]

The word *da'wah* in the preceding paragraph is used by Muslims to mean the proclamation of the message of Islam to non-Muslims by Muslims by persuading them to believe in Muhammad and the message that he brought

[2]David Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology* (Brill: Leiden, 2008), 8.
[3]This researcher lived in Walewale (1986-1992) and worked as a School Teacher. He also lived in Kumasi (1992-2001) and worked both as a School Teacher and a Minister/Pastor of a Baptist Church called Solid Rock Baptist Church.

from God to humankind.[4] The people who believe this message are then invited to submit to God and become Muslims.

We should note that the work of itinerant Muslim preachers which we pointed out in the preceding paragraph resulted in the proliferation of Christian organizations in Ghana. Some of these organizations were started by some Muslim converts to Christianity who believed that they had received a divine commission to take the gospel to Muslims in Ghana. It is worth mentioning that the evangelistic activities of these organizations were financed by some mainline Churches in Ghana including the Assemblies of God, Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church etc.

Apart from preaching the gospel to Muslims, some of these organizations provided a Christian response to the Muslim anti-Christian polemic then prevalent in Ghana. The most notable of these organisations that is known to this researcher is the Converted Muslims Christian Ministry (CMCM). It was founded by Ahmed Agyei, a Muslim convert to Christianity in the early 1980s. Ahmed trained at the Mid-Ghana Assemblies of God Bible School in Kumasi and was ordained as the Pastor/Minister of Converted Muslims Christian Ministry, Kumasi. This researcher was a member of the Church (CMCM) for one year (1992-193).

Evidence that some Christian organizations including CMCM were founded to give a Christian response to the Muslim anti-Christian polemic in Ghana is seen in some Christian anti-Muslim polemical treatises that were collected by this researcher but are not examined in this thesis. This Christian

[4]*The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, s.v. "*Da'wah*", 64.

anti-Muslim literature is not examined in this thesis because it treats theological topics other those that are being investigated in this thesis.

The reference by Ustaz Adam Dwomoh in his booklet, *Renewed Attacks on Islam* to a publication by the Converted Muslims Christian Ministry (CMCM) in the phrase 'one of their heretical pamphlets' is worth noting. It is proof as we noted above, that some of the Christian groups that were started in the 1980s in Ghana to reach Muslims with the gospel also provided a Christian response to the Muslim anti-Christian polemic then prevalent.[5] The reference is to a work entitled *True Islam is in Jesus Christ* which was written by an ex-Muslim called Ishmael Kusi Agyei.[6]

Also, in his booklet *Jesus and Muhammad: Brothers in Islam*, Amin Bonsu refers to the polemical work authored by Ahmed Agyei entitled *The Comforter: The Holy Spirit or Muhammad?*[7] This work aimed to show that there is no biblical evidence for the Muslim claim that Jesus predicted the coming of Muhammad.

To the present day, it is common to see Muslim and Christian groups debating with one another in some of the major cities in Ghana including Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi, Tamale etc. For example, on a typical Sunday afternoon in the city of Kumasi where this researcher collected most of the treatises that are examined in this thesis, one would find three or four groups Sunni and Ahmadiyya Muslim preachers debating with Christians.

Thirdly, the personal experience of this researcher also inspired this thesis. While this researcher was working as a Minister/Pastor of a Baptist Church in a predominantly Muslim settlement outside the city of Kumasi

[5]Ustaz Adam Dwomoh, *Renewed Attacks on Islam* (no place of publication, 1992), 3.
[6]Dwomoh, *Attacks*, 3.
[7]Amin Bonsu, *Jesus and Muhammad: Brothers in Islam* (no place and date of publication), 19.

called Moshie Zongo for nine years (1992-2001), he would debate with Muslim preachers about the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity and Incarnation, biblical predictions about Muhammad etc. Consequently, he realized that Christology was both an important and a controversial theological subject in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Therefore, to fully appreciate Islam's rejection of both the divinity of Jesus and his death by crucifixion, this researcher decided to investigate the subject in this thesis.

Finally, five trips to Ghana between 2010 and 2016 during which this researcher visited three of the leading universities in Ghana also provided the inspiration for this thesis. During the trips, the researcher had the privilege of going through databases of research theses. He discovered that no research work had been done at doctorate level on Christology. Consequently, this researcher decided to research Christology in order to fill the existing scholarly gap and thereby, make both an intellectual contribution to scholarship and to the ongoing Muslim–Christian dialogue about Jesus in Ghana.

It is instructive to note that the use of polemical literature by Muslims and Christians in Ghana over the last three decades has resulted in spasms of Muslim-Christian and intra-Muslim violence in some towns and cities across the country. We shall cite three cases of Muslim-Christian and intra-Muslim disturbances that have happened in Ghana since the 1980s to illustrate this development.

Despite the generally peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians in Ghana which we shall briefly discuss below, there have been spasms of violence between the two communities. The three cases of Muslim-Christian and intra-Muslim disturbances that will be cited below are illustrative

rather than exhaustive and help to show that such violence is associated with proselytizing in Ghana either by means of Christian evangelism or Muslim *da'wah*.

The first incident was intra-Muslim. It occurred during an open-air debate on a Sunday afternoon in 1987 between Sunni and Ahmadiyya Muslims about the death of Jesus by means of crucifixion. After a long intellectual debate about the correct interpretation of Qur'an 4:157-158 in terms of whether it asserts or denies the death of Jesus by crucifixion, violence erupted between the two groups. During the disturbance that ensued, the public address systems and religious literature that were brought there by both groups were all destroyed and the debate was brought to an abrupt halt. This researcher witnessed the incident firsthand.

The second happened in Walewale in 1992 at an open-air evangelistic event by members of the Living Bread and Evangelistic Ministry (LBEM) who had travelled there from Kumasi. In an attempt to illustrate what he was saying, one of the preachers argued that there was a distinction between Jesus and Muhammad in the sense that the former resurrected from his grave after he was buried while the latter perished in his grave. The Muslims in the audience interpreted this illustration as an insult against Muhammad.

Consequently, the Muslims vandalized both the public address system and musical instruments belonging to the Christian preachers and physically assaulted them. The Muslims attempted to burn a bus that belonged to the Christians. The disturbance was brought under control by some personnel from the Ghana Police Service in the town. The incident was witnessed by this researcher firsthand.

The third happened in 1995 in Suame, a suburb near the city of Kumasi during an open-air evangelistic event at which Ahmed Agyei whom we referred to earlier in this chapter was preaching. The event was brought to an abrupt halt when the Muslims who were in the audience attacked Agyei because he argued both from the Qur'an and the Bible that Jesus neither predicted the coming of Muhammad nor said that he (Muhammad) would be his successor. The incident was not witnessed firsthand by this researcher. He only heard about it on the same day that it happened while he was preaching at the Emmanuel Methodist Church in Suame.

1.2 Statement of the problem

While the current state of Muslim-Christian relations in Ghana is peripheral to this thesis, it is important to briefly mention that Muslims and Christians have generally lived peacefully together in Ghana since independence from British colonial rule in 1957. A brief statement about the current state of Muslim-Christian relations in Ghana would help to shed more light on the context within which this research conducted.

An example of the mutual respect between Muslims and Christians in Ghana is seen in the way one of the main political parties, namely, New Patriotic Party, has always selected a Christian and a Muslim for its presidential and vice-presidential positions since the year 2000.[8] Moreover, there are many families in Ghana in which the members are both Christians and Muslims. Given what we have mentioned above, we can say that compared to other African countries, Muslims and Christians in Ghana co-exist

[8]The late Alhaji Aliu Mahama was the Vice-President to President John Agyekum Kufuor in the government of the New Patriotic Party from 2000 until 2008. Also, Dr. Mahamadu Bawumia and Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo have been the vice-presidential and presidential candidates respectively for the New Patriotic Party from 2008 until 2016.

peacefully and generally work together in all spheres of life including education, politics, the Ghana Army, the Ghana Police Service etc.

However, Christian-Muslim disturbances have been rife in Ghana since the 1980s, as illustrated in the three cases we have cited above. It is worth noting that the three cases we cited above were all caused by Muslim *da'wah* activities and Christian evangelistic activities that aimed to proselytize non-Muslims or non-Christians. It is worth observing that both Muslim anti-Christian and Christian anti-Muslim polemical literature is distributed at both *da'wah* or evangelistic events in Ghana. The key theological issues that will be investigated in this thesis are the divinity of Jesus, the associated Christological doctrines (Trinity, Incarnation, the epithet 'Son of God') and the Muslim claim that Jesus was the precursor of Muhammad.

This thesis is limited to only Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus as this researcher was not successful in collecting any Shia materials when he paid two visits to the Islamic Shia University College in Accra in Ghana on 12th and 15th May 2014 respectively. Consequently, no Shia literature will be examined in this thesis. Admittedly, the inclusion of Shia literature would have broadened both the scope of investigation and the depth of analysis in this thesis. We shall first look briefly at some key theological differences between the Sunni and Ahmadiyya. This will help to provide a useful theological background to the analysis that will be done in Chapter 4 where the death and crucifixion of Jesus will be examined.

We first consider Sunni and Ahmadiyya perceptions of each other. It is noteworthy to mention that Sunni Muslims do not accept Ahmadiyya Muslims

as members of the one universal community of believers.[9] Sadly, Ahmadiyya Muslims are seen by Sunni Muslims both as a heretical and an apostate sect within Islam.[10] Similarly, the Ahmadiyya do not accept Sunni Muslims and have therefore disdainfully described them as misguided apostates and innovators who will be thrown into Hell.[11]

It is in order to first note some of the areas of theological and doctrinal agreement before we look at three key areas of theological disagreement. As we do not intend to do a detailed examination of their theological differences we shall briefly note only four areas of agreement. These are (1) the belief in the absolute unity and oneness of God (*tawhid*), (2) the belief in the existence of angels, (3) the belief in revealed books and (4) the belief in the Last Day etc.[12]

Next, we consider some of the areas of fundamental theological disagreement. We limit ourselves to only three areas. The first is the mission of Ghulam Ahmad (d.1908), the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in relation to the mission of Prophet Muhammad. The disagreement revolve around the correct interpretation of the phrase 'the seal of the prophets' (*Khataman nabiyeen*) in the text "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the prophets" in Qur'an 33:41.[13]

The disagreement in relation to the above verse (Q.33:41) is whether this verse implies the cessation of the sending of prophets by God into the world after Muhammad or whether prophets including Ghulam Ahmad could

[9]Simon Ross Valentine, *Islam and Ahmadiyya Jama'at: History, Belief, Practice* (London: Hurst and Company, 2008), 127.
[10]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 127.
[11]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 34.
[12]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 34.
[13]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 128-129.

still be sent by God after Muhammad.[14] The implication is that if Qur'an 33:41 means that no prophet would be sent into the world after Muhammad, the claims of Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet would be seen to be without support from the Qur'an.

Generally, Sunni Muslims believe that the correct interpretation of Qur'an 33:41 is that the line of prophets who were sent by God ended with Muhammad which implies that no other prophet will be sent into the world after him.[15] On the basis of this interpretation, Sunni Muslims have dismissed the prophetic claims of Ghulam Ahmad. According to them, the text (33:41) forecloses the sending of prophets, including Ghulam Ahmad, by God after Muhammad.

However, Ahmadiyya Muslims have countered the Sunni exegesis of the text we noted above and offered an alternative interpretation. According to them, the correct interpretation of the text is that there cannot be a prophet to come after Muhammad with a revealed book that contains a religious law or code.[16] They have therefore argued that to recognize Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet of God does not contradict Qur'an 33:41 because the text does not mean that there will be no prophet to come after Muhammad as their prophet is regarded as a *Mujadidd* (Reformer).[17]

According to Ahmadiyya Muslims, Qur'an 33:41 means that Muhammad is the 'spiritual father of all the prophets' and that his advent brought to an end the line of the independent law-giving prophets.[18] On this view, Ahmadiyya Muslims have argued that there can be lesser non law-

[14]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 128.
[15]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 129-131.
[16]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 128.
[17]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 128-134.
[18]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 132-134.

bearing prophets described as 'spiritual sons' of Muhammad, who is the 'father of all prophets' who would be sent into the world after him.[19] At any rate, Sunni Muslims have continued to reject the prophetic claims of Ghulam Ahmad despite their re-interpretation of Qur'an 33:41 we noted above.

Secondly, Sunni and Ahmadiyya Muslims disagree about the crucifixion and death of Jesus.[20] Generally, Sunni Muslims believe that Jesus was miraculously rescued from dying by crucifixion when God cast his likeness unto a nameless substitute who died in his place. This interpretation is based on their exegesis of Qur'an 4:157-158. Ahmadiyya Muslims hold a view that is in many respects, the polar opposite of the Sunni view. They believe both that it was Jesus who was crucified but he did not die on the Cross and that no substitute died in his place.[21] We shall examine this view in more detail in Chapter 4.

Thirdly, Sunni and Ahmadiyya Muslims disagree about the second return of Jesus to the earth again. Sunni Muslims believe on the basis of Qur'an 4:159 and Qur'an 43:61, two verses we noted in the introduction to this chapter, that Jesus will return to this earth before the Day of Judgement and die a physical death. It seems to this researcher that this view is predicated on the assumption that Jesus did not die when the Jews tried to kill him by means of crucifixion. On this view, Sunni Muslims believe that Jesus will come back and die a physical death.

In contrast to the Sunni view we noted above, Ahmadiyya Muslims believe that Jesus died a physical death decades after he survived death by crucifixion. We shall see the detailed analysis in Chapter 4. They also argue

[19]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 134.
[20]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 148.
[21]Valentine, *Ahmadiyya*, 21-22, 148.

that the second return of Jesus to this earth would contradict the finality of prophethood as taught in Qur'an 33:41. On the view that Jesus came with a revealed book and a religious law like Muhammad, Ahmadiyya Muslims have argued that if Jesus would return to this earth a second time he would come as a prophet. In other words they argue that if Jesus would come as a prophet with a revealed book and a religious law as he came the first time, his second return would contradict the finality of prophethood in Qur'an 33:41.

1.3 Purpose and goals of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to examine contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Ghana in the light of four key pre-modern Islamic sources. For the purposes of this thesis, the four pre-modern sources are the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition, the exegetical tradition and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. The goals of this thesis are as follows:

i. Analyze the arguments and the views about the divinity of Jesus in the four pre-modern Islamic sources.

ii. Analyze the arguments and views about the associated doctrines (Trinity, Incarnation, the divine sonship of Jesus etc) and the Muslim claim that Jesus was the precursor of Muhammad in the four pre-modern Islamic sources.

iii. Analyze the arguments and the views about the crucifixion and the death of Jesus in the four pre-modern Islamic sources.

iv. Analyze the arguments and the views about the divinity of Jesus in the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemical treatises.

v. Analyze the arguments and the views about the associated Christological doctrines (Trinity, Incarnation, the divine sonship of Jesus etc) and the Muslim claim that Jesus predicted the coming of Muhammad as his successor in the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemical treatises.

vi. Analyze the arguments and views about the crucifixion and the death of Jesus in contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya treatises.

vii. Compare and contrast the pre-modern and contemporary arguments and views about the divinity of Jesus, the associated Christological doctrines and the Muslim claim that Jesus was the precursor of Muhammad.

viii. Compare and contrast the pre-modern and contemporary arguments about the crucifixion and the death of Jesus.

ix. Compare and contrast the methodological approaches of the pre-modern sources and the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya sources in their critique against the divinity of Jesus, the associated doctrines, the Muslim claim that Jesus predicted the coming of Muhammad as his successor and the death of Jesus.

1.4 Overview of Muslim anti-Christian polemics in Ghana

Islam was first introduced into chiefdoms and kingdoms including the Asante in West Africa by Juula traders who were attracted to the lucrative trade in gold in the fifteenth century CE.[22] Islam was introduced when Muslim traders first settled among some predominantly pagan populations. This phase in the spread and growth of Islam in West Africa is described by David

[22]Ivor Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam in the Forest," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, eds. Nehemiah Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000), 94-104.

Robinson in his *Muslim Societies in African History* as "minority" or "quarantine" Islam.[23]

Robinson has identified two more phases in the development of Islam namely, 'court' Islam and 'majority' Islam.[24] The former phase refers to the adoption of Islam by both the rulers and members of the ruling classes in the states where the literate and skilful Muslim merchants served as court officials.[25] According to Robinson, the 'majority' phase was reached when Islam grew beyond the merchants and the ruling classes of the states in which the Muslims had settled as traders. These stages best illustrate the spread of Islam in the Asante kingdom which later became part of the modern state of Ghana.

Five centuries after its introduction, Islam is the second largest religion in Ghana after Christianity. Statistics released by the Ghana Statistical Service in 2012 for the 2010 Ghana Population and Housing Census showed that the population of Ghana was twenty-four million, six hundred and fifty-eight thousand, eight hundred and twenty-three (24, 658, 823) which represents an increase of 30.4% over the last population census in 2000 and Christianity and Islam account for 71.2% and 17.6% of the total population respectively.[26]

Muslim anti-Christian polemics has a very long history in Ghana. It began in the twentieth century and reached an apotheosis the 1980s. By this time, it had become both a tool for evangelism and *da'wah* that was used by

[23]David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 28.
[24]Robinson, *Muslim Societies*, 28.
[25]Robinson, *Muslim Societies*, 28.
[26]http://www.statsghana.gh/docfiles/Census 2010. These figures were compiled by the Ghana Statistical Service in May 2012, 6. This was last accessed on 15th January 2016.

Muslims and Christians for proselytising non-Christians and non-Muslims in Ghana.

The first documented case of polemics was by the Madhi movement which was active in the Gold Coast in the first decade of the twentieth century C.E. [27] Although Samwini has provided sufficient information about the movement's activities with respect to intra-Muslim polemics he does not tell us whether it also engaged in Muslim anti-Christian polemics. We can only conjecture that it did. We are therefore, unable to tell whether or not it was the Madhi movement that pioneered Muslim anti-Christian polemics in the Gold Coast (now Ghana).

The second case of polemics is traced to the pioneer Ahmadiyya missionaries to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century C.E. According to Samwini, to whom we are indebted for the information about the earliest cases of polemics in the Gold Coast, the Ahmadiyya missionaries arrived in 1921.[28] It is worth noting that prior to the coming of the Ahmadiyya, Christians and Muslims living along the coastal villages and towns of the Gold Coast were careful not to ask questions about one another's religious beliefs. Thus, they co-existed peacefully, lived and worked side by side. However, with the coming of the Ahmadiyya, polemics became a useful tool both for apologetics and proselytising among both Sunni Muslims and Christians.

In debates with Christians about the death of Jesus, the Ahmadiyya missionaries would argue persuasively from the Bible that Jesus did not die by crucifixion. They would argue that unknown to the Jewish religious, Roman

[27]Nathan Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2003), 76-79.
[28]Samwini, *Muslim Resurgence*, 86-97.

political authorities and Roman soldiers, Jesus was taken down from the Cross alive but unconscious and was buried in the tomb from where he regained consciousness and came out of it.[29] Ahmadiyya preachers in Ghana are skilled at using very novel hermeneutical techniques to re-interpret the verses in the gospel that are traditionally thought to support the literal death of Jesus by means of crucifixion.

Similarly, they would argue when debating Sunni Muslims that on the basis of Qur'an 4:157-158, Jesus was not saved from a literal death by crucifixion by being taken miraculously by God into heaven. Rather, they would argue that Jesus survived death by crucifixion by being taken down alive from the Cross and buried in the tomb. Also, they would argue that Jesus travelled to the regions around India and completed the final phase of his prophetic ministry and died there decades afterwards.[30]

Since the 1980s as we noted above, polemics has been widely used by Muslims and Christians during *da'wah* and evangelistic events. The Sunni and Ahmadiyya treatises that will be examined in this thesis were written to equip Muslims both with the information and the skills to engage in Muslim-Christian polemics in Ghana. The Christian response to the Muslim anti-Christian critique of traditional Christian doctrines in the 1980s came through the work of groups such as the Converted Muslims Christian Ministry (CMCM) we referred to earlier.

1.5 Sources of the thesis

This thesis draws on both pre-modern and contemporary documentary Muslim sources. The pre-modern sources are (1) the Qur'an, (2) the prophetic

[29]Nurudeen Muhammed Asante, *The Guide* (no place and date of publication), 48-50.
[30]Asante, *Guide*, 49.

tradition (*hadith*), (3) the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and (4) the Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. The contemporary sources are written by Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists about the divinity of Jesus, other Christological doctrines and the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

In Chapter 2, the works of four pre-modern scholars will be examined in relation to the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines and the works of two pre-modern scholars will be examined in relation to the crucifixion and death of Jesus. The contemporary sources were collected in Ghana during five trips to Ghana by this researcher between 2010 and 2016.

The contemporary polemical texts were collected from three cities in Ghana, namely, Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast. Altogether, nine Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemical treatises on the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines will be examined in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4 which will focus on the death of Jesus, a total of ten treatises will examined.

We shall highlight the historical contexts within which the pre-modern scholarly texts that will be examined in Chapter 2 were written in order to illuminate our appreciation of the information they provide about Jesus. For example, the abundance of information about the Trinity and the Incarnation in the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical treatises as compared to the scant information in the Qur'an can be explained only with recourse to the historical contexts of those sources.

It is worth noting that the Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition developed within a religious environment where Christian and Muslim scholars were engaged in scholarly theological debates, most of which were about the person of Jesus. In contrast to this, the revelation of the Qur'an did not take

place within an environment that was characterized by such Muslim-Christian scholarly debates.

We should point out that there is an abundance of information on the death of Jesus in the Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition compared to the scant information on the subject in the Qur'an apart from Qur'an 4:157-158. It is evident from this brief explanation that the historical contexts are useful in illuminating our understanding of the portrayal of Jesus in the pre-modern Islamic sources that will be examined in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

1.5.1 The contemporary polemical works

This thesis will draw on nineteen contemporary treatises written by both Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists. They were collected from (1) Muslim bookshops in Kumasi and Accra, (2) educational institutions in Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast and (3) Muslim polemicists during *da'wah* sessions in Kumasi and in Accra.

Normally, most Muslim preachers in Ghana publish their sermons in the form of tracts, cassette tapes, booklets etc in the local languages. However, this thesis examines only Sunni and Ahmadiyya treatises that are written in English. These were collected between 2010 and 2016 in Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast by this researcher during five trips to Ghana. The three cities can be seen in the map below.

It is worth pointing out that this researcher travelled to other towns and cities in Ghana in search of materials for this thesis including Bolgatanga, Tamale, Takoradi, Walewale etc. We should observe that both Muslim anti-Christian and Christian anti-Muslim polemical literature in Ghana are written

in the southern cities including the cities where the treatises that are examined in this thesis were collected.



1.5.1.1 The contemporary polemicists

Firstly, we consider the Sunni polemicists first. The first polemicist is Abubakar Siddiq Abban. We have no details about him apart from his book entitled *Be a Bible Professor: A Book of Bible Quotations and Notes*. The second is Ahmed Deedat (d. 2005). He was a South African citizen of Gujurati origin. According to Zebiri, Deedat had no formal religious training and

therefore**,** had limited academic knowledge about Christianity.[31] We shall examine four of his booklets in this thesis, namely, (1) *Christ in Islam*, (2) *Muhammed: The Natural Successor to Christ*, (3) *Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction* and (4) *Was Jesus Crucified?*

The third polemicist is Alhassan Mubarick. This researcher first met him in 2014. He was living in one of the predominantly Muslim suburbs of the city of Kumasi called Asawasi. His polemical work that will be examined in this thesis is entitled '*Is Jesus God?* The fourth is Ayuob Ofosuhene Asare who has had a long career as a polemicist spanning nearly three decades. This researcher first met him at the University of Ghana, Accra, in 2010. His booklet is entitled *Who Really is Jesus?* He was living in the capital city, Accra, at the time.

The fifth polemicist is Mohammed Braimah Youseph. He was living in Saabo Zongo when this researcher first met in 2010. His booklet that is examined in this thesis is entitled *Muhammed the Comforter*. The sixth polemicist is Ustaz Adam Dwomoh. He was living in Old Tafo in the city of Kumasi when this researcher first met him in 2010. His two polemical works that are examined in this thesis are *Pentecost Spirit (The Supposed Comforter): Holy or Evil?*) and *Was the Word God or God's (John 1:1 versus Psalm 33:6?*). The seventh is Naser al-Moghamis. We do not have any information about him apart from what we have in his booklet entitled *Christianity and Islam according to the Bible and the Qur'an*.

Secondly, we consider the Ahmadiyya polemicists. The first polemicist is Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908). He was the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement

[31]Kate Zebiri, *Muslims and Christians: Face to Face* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 46.

and claimed to have been divinely appointed as the promised Messiah as well as the *Mujaddid* (Renewer) of Islam. His work that will be examined in this thesis is entitled *Jesus in India*. The second is Hussaini Mabera about whom there is no information about him apart from what we have in his booklet entitled *Is Jesus Christ Son of God?* The third is Nurudeen Mohammed Asante. We know very little about him apart from information in his work entitled *The Guide* which is examined in this thesis.

The fourth is Tahir Ahmad who died in London in 2003. He was the fourth successor to the promised Messiah, Ghulam Ahmad. His work that is examined in this thesis is *Christianity: A Journey from facts to Fiction*. The fifth Ahmadiyya document has no details about its author and its pages the pages are not numbered. Hence, we have described this work in this thesis as the 'Anonymous Tract'.

1.5.1.2 Reasons for using treatises written in English

This researcher found four types of Muslim anti-Christian materials in Ghana while he was collecting materials for this thesis, namely, (1) cassette tapes, (2) videos (3) treatises written in English and (4) treatises written in Twi.[32] Although this researcher collected all four types in varying quantities, he decided to use polemical treatises written in English because of four main reasons.

Firstly, treatises that are written in English are more accessible in Ghana compared to videos and cassette tapes. Ghanaian Muslim polemicists

[32]Twi is spoken by the Akan tribe who live in the Ashanti Region in southern Ghana. In this thesis we have used treatises that are written in English for our analysis rather than other Muslim anti-Christian polemical works that are written in Twi.

tend to use polemical treatises as one form of interaction and dialogue with Christians in Ghana. We should note that Muslim anti-Christian treatises, especially those that are written in English, are easily obtained from the libraries of Muslim preachers and Muslim bookshops throughout Ghana.

Secondly, the polemical treatises that are used in this thesis lend themselves both to the depth of analysis and critique that are required in this thesis. In other words, they have been written in ways that make it easier for them to be analysed as compared to cassette tapes and videos. We should note that whereas the polemical works that are examined in this thesis are not as scholarly as their pre-modern counterparts whose works will be examined in Chapter 2, their arguments against the divinity of Jesus, the associated Christological doctrines and the death of Jesus are presented in a simple and lucid manner.

Thirdly, we have used treatises that are written in English in this thesis because it would have been harder for this researcher to have analyzed cassette tapes and videos or polemical treatises which are written in Twi as it is not his mother tongue. Therefore, to have analyzed treatises written in Twi would have required the assistance of a native Twi speaker to help this researcher to understand difficult theological terminologies in order to be able to do an in-depth analysis.

Finally, the treatises that this thesis draws on are responses to Christian anti-Muslim polemic in Ghana, especially those that have been written by indigenous Ghanaian Muslims some of who make references to Christian anti-Muslim treatises in their works. We cite one example to illustrate this. We shall see in Chapter 3 that Youseph's treatise *Muhammad is the Comforter* was a

response to the work of Ahmed Agyei entitled *The Comforter is the Holy Spirit*. Thus, the Muslim anti-Christian work of Youseph provides additional information about Christian anti-Muslim polemical works in Ghana.

1.5.2 Overview of Chapter 3

The nine treatises to be examined here in relation to the divinity of Jesus, the associated doctrines including the Trinity and the Incarnation are listed in Table 1 below. The work of Asante entitled *The Guide* and the work of Ahmad entitled *Christianity: A Journey from Facts to Fiction* are examined both in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 4.

Table 1

Name of author	**Title of work**	**Allegiance of author Sunni/Ahmadiyya**	**Length of work**	**Publishing details**	**Parts of work used in thesis**
Ahmed Deedat	*Christ in Islam*	Sunni	48 pages	No publishing details	48 pages
Ahmed Deedat	*Mohammed: The Natural Successor to Christ*	Sunni	71 pages	New Delhi, no year of publication	66 pages
Ayoub Ofosuhene Asare	*Who Really is Jesus?*	Sunni	128 pages	Accra, 2009	40 pages
Mohammed Braimah Youseph	*Muhammed the Comforter*	Sunni	78 pages	No place of publication, 1990	21 pages
Utaz Adam Dwomoh	*Pentecost Spirit: Holy or Evil*	Sunni	30 pages	No publishing details	12 pages
Utaz Adam Dwomoh	*Was the Word God or God's?:John 1:1 Versus Psalm 33:6*	Sunni	110 pages	No place of publication, 2014	108 pages
Hussaini Yusuf Mabera	*Is Jesus Son of God?*	Ahmadiyya	54 pages	Kaduna, 2007	44 pages
Nurudeen Mohammed Asante	*The Guide*	Ahmadiyya	80 pages	No publishing details	7 pages
Tahir Ahmad	*Christianity: A Journey from Facts to Fiction*	Ahmadiyya	153 pages	Islamabad, 1994	116 pages

1.5.3 Overview of Chapter 4

The ten treatises to be examined in Chapter 4 in relation to the death of Jesus by crucifixion are shown in Table 2 below. The same work by Asante and also the same work by Ahmad is examined both in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Table 2

Name of author	**Title of work**	**Allegiance of author Sunni/Ahmadiyya**	**Length of work**	**Publishing details**	**Parts used in thesis**
Abubakar Siddiq Abban	*Be a Bible Professor: The Book of Bible Quotations and Notes*	Sunni	46 pages	No place of publishing, 1998	38 pages
Ahmed Deedat	*Cruci-fiction or Crucifixion*	Sunni	88 pages	New Delhi, 1984	69 pages
Ahmed Deedat	*Was Jesus Crucified?*	Sunni	31 pages	Illinois, 1992	3 pages
Alhassan Mubarick	*Is Jesus God?*	Sunni	60 pages	No publishing details	38 pages
Naser al-Moghamis	*Christianity and Islam according to the Bible and the Qur'an*	Sunni	160 pages	Darsaalam, 2007	72 pages
Nurudeen Mohammed Asante	*The Guide*	Ahmadiyya	80 pages	No publishing details	7 pages
Hussaini Yusuf Mabera	*Jesus did not Die on the Cross*	Ahmadiyya	53 pages	No place of publication, 2012	34 pages
Ghulan Ahmad	*Jesus in India*	Ahmadiyya	122 pages	Tilford, 2003	106 pages
Tahir Ahmad	*Christianity: A Journey from Facts to Fiction*	Ahmadiyya			116 pages
No Author	*Jesus Son of Mary:Islamic Beliefs*	Ahmadiyya	Document not numbered	No publishing details	Used whole document

1.5.4 The pre-modern polemical works

We begin with the Qur'an as it is the most basic theological source of doctrine in Islam. God is both the subject of the message of the Qur'an as well

as its speaker as is illustrated in the Qur'an's most insistent assertion that God is one to the utter exclusion of other deities.[33] We are interested in the historical and religious background with respect to Christianity, within which the monotheistic message of the Qur'an was first proclaimed. In this way we shall gain insight for example, into the views of the first Christians about Jesus and whether such early Christian beliefs are reflected in the material about Jesus in the Qur'an.

In his reflection on the Christian theological influence on the Qur'an, Samir cites some texts in the Qur'an that are suggestive of this.[34] The very fact that Samir is prepared to talk about a Christian theological influence on the Qur'an presupposes that there are some Christian elements in the historical context within which the Qur'an was revealed. Samir seems to treat the Qur'an as a literary document rather than purely as revelation and notes that there are scores of biblical allusions in the Qur'an including biblical names such as Jesus, Mary, John the Baptist, Zechariah etc.[35]

The suggestion made by Samir that there are some biblical allusions in the Qur'an would appear repugnant to many Muslims because they believe that it (Qur'an) is solely the handiwork of God. Let us note a few examples of what Samir has described as the Christian theological influence on the text of the Qur'an. Again, Samir notes that there is a Christian influence behind the name 'Imran' which may have originated from 1 Chronicles 5:29 (Hebrew) where Aaron, Moses and Miriam (Mary) are all referred to as the children of

[33] Daniel A. Madigan, "Themes and topics," in *The Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 79-81.
[34] Samir Khalil Samir, "The Theological Christian Influence on the Qur'an: A Reflection," in *The Qur'an in Its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2008), 141-5.
[35] Samir, *Historical Context*, 141-145.

Amran.[36] The plausibility of this view is further reinforced when Miriam (Mary) is referred to as the 'sister of Aaron' in Exodus 15:20.[37] Samir argues that the Qur'an may have confused Mary the mother of Jesus with Miriam the sister of Aaron since the latter (Miriam) is referred to as the 'sister of Aaron' in Qur'an 19:28.[38]

Jane I. Smith has also pointed out that the Arabia into which Islam was born in the seventh century C.E. was home to significant numbers of Jewish and Christian communities.[39] She notes that there were Christian communities living in Medina, Mecca, Khyber, Yemen and Najran during the lifetime of Muhammad.[40] This is corroborated by the twentieth century Hungarian scholar Ignaz Goldziher when he notes that the ideas that finally became the text of the Qur'an were the direct result of the interactions Muhammad had with a myriad of religious elements including Jews and Christians.[41]

Also, in the chapter entitled *Arab Christianity*, Thomas provides some helpful information about the state of Christianity in Arabia prior to the advent of Islam. According to him, there are references to Arabian bishops and their successors in the third and fourth centuries C.E. prior to the birth of Islam.[42] He specifically mentions that some of these bishops were privileged to have attended some of the major Church Councils.[43] His observation that the references to Arabian bishoprics are indicative of a Christian presence among

[36]Samir, *Historical Context*, 142-143.
[37]Samir, *Historical Context*, 143.
[38]Samir, *Historical Context*, 143.
[39]Jane I. Smith, "Islam and Christendom: Historical, Cultural, and Religious Interactions from the Seventh to the Fifteenth Centuries," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed., John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 306.
[40]Smith, *History of Islam*, 306.
[41]Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans., and ed., Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton, Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 3.
[42] David Thomas, "Arab Christianity," in *Companion to Eastern Christianity*, ed. Ken Parry (Chichester: Wiley –Blackwell, 2010), 2.
[43]Thomas, *Eastern Christianity*, 2.

the Arabs as early as the third and fourth centuries C.E. before the advent of Islam is instructive. After evaluating the various views with respect to the identity of the *al-nasara* (Q.22:17) which is translated 'Nazarenes', Griffith argues that the 'Nazarenes' who are criticized in the Qur'an were 'none other than those of the mainline 'Melkites', 'Jacobites' and 'Nestorians' of the seventh and eighth centuries.[44] Here too, we are given some insight into the state of Christianity in Arabia before the advent of Islam.

The above scholarly comments about the state of Christianity in Arabia before the coming of Islam suggest that there were Christians among the audiences of the earliest proclamation of the prophetic message by Muhammad. The implication of this hypothesis for this thesis, as Griffith has argued above, is that the texts about Christology in the Qur'an including those that relate to Jesus not being the son of God (Q. 4:171), the objection that God does not beget (Q.112) and the objection that God is the Messiah (Q. 5:17, 72-73) may be offering valuable insights into the doctrines that were held by the Christian communities that were contemporaneous with Muhammad.

The second pre-modern source whose historical context will occupy our attention at this point is the prophetic tradition (*hadith*). We noted above that God is both the speaker in the Qur'an and its message simultaneously. By contrast, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), arose within a historical context in which the fledgling Muslim community needed guidance and direction after the death of Muhammad. To meet this need, reports about what Muhammad said, allowed and prohibited that were already in circulation within the

[44]Sidney Griffith, "Al-Nasara in the Qur'an: A hermeneutical reflection," in *New Perspectives in the Qur'an: The Qur'an in its Historical Context*, 2nd edition, ed., Gabriel Said Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2011), 312-315.

community were collected. The test of the authenticity of a report was that it had to be traced to Muhammad as the person from whom it first originated.

Juynboll has noted that a *hadith* proper is a saying that is ascribed or attributed to Muhammad or a description of his deeds.[45] Over time, these reports became sacrosanct in the eyes of Muslims and were invested with an authority second only to the Qur'an. It is therefore little wonder that the prophetic tradition (*hadith*) came to acquire a significance that was only rivalled by the Qur'an. Together with the Qur'an, they became the two key theological sources that determine right belief and right conduct for Muslims.

However, due largely to the historical circumstances that occasioned the collection of the reports that are now known to us as the prophetic tradition as we briefly explained above, the tradition has little to tell us about Jesus in relation to his divinity, the associated Christological doctrines (Trinity, Incarnation, 'Son of God' etc) and his death by crucifixion compared to the other three pre-modern sources.

It would seem as we noted above regarding the reasons both for the writing and the collection of the prophetic tradition (*hadith*) that any information about Jesus there, whether such information is about his divinity or his death by crucifixion is only incidental to the purpose of the tradition. In that case, such information may not directly tell us anything about what we are investigating in this thesis and we may have to resort to inferring what such statements may have been intended to say about Jesus.

The third pre-modern source that we would like to briefly look at with respect to its historical context is the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*). It arose

[45]G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

largely as a result of the insistence that the interpretation of the Qur'an must be done on the basis of the Qur'an itself.[46] Throughout its history, the tradition has sought to establish the precise meaning of every word and phrase within the sacred text so as to remove any ambiguity in the meaning of the text.[47] It is a matter of fundamental importance for exegetes of the sacred text (Qur'an) to interpret obscure texts or passages (*mutashabihat*) in the light of clear or unambiguous texts or passages (*muhkamat*).[48]

Due largely to the importance of the practice of interpreting the Qur'an in the light of the text itself as we noted above, the rule of thumb as established while the exegetical tradition was developing was to interpret the sacred text on 'the basis of tradition' (*tafsir bi-l- ma'thur*) which involves drawing on the authorities within the tradition.[49]

It is reasonable to say in the light of the comments about the background to the Qur'an above that the exegetical tradition must have arisen, developed and shaped not only within a religious milieu in which Muslim-Christian debates were common but also one in which there was a cross-fertilization of theological ideas between Christians and Muslims. The excellent work of Lawson on the crucifixion of Jesus from the perspective both of the Qur'an and the Islamic exegetical tradition sheds some light on the view that the early commentators obtained some useful information about the crucifixion outside of the Qur'an itself.[50]

[46]Neal Robinson, *Islam: A Concise Introduction* (Richmond: Curzon, 1999), 66-67.
[47]Robinson, *Introduction*, 66-7.
[48]Robinson, *Introduction*, 67.
[49]Robinson, *Introduction*, 67.
[50]Todd Lawson, *The Crucifixion and the Qur'an: A study in the History of Muslim Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 43-68.

The fourth pre-modern source whose historical context concerns us here is the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. The polemical treatises of four of its leading scholars will be examined in this thesis in relation to the divinity of Jesus, the associated doctrines and the death of Jesus by means of crucifixion. Compared to the other three pre-modern sources this tradition has the most information on Jesus as we shall see in the detailed analysis below. It can best be described as a collection of Muslim scholarly reflection about Jesus.

It is needless to mention that the tradition developed within a religious environment that was characterised by scholarly theological debates between competing Muslim sects on the one hand and Muslim and Christian scholars on the other. The attempt by the Nestorian theologian and scholar, 'Ammar al-Basri (d. 9th century C.E.) to reformulate the doctrine of the Trinity (as one essence with two attributes) in an Arabic idiom that would be meaningful to Muslims is illustrative of the ongoing doctrinal debates between Christian and Muslim scholars at this time.[51]

Similarly, the insistence of the Mu'tazili scholars that the divine essence was undifferentiated and that the attributes of God were indistinguishable from his essence (all of which were meant to safeguard the oneness of God) illustrates the intra-Muslim as well as the Muslim-Christian debates then prevalent.[52]

The above two factors imply that the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition benefited enormously from the theological debates that were prevalent when the scholars whose works will be examined in this thesis

[51]David Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 3-4.
[52]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 4.

published their treatises. Hence, the comprehensive nature of the Christian doctrines that are addressed therein, not least those that relate to the person of Jesus. Having sketched the historical background to this tradition, we shall now look briefly at some biographical details of the scholars whose works will be examined in the thesis. The brief treatment is based on when each scholar lived.

1.5.4.1 The pre-modern polemicists

The first scholar whose polemical works will be examined in this thesis is Abu ‘Isa Muhammad b. Harun b. Muhammad al-Warraq (d. 9th century C.E.).[53] He was one of the most learned scholars of his time and is credited with one of the most sustained refutations of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

According to Thomas, Al-Warraq remained unrivalled in the analytical completeness and robustness of his polemic against the Incarnation and the Trinity until the appearance of Ibn Taymiyya’s polemical “The Correct Reply to those who have Altered Christ’s Religion” (*Al-Jawab al-Sahihli –man baddala din al-Masih)* in the fourteenth century.[54]

Abu ‘Isa al-Warraq was a native of Baghdad. He lived and was active in the mid-ninth century C.E.[55] He brings his analytical abilities and extensive knowledge of Christianity and Christian doctrine to bear on his critique of the Trinity and the Incarnation entitled *Kitab al-Radd ‘ala al-thalath firaq min al-Nasara* which is examined in the thesis.

The second scholar is Abu Mansur Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Maturidi (d. 944 C.E.). He was of the Hanafi legal school of

[53]Abu ‘Isa al-Warraq, *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity: Abu ‘Isa al-Warraq Against the Incarnation* ed., trans., David Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.
[54]Al-Warraq, *Muslim Polemic*, Preface.
[55]Al-Warraq, *Muslim Polemic*, 21.

Islamic jurisprudence and was active in the first part of the 10th century C.E. in his native Samarkand.[56] He was acknowledged as the founder of one of the main Sunni schools of theology.[57] Altogether, Al-Maturidi wrote more than twenty works consisting of works on theology, legal matters, exegesis and refutations of other Muslim groups, all of which except two have survived. In this thesis, we shall examine his *Kitab al-tawhid*. His work is examined in relation to the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines.

The third pre-modern scholar is ‘Abu al-Hasan ‘Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamadhani al-Asadabadi (d. 1025 C.E.). He was a leading Mu’tazilia scholar of the eleventh century C.E.[58] He wrote within the prevalent interfaith and intra-Muslim polemical and apologetic intellectual climate of the tenth and eleventh centuries in which he lived. In this thesis we examine his two works, *Al-Mughni* and *Tathbit dala ‘il al-nubuwwa* (Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophecy).[59]

‘Abd al-Jabbar’s second work reflected a tradition within medieval Islam whereby Muslim scholars would collect stories and proofs to support Islamic claims about the prophethood of Muhammad. However, ‘Abd al-Jabbar wanted to achieve more in this work than his predecessors before him had done. To achieve this aim, he does not only use only apologetic, but also adds polemic. It is little wonder that he makes it abundantly clear in this work that his aim was to demonstrate both to his Muslim and Christian readers that Christianity as it was practiced in his day, was a deviation from what was originally revealed to Jesus.

[56]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 79.
[57]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 79.
[58]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 205-206.
[59]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 206-208.

The fourth scholar is Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328 C.E.). He was a well-known Hanbali scholar who lived in Damascus during the troubled times of the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century. He was a staunch protagonist of mainstream Sunni Islam and was concerned to show in his writings that it was the Qur'an and the tradition of Muhammad that were the only sources of truth in Islam. He was critical both of Muslim beliefs that compromised the oneness and transcendence of God as he was of Christian beliefs that implied a multiplicity in the nature of God.

The work of Ibn Taymiyya which will be examined in this thesis is "The Correct Reply to those who have Altered Christ's Religion" (*Al-Jawab al-Sahihli –man baddala din al-Masih*).[60] The main text for our analysis will be *al-Jawab*. However, we shall also draw on the analysis of *al-Jawab* by Thomas entitled 'Apologetic and Polemic in the *Letter from Cyprus and Ibn Taymiyya's Jawab al-sahihli-man baddala din al-Masih*'.[61] His one overarching concern in this work is to demonstrate the dissimilarity between God both as the creator and commander of the world and his creation.[62]

1.6 Research methodology

This thesis is a qualitative piece of work. It uses documentary materials to investigate contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Ghana in the light of the portrayal of Jesus in the pre-modern sources in Islam. The pre-modern sources that will be examined are English translations of the primary sources which were all originally written in Arabic. The analysis in Chapter 2

[60]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 99.
[61]David Thomas, "Apologetic and Polemic in the Letter from Cyprus and Ibn Taymiyya's Jawab al-sahihli-man baddala din al-Masihin *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Youssef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 247-263.
[62]Ibn Taymiyya, *Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, edited and trans., Thomas F. Michel (New York: Caravan Books, 1984), 1.

will be the theological benchmark against which we shall assess the contemporary treatises that will be examined in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

The contemporary primary sources consist exclusively of polemical texts that were authored by Muslim polemicists both within and outside of Ghana. Whereas some of these materials critique a single Christian doctrine such as the divinity of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the Trinity, the Incarnation, others critique a number of doctrines in one polemical treatise. Apart from the primary documentary sources, some secondary sources including academic books, dissertations, theses, etc., were also used in the thesis.

We use secondary sources in this thesis for two key reasons. The first is to help us to trace the history of the debates about Jesus within the Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. The second is to help us with a theoretical framework within which to situate the thesis especially, in its contemporary Ghanaian context. To put it another way, the reason for reading dissertations and theses related to this thesis is to find out how much work has been done and how much work remains to be done in Christology.

1.7 Literature review

Over the past six years when this researcher collected materials in Ghana for this thesis, there was no single piece of research work that was found on Christology except a handful of studies that related indirectly to this thesis. The first is the work of Johnson A. Mbillah entitled *The Causes of Present –Day Muslim Unrest in* Ghana.[63] As its title indicates, this work is concerned with intra-Muslim conflict arising directly from doctrinal issues. As

[63]Johnson A. Mbillah, "The Causes of Present-day Muslim Unrest in Ghana," PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1999.

a result, Muslim-Christian polemics is not the central concern of this piece of work.

The second is the unpublished work of Ofosu Asante entitled *Christian Missions to Muslims in Ghana: A Case Study of the Converted Muslims Christian Ministry and Markaz al-Bishara*.[64] This thesis investigates two of the pioneer Christian groups that were started to reach Muslims with the gospel in Ghana. Although Muslim-Christian polemics was central to the research work of Asante, its focus was on a Christian critique of Islam by studying the two groups we noted above, namely, the Converted Muslims Christian Ministry and Markaz al-Bishara. Quite the contrary, the present thesis focuses on Muslim anti-Christian polemics. In other words, this thesis is about a Muslim critique of Christianity.

Despite the focus of this study on Christian anti-Muslim polemics, it still provides some background information that provides the context within which some of the treatises that are examined in this thesis were written. In particular, it provides details about the nature of the materials that are used in Christian anti-Muslim polemics in Ghana, namely, cassette tapes, radio broadcasts, videos etc. The work of Ofosu Asante is also useful in the sense that it shows what the commonest theological issues are that Christian preachers address in their polemical treatises against Islam.

The third is the work of Nathan Samwini entitled *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana Since 1950: Its Effects Upon Muslims and Muslim-*

[64]Ofosu Asante, "Christian Missions to Muslims in Ghana: A Case Study of the Converted Muslims Christian Ministry and Markaz al-Bishara" M. Phil., Thesis, University of Ghana, 1997.

Christian Relations.[65] This thesis is about the resurgence of Islam in Ghana since 1950. It offers historical insights that are useful to this thesis. For example, it provides some historical background to Muslim-Christian polemics in Ghana since the last century. However, it is too general and does not address the person of Jesus comprehensively from the standpoint of Muslim anti-Christian polemics.

The fourth is the thesis of Acquah Francis entitled *The Impact of African Traditional Religious and Cultural Values on Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 to the Present: A Case Study of the Nkusunkum –Ekumfi-Eyan Traditional Area of the Central Region*.[66]

The central argument in the above work is that the values and cultural practices of the African Traditional Religion (ATR) have provided the means through which Christians and Muslims have expressed their faiths and does not directly relate to this thesis. The African Traditional Religion (ATR) which we noted in relation to the research thesis of Acquah Francis is practiced by many people in Ghana. Some of its key teachings are the belief in the Supreme Being, the ancestors, river gods, earth gods etc. Clearly, little research has been done in Christology from a Muslim anti-Christian polemical perspective in Ghana. This thesis therefore aims to fill this gap.

1.8 Outline of chapters

Structurally, the thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis and covers the key conventional parts of a thesis including the

[65]Nathan Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations" PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2003.
[66]Acquah Francis, "The Impact of African Traditional Religious and Cultural Values on Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 to the Present: A Case Study of the Nkusunkum –Ekumfi-Eyan Traditional Area of the Central Region" PhD. Thesis, University of Exeter, 2011.

background to the thesis, literature review, methodology, etc. Chapter 2 explores the person of Jesus and the associated theological doctrines and issues from the perspective of the pre-modern sources in Islam, namely, the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition.

Chapter 3 examines the divinity of Jesus and the cognate doctrines (Trinity, Incarnation, the appellation 'Son of God' etc.). It analyses the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemical literature that is written about Jesus. It also examines the Muslim claim that Jesus was the forerunner of Muhammad.

Chapter 4 examines the death of Jesus by means of crucifixion from the perspective of both the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemical treatises. The analysis is about the correct interpretation of Qur'an 4:157-158 in terms of whether these two verses assert or deny the death of Jesus by crucifixion.

Chapter 5 brings the results of the analyses in the previous chapters together and also shows whether the goals that were set out in this chapter which this thesis aims to achieve have been achieved. It also indicates areas for future study and concludes with some recommendations regarding how Muslim-Christian dialogue generally and especially about the person of Jesus can be improved.

1.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we provided a general outline of the thesis including the literature review, methodology, the aims of the thesis etc. The chapter has also clearly stated the main subject that is being investigated in this thesis. We have

also provided important background information about both the pre-modern and the contemporary sources.

Chapter 2 will be concerned with how Jesus is portrayed in the pre-modern Islamic sources. In this chapter, the works of four pre-modern scholars will be examined in relation both to the divinity of Jesus and the associated Christological doctrines including the Trinity and the Incarnation and his death by crucifixion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PORTRAYAL OF JESUS IN FOUR PRE-MODERN ISLAMIC SOURCES

2.1 Introduction

This thesis examines contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Ghana in the light of four key pre-modern sources in Islam, namely, the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. The works of four key scholars within the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition will be examined in this chapter.

Chapter 1 focused on some of the key introductory aspects of the thesis including the literature review, the methodology and the outline of the chapters among others. Chapter 1 also provided some brief biographical information about the authors of both the pre-modern and contemporary Muslim polemical treatises.

Chapter 1 also provided some brief sketches of the historical contexts of the pre-modern sources. The rationale for providing the background information to both the pre-modern and contemporary Islamic sources is to help to situate the thesis within its proper historical context with respect to the person of Jesus in the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue over the last fourteen centuries.

The thrust of this chapter is to examine the divinity of Jesus, the associated doctrines, namely, the Trinity, Incarnation, the appellation 'Son of God' and the death of Jesus by crucifixion from the perspective of the four key pre-modern Islamic sources we mentioned above. Although the view that Jesus

was the precursor of Muhammad is not part of traditional Christology, it will be examined in this chapter because it is central to Sunni perception of the person of Jesus. We shall also briefly look at the belief in Sunni Islam that Jesus will return a second time to the earth before the Last Day when it is mentioned in the pre-modern sources that will be examined in this chapter.

Structurally, this chapter is in two main sections. Section 1 focuses on the divinity of Jesus and the cognate doctrines from the perspective of the four pre-modern Islamic sources, namely, the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition, the exegetical tradition and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. The scholars whose works will be examined are Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, 'Abd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya.

Section 2 is about the death of Jesus in the light of Qur'an 4: 157-158. This section examines the death of Jesus from the perspective of the four pre-modern sources we noted above. We consider only the works of 'Abd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya on death of Jesus as Abu 'Isa al-Warraq and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi have not addressed this subject in their scholarly treatises.

2.2 The divinity of Jesus

We should mention at the outset that there is a disproportionate amount of information about Jesus in the pre-modern sources. We shall discover that the amount of information about Jesus in these sources varies from one source to another as we pointed out when we briefly looked at the historical contexts of these sources in the previous chapter. A comparison of the amount of the material on the death of Jesus for example, in the Qur'an, the exegetical tradition and the early Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition would show that this is the case.

Apart from the passing reference in Qur'an 4:157-158, the three explicit references (5:117, 19:33, 3:55) and the one implicit reference (5:17), there are no other references to the death of Jesus in Qur'an.[67] This scant information contrasts sharply with the comprehensive information on the subject in the exegetical and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical traditions.

The historical contexts of the pre-modern sources are useful in explaining why some of these sources have more information on the subject than others. For example, the historical context of the Qur'an will show that compared to the scholars of the exegetical and pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical traditions, Muhammad was not familiar with the theological nuances of the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the death of Jesus etc.

We should point out that the debates we noted above had not yet crystallised and become part and parcel of Muslim-Christian theological dialogue during the time of the composition and the codification of the Qur'an. In contrast to the Qur'an, both the exegetical and Muslim anti-Christian polemical traditions emerged during a period of intense Muslim-Christian scholarly debates in which these theological subjects were central. Hence, the presence of the detailed doctrinal details we find in them about these theological themes.

In this analysis, our aim is to find out what each of these sources says about the divinity of Jesus, the cognate doctrines and the death of Jesus. The analysis of the pre-modern sources shall be done as follows (1) the divinity of Jesus, (2) the Trinity, (3) the Incarnation, (4) the divine sonship of Jesus and

[67]Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 28.

(5) the relationship between Jesus and Muhammad. Where it is not possible to follow the above order especially in the case of the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical scholarly works, we shall preserve their originality, methodology and critique by analysing them based on the structure of each polemical treatise.

2.2.1 The Qur'an

As a literary document, the Qur'an bears all the marks of having been composed within a particular religious context and therefore, shows evidence of external religious and theological influences. An important clue to the external influence on the Qur'an we are hypothesising here is illustrative in the observation by Madigan that the Qur'an claims to have a revelatory kinship with the sacred scriptures of the Jews and the Christians.[68]

Similarly, Samir has argued by means of an assemblage of material from both biblical and apocryphal sources that there are Christian theological influences on the Qur'an.[69] This is corroborated by Sidney Griffith who argues that there was an active presence of Arabic–speaking Christians in the audiences of the early proclamations of the prophetic message of the Qur'an.[70]

According to him, it was the Melkites, Jacobites and Nestorians who were the dominant Christian communities that were present both on the Arabian periphery and in the Arabian Peninsula itself.[71] While no definitive conclusions can be drawn regarding the presence of Christians in the countries that bordered the Arabian Peninsula from the scholarly arguments we have

[68]Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self-image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 13.
[69]Samir Khalil Samir, "The theological Christian influences on the Qur'an: a reflection," in *The Qur'an in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), 141.
[70]Sidney H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the language of Islam* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 9.
[71]Griffith, *The Bible*, 9.

noted above, the arguments suggest that Christians may have been among the audiences among whom the first proclamation of the message of Muhammad was made.

What concerns us as we examine the body of teaching about Jesus in the Qur'an is the influence that the views of Christians in Arabia may have had on Muhammad's views of Jesus and how this has affected the portrayal of Jesus in the Qur'an. Given the historical context of the Qur'an we sketched above, it makes sense to proceed with the analysis of the portrayal of Jesus in the Qur'an with the working hypothesis that the passages about Jesus do reflect some discussions, arguments and tensions between Muhammad and some groups of Christians.

In view of the importance of the contexts of the passages about Jesus in the Qur'an we noted above, such material may have been intended primarily, to distinguish right belief about Jesus from erroneous Christian beliefs about Jesus. It therefore makes sense to understand the material about Jesus contextually since it must first of all, have made sense to both the Muslims and the Christians who were the first to hear these messages. Now, we look at the narrative about Jesus in the Qur'an in more detail.

Firstly, the overarching characterisation of Jesus in the Qur'an is that he was a human being (Q.43: 63-64). This teaching is seen in the composite accounts of the annunciation to Mary by angels of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, who will be honoured in this world and in the next (3: 42-47) and by an angel who appeared to Mary in the form of a man and told her about the righteous son that she would have (19: 16-22).[72]

[72]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 4-5.

It is against the backdrop of the emphasis on the humanity of Jesus in the Qur'an that we should understand the import of Qur'an 3:59-60 where he is likened to Adam in the sense that they are both human and are creatures of God. This would suggest that these verses may have been occasioned by theological disputes between Muhammad and Christians that may have bordered on the divinity of Jesus. In that case, the verses may have been intended as a corrective to Christian doctrine about the divinity of Jesus.

Furthermore, the humanity of Jesus in the Qur'an is seen in other ways in the Qur'an. For example, it teaches that he was given a name ('Isa) and he had a family (3:31). Also, the name 'Isa is attested twenty-five times in the Qur'an including nine times by itself and sixteen times in conjunction with other appellations.[73]

Jesus is also given other titles in the Qur'an (Q.2:81, 87; 130; 136), the most important of which is 'Messiah', which is rendered *al-masih* (Q.3: 40, 45; 4:156, 157). Other titles that are given to Jesus include 'son of Mary' (Q. 3: 40, 45; 2) which is used on its own just two times and twenty-three times in conjunction with other titles for Jesus (Q. 43:5; 23:50).

It is worth noting that in the twenty-three times that 'son of Mary' is used in the Qur'an, it is preceded by 'Jesus the Messiah' or 'the Messiah Jesus'.[74] It is instructive to mention that in Arabic, a name is followed by a familial attribution (*nasab* in Arabic) so that we have something like 'the son of X' where the familial attribution is normally the name of the person's father.

It has been pointed out in relation to the title 'son of Mary' that it is unusual in Arabic names to find the *nasab* being the name of the person's

[73]*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed., s.v. "'*Isa*" 2.
[74]*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, s.v "Son of Mary", 4.

mother although this is not uncommon. Normally, a *nasab* in which this is the case normally locates the origin of the mother of the person or a nickname that draws attention to the mother of the person or a feature of her own *nasab*.[75] It has therefore been suggested that the use of this appellation had a polemical intent and may have been used to counter the Christian claim that '*Isa* was more than a human being.[76]

Secondly, Jesus is portrayed as a prophet and a messenger of God (Q.19: 26-33; 61:6). Evidence of his prophetic status is seen in his name being mentioned within an ancient prophetic tradition (4:163; 3:84-85). By virtue of his being only one link within the prophetic tradition, he is described as one among many who brought the same monotheistic faith that was preached by his predecessors.

It is worth noting that according to the Qur'an, Jesus' self-understanding of his person and his earthly mission while in the cradle (Q.19:26-33) is sufficient evidence of his prophetic status. The teaching of the Qur'an that Jesus was human also implies that as a prophet, he had a special relationship to Muhammad as his precursor. In other words, as a human being and a prophet, Jesus was the precursor of Muhammad. Hence, it has been argued on the basis of Qur'an 61:6 that Jesus announced the advent of Muhammad was his successor.

Thirdly, the Qur'an depicts Jesus as a believer (Muslim) who in his preaching ministry as a prophet invited people to worship the one and only true God (Q. 3:51; 5:72), taught his followers to pray *(salat*) and give alms (*zakat*) (Q.19:31). The portrayal of Jesus as a devout Muslim who called people to

[75]*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, s.v. "Son of Mary", 5
[76]*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, s.v. "Son of Mary", 5.

worship God and dutifully performed his religious duties of praying and alms-giving implies that he was a prophet who was sent into the world to preach about God and to call his hearers (the Israelites) to monotheism.

Fourthly, there is an acknowledgement in the Qur'an that Jesus worked extraordinary miracles (Q.3:49; 5:110) as compared to other prophetic figures including the Prophet Muhammad himself. These miracles include the creating of a bird with clay, healing of the blind, the cleansing of lepers and the raising of the dead to life again (Q.3:49; 5:110). However, the Qur'an is abundantly clear regarding the source of Jesus' miracles.

According to the Qur'an, the source of the miracles of Jesus was not himself but God who granted him the power to do so. These then, are the key characterizations of Jesus in the Qur'an. He was a human being, a prophet and therefore, the forerunner of Muhammad and a messenger who worked miracles by 'leave of God' to authenticate his prophetic status. Another important thing about the characterization of Jesus in the Qur'an is the view that he did not die by crucifixion on the basis of Qur'an 4:157-158. A detailed treatment of this subject is deferred until the second main division of this chapter.

Next, we consider the teaching about the associated doctrines in the Qur'an. We shall confine our analysis to the Trinity and the view that Jesus was the son of God. It seems to this researcher that there is no unambiguous reference to the Incarnation in the Qur'an. Therefore, we shall consider four main texts in the Qur'an that relate to the Trinity. The first is Qur'an 112:1-4. It reads "Say: 'He is God the One, God the eternal, He begot no one nor was He begotten, No one is comparable to Him".[77] Despite its brevity, Qur'an 112

[77] M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004), 444.

succinctly describes the nature of God and questions the idea of predicating God with procreation as seen in the phrase 'He begot no one nor was He begotten'.

Similarly, the text suggests that it does not make any theological sense to believe that the life of God is derived from someone/something outside of himself as the phrase 'nor was He begotten' seems to suggest. These two phrases may be references to the doctrine of the Trinity. In that sense, the text is a scathing attack against the doctrine of the Trinity. The Qur'an therefore rejects the idea that God can be conceived of as a Trinity.

The second is Qur'an 4: 171. It reads: "People of the Book, do not go to excess in your religion, and do not say anything about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God, His word directed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not say 'three' – stop (this) , that is better for you – God is only one God, He is far above having a son, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him and He is the best one to trust".[78]

While we cannot be certain about the context of Qur'an 4: 171, its wording seems to suggest that the Christians who are mentioned are accused of being guilty of not recognizing that Jesus was human. Also, the verse is emphatic that there is no plurality in the being of God. Here apart from describing the Trinity as being among the excesses of Christian doctrine, the verse categorically portrays Jesus as a human being and a messenger of God.

The third is Qur'an 5:72-75. It reads: "Those who say 'God is the Messiah, son of Mary,' have defied the truth. The Messiah himself said,

[78] Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 66.

'Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord' If anyone associates others with God, God will forbid him from the Garden, and Hell will be his home. No one will help (such) evildoers. Those people who say that God is the third of three are defying (the truth): there is only one God. If they do not stop what they are saying ….The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger, other messengers had come and gone before him, his mother was a virtuous woman; both ate food (like other mortals) …").[79]

It is not difficult to notice the import of Q. 5:72-75 above in relation to both the unity of God and the humanity of Jesus. The key points are the humanity of both Jesus and Mary, the role of Jesus as a messenger and the oneness and transcendence of God. It is noteworthy that Jesus is inviting his hearers to worship God who is both his Lord and the Lord of his hearers.

Finally, we look at Qur'an 5:116. It reads as follows: "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 any such 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".[80] Like the other three verses that we have already noted, this text rejects the Trinity on the basis that neither Jesus nor his mother Mary, are deities. The verse also implies that Jesus is not part of a Trinity as a result of which, the Qur'an has him say that he had no right to ask people to worship him since worship is the prerogative of God, the all-knowing.

[79] Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 75.
[80] Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 79.

Next, we consider the view that Jesus is the 'Son of God' from the standpoint of the Qur'an. Parrinder has pointed out that the passages in the Qur'an that refer to this belief are of two kinds (1) those that refer to the idea then prevalent in Arabia that God had sons and daughters (Q.53:19-21; 112:1-4) and (2) those that refer to the Christian belief that Jesus is the 'son of God' (Q.19: 34-36; 88-93; 6:102).[81] According to Parrinder the former references were directed at the Meccan polytheists among whom the belief that God had male and female children was commonplace.[82] The latter, however, are references to Christian doctrine about the designation 'son of God' as applied to Jesus.[83]

The analysis has shown that while the Qur'an recognises Jesus as a prophet and messenger of God whose prophetic ministry was authenticated by miracles of healing, raising the dead to life and in the one case, the giving life to birds made from clay (Q. 3:49), its overall characterisation is that he was a human being. It is therefore not surprising that the Qur'an is critical of Christian claims of the divinity of Jesus and his being part of a Trinity.

We should note that the argument against the divinity of Jesus which has occupied our attention until now is predicated on two key theological axioms from the point of view of the Qur'an. The first is that humanity and divinity (God) are so mutually exclusive that Jesus could not have been human and divine at the same time.

The second is that the concept of the unity of God (*tawhid*) that is so clearly enunciated in the Qur'an implies that there cannot only be one God. Hence, the view that Jesus is divine contradicts the belief in the unity/oneness

[81]Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1965), 126.
[82]Parrinder, *The Qur'an*, 126.
[83]Parrinder, *The Qur'an*, 126.

of God. Next, we shall look at the portrayal of Jesus in the prophetic tradition (*hadith*) since the Qur'an is only one of four pre-modern sources that are being examined in this chapter. It is worth noting that the prophetic tradition (*hadith*) occupies a place of importance in Islam as a source of doctrine, second only after the Qur'an.

2.2.2 The prophetic tradition (*hadith*)

We noted in the brief introduction to the pre-modern sources in Chapter 1 that the composition and collection of the prophetic tradition was occasioned by the needs of the fledgling Islamic community in Medina after the death of Muhammad. The community in Medina which was not yet fully organised in terms of its political leadership was handicapped, needed some guidance from the example and practice of Muhammad.

The prophetic tradition as we noted above, came into being to meet this need. For this reason, it has little material of the kind that we want about Jesus since that was not its primary aim. Nonetheless, it is still possible to gather a few things about Jesus therein. Owing to the importance that Muslims attach to the prophetic tradition because it prescribes both right teaching/doctrine and right behaviour for Muslims, six collections have been recognised as canonical, namely, (1) *Sahih* Al-Bukhari, (2) *Sahih* Al-Muslim, (3) *Sunan* Abu Dawud, (4) *Sunan* al-Nasa'i, (5) *Sunan* al-Tirmidhi and (6) *Sunan* Ibn Maja.[84]

Leirvik has organised the material about Jesus in the prophetic tradition into five areas, namely, (1) sayings about the relationship between Jesus and Muhammad, (2) description of the appearance of Jesus, (3) sayings about the second coming of Jesus, (4) sayings about specific merits of Jesus and (5)

[84] Mohammed Hashim Kamali, *A Textbook of Hadith Studies: Authenticity, Compilation, Classification and Criticism of the Hadith* (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2005), 38.

sayings about the similarities between some accounts in the gospels and some acts of Muhammad. For the purposes of this analysis, only three of these are important to us. They are (1) the sayings about the relationship between Jesus and Muhammad, (2) the sayings about specific merits of Jesus and (3) sayings about the appearance of Jesus.

We should note that the sayings about the second coming of Jesus will be considered in the second part of this chapter which is about the death of Jesus. The group of sayings about the similarities between some accounts in the gospels and some acts of Muhammad are neither relevant to the deity nor the death of Jesus. Our task here is to delineate the two groups of sayings that relate to the deity of Jesus.

Firstly, we consider the sayings about the relationship between Jesus and Muhammad as it is one of the things that concern us in this part of the chapter. The tradition that relates this is reported by the renowned *hadith* collector, Muslim (d. 875 C.E.), according to which, Muhammad is reported to have said that he was the closest to Jesus among all mankind both in this world and in the life to come.[85] Further, Islamic tradition reports that there is a unique prophetic kinship between Jesus and Muhammad in the sense that there was no apostle/messenger/prophet sent by God after Jesus except Muhammad. This is corroborated by another tradition by Bukhari (d. 870 C.E.) according to which Muhammad said that whoever believes in Jesus and Muhammad will be given a double reward.[86]

There are also parallel sayings in Muslim legend that aim to show that there was a close relationship that Muhammad shared with Jesus no other

[85]Oddbjorn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam* (London: Continuum, 2010), 37- 38.
[86]Leirvik, *Images*, 38. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Volume 3, Book 34, Number 78.

prophet shared. An example is the legend that Muhammad had instructed his Companions to reserve a grave next to his own grave for Jesus to be buried after his return to the earth.[87] Leirvik has observed that although the report is common in the Sunni emphasis of the prophetic affinity between Jesus and Muhammad, it is not found in the two canonical collections attributed to Bukhari and Muslim.[88]

Secondly, we look at the sayings about the specific merits of Jesus. In the collections of Muslim and Bukhari (the two most important Sunni *hadith* collectors), there is a report that it was Jesus and his mother, who among humankind, were not born with sin.[89] We shall produce the reports as they are found in the *hadith* collections of Muslim and Bukhari. The first report reads as follows: "There is none born among the off-spring of Adam, but Satan touches it. A child therefore, cries loudly at the time of birth because of the touch of Satan, except Mary and her child". The second reads as follows: "Satan touches every son of Adam on the day when his mother gives birth to him with the exception of Mary and her son".[90]

Furthermore, there are reports in Bukhari that shed light on some of the titles that are used for Jesus in the Qur'an. One of such reports reads as follows: "If anyone testifies that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah alone who has no partners, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Apostle, and that Jesus is Allah's slave and His Apostle and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a Soul from Him, and that Paradise is true, and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he has done even

[87]Leirvik, *Images*, 38
[88]Leirvik, *Images*, 38
[89]Leirvik, *Images*, 42.
[90]Leirvik, *Images*, 42. See *Sahih al- Bukhari*, Volume 3, Book 34, Number 34.

if those deeds were few".[91] It is also reported in Bukhari that Muhammad warned the believers to be modest in the respect they gave to him with the following words: ".... Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians' praise of the son of Mary, for I am only a slave. So call me the slave of Allah and His Apostle".[92]

The above reports do not provide us with any information about their setting, that is, what circumstances occasioned their revelation although it makes sense to surmise that they may have been intended to clarify a number of doctrinal issues about Jesus. In the first place, the report about the special relationship between Jesus and Muhammad may have been intended to show among other things that Jesus was a prophet and a messenger of God. If so, the report may have been the objection of Muhammad to Christian views about Jesus that saw him as someone other than a prophet and a messenger of God.

Also, a report in which Muhammad warned his followers to recognise him only as the slave of Allah and His Apostle may have also been intended as a reaction by Muhammad to Christian views that Jesus was more than a human being. In that case, the reports we have cited above are integral to the portrayal of Jesus in the Qur'an as a prophet and a messenger of God.

It is sufficiently clear from the foregoing that while there is neither a detailed treatment of the divinity of Jesus in the prophetic tradition nor of the associated doctrines, its portrayal of Jesus is still consistent with what we saw in the Qur'an above. It seems to this researcher that overall, the prophetic tradition characterises Jesus first and foremost, as a human being, a prophet and a messenger of God. In the light of the analysis so far, we conclude that

[91]Leirvik, *Images*, 42. See *Sahih al- Bukhari*, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 644.
[92]Leirvik, *Images*, 43. See *Sahih al- Bukhari*, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 654.

there are two key images of Jesus in the prophetic tradition, namely, a human being and a prophet and a messenger of God. Next, we look at the portrayal of Jesus in the exegetical tradition.

2.2.3 The exegetical tradition (*tafsir*)

We mentioned in the brief introduction to the historical context of the pre-modern sources in the previous chapter that the exegetical tradition was developed to provide a systematised interpretation of the text of the Qur'an. It is worth adding that there is a large body of material about Jesus in the Qur'an and also in the exegetical tradition than there is in the prophetic tradition (*hadith*) which we examined above.

The large body of information in the exegetical tradition may be due to the fact that it developed at a time of intense theological debates about Jesus between Muslims and Christians. It is therefore no wonder that it contains information about Jesus that is neither found in the Qur'an nor in the prophetic tradition. For example, the classical commentators had the benefit of receiving information from Jewish and Christian sources and informants.

In all, there are four key theological issues about Jesus that were important to the commentators, namely, (1) the virginal conception of Jesus (2) the miracles of Jesus including the creating of birds with clear and the raising of the dead to life again (3) the death of Jesus by means of crucifixion and (4) his return to the earth a second time as one of the key eschatological signs of the Day of Judgement. We should note that the commentators were preoccupied with the miracles of Jesus and his virginal conception in order to show that there was no theological justification for the Christians to use them as the basis for the divinity of Jesus.

We shall look at the miracles of Jesus and the virginal conception in more detail below. A detailed treatment of the death of Jesus and his return to the earth are deferred to the second part of the chapter in which the death of Jesus is examined. Our task in this analysis is to find out from the standpoint of the exegetical tradition whether the miracles, both the physical signs of the creating of birds and the raising of the dead constitute any compelling evidence that supports the view that Jesus was divine.

As we have already noted, the aim of the early commentators was two-fold; first, they were concerned both to put the miracles in perspective and to provide good exegesis of the relevant passages in order to show that the miracles were the work of God and second, to show that if the passages were properly interpreted they would neither support the view that Jesus was divine nor that Jesus was the 'son of God'.

Firstly, we consider the passages that deal with the miracles of Jesus, two of which are worth looking at. The first is Qur'an 3:49. It reads as follows: ("And He shall appoint him a messenger to the Children of Israel (saying) 'Lo! I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. Lo! I create for you from clay something resembling the form of birds and I blow into it and it becomes birds by God's leave. And I heal the blind from birth and the leper and I bring the dead to life by God's leave. And I declare to you what you eat and what you store up in your houses. Surely in that there is a sign for you if you are believers").[93]

The second is Qur'an 5:110. It is similar to the first (3:49) except that it is retrospective.[94] It reads as follows: ("When God said, 'O Jesus Son of Mary

[93]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 142.
[94]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 142.

remember my favour to you and your mother, how I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit so that you spoke to mankind when you were in the cradle and when you were of mature age. Remember when I taught you the Scripture, Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel and when you created from clay something resembling the form of birds by My leave and when you blew into it and it became birds by my leave and you healed the blind from birth and the leper by My leave and brought forth the dead by My leave...").[95]

In the midst of the Christian anti-Muslim polemical debates then prevalent in their day, the early Muslim commentators expended much exegetical effort in looking at the technical matters connected with the wording of the two texts we have cited above.[96] We shall limit the discussion of the material in the exegetical tradition about Jesus to the commentaries of two scholars, namely, al-Zamakhshari (d.1144 C.E.) and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d.1209/10 C.E.).

Al-Zamakhshari was a Mu'tazili scholar and exegete.[97] Apart from other works, the memory of al-Zamakhshari is immortalised in his commentary, *al-Kashshaf 'an haqa'iq al-tanzil wa-'uyun al-aqawil fi wujuh al—ta'wil*.[98] Seyyed Hossein Nasr characterises *al-Kashshaf* as a commentary that is unique for its emphasis on both the language and the grammar of the Qur'an compared to other commentaries that are concerned either with sacred history or theology.[99]

[95]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 142.
[96]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 154.
[97]*The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, s.v. "Zamakhshari, Abu al-Qasim Mahmud Ibn Umar".
[98]Irfan A. Omar, ed., *A Muslim View of Christianity* (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 132-133.
[99] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam: religion, history and civilization* (New York: Harper SanFrancisco, 2003), 44.

Due largely to the emphases that he placed both on the language and the grammar of the Qur'an, al-Zamakhshari was one of the early commentators who seriously question the exegetical basis for the view that Qur'an 4: 157-158 denies the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion in favour of the death of substitute.[100] It is worth noting that his objection to the 'substitutionist' theory was based purely on grammatical than on any other considerations.[101]

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi was a man of great learning both as a theologian and a legal expert of the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence.[102] Although he was renowned for works on many disciplines including those in which he offers refutations of Christian doctrines, it is his commentary *Al-tafsir al-kabir* that is of significance to us in this thesis. In *Al-tafsir al-kabir*, Razi rejects and refutes key Christian doctrines including the claims that (1) Jesus was divine, (2) God was incarnated in Jesus, (3) God is a single essence with three hypostases etc.[103] In the brief discussion that follows, we shall focus on some key words in the works of these two exegetes that have significant theological implications for the divinity of Jesus.

We consider the verb *khalaqa* (create) in Qur'an 3: 49 and the significance of Jesus blowing into the birds and giving them life. Zamakhshari suggests that the verb *khalaqa* is the equivalent of *qaddara* which means 'determine' or 'make in proportion'.[104] Also, Zamakhshari defines 'creating' (*khalq*) as 'the bringing of a thing into being by proportioning it and making it

[100]Nasr, *Islam*, 162-163.
[101]Nasr, *Islam*, 162-163.
[102] *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History (1200-1350)*, Volume 4, s.v. "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi".
[103] *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History (1200-1350)*, Volume 4, s.v. "Fakhr al-Din al-Razi".
[104]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 144-145.

regular'.[105] He illustrates this with the expression 'to fashion a sandal' (*khalaqa 'l–na'ala*). Razi favours a broader meaning of the verb *khalaqa* and argues that it has the meaning of *taqdīr* which has three shades of meaning including 'determining', 'measuring', '*tasīya*' which means 'arranging', 'making regular' and '*taswīr*' which means 'fashioning', or 'representing'.[106]

It is interesting that in the brief analysis of the verb *khalaqa* (create) above, none of the commentators mentions that there is a similarity between Jesus' 'blowing into the birds' (Q. 3:49) and God's blowing of His Spirit into Man at creation.[107] One wonders why the commentators failed to note such an important similarity. It is instructive that Razi is the only commentator who notices this and therefore notes that there must have been something special about the breath of Jesus'.[108]

However, Razi is unsure whether it is permissible to say that God endowed the breath of Jesus with a special creative power so that when he breathed into things, they came back to life.[109] Again, it is noteworthy that Razi explains that the breath of Jesus was life and spirit because Jesus was created as a result of the blowing of Gabriel (who is a pure spirit and a pure spiritual being) into Mary.[110]

The third is about the raising of the dead to life by Jesus. The commentators took pains to explain that Jesus did the blowing (as in the case of the birds) and did the praying (by invoking God in the case of the dead) but it was God who gave life to the birds and the dead people. The commentators

[105]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 145.
[106]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 145.
[107]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 145.
[108]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 145.
[109]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 146.
[110]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 146.

always made use of the phrase 'by God's leave' in order to show that Jesus possessed no innate creative power either to give life or to bring the dead to life. The creating of the birds and the raising of the dead were done only by 'leave of God'. It is to an analysis of this proviso 'by leave of God' that we now turn. It is found in two forms namely, 'by God's leave' (*bi-idhni 'llahi*) and 'by my leave' (*bi-idhni*).[111]

The early commentators' understanding of the proviso 'by God's leave' (*bi-idhni 'llahi*) or 'by my leave' (*bi-idhni*) is interesting. For example, Tabari refers to this proviso when dealing with the raising of the dead by Jesus but does not refer to it in the miracle of the creating of the birds. In the former case, he connects the proviso to Jesus' practice of petitioning God in his miracles of healing.[112] Zamakhshari understands the purpose of the proviso in relation to Jesus' miracles differently. According to him, it was used as a caveat so that people will not ascribe divinity to Jesus on the basis of the miracles.[113] In his view, its use in Qur'an 5:110 means either 'by my facilitation' or 'by my supplying'.

Again, Razi goes into greater detail about the meaning of the proviso than the other commentators. He notes that in relation to Qur'an 3:49 the phrase means 'by God causing to be and determining' (*bi-takwini 'llahi wa-takhliqi-hi*).[114] He supports his view by citing Qur'an 3: 145 ("No soul can ever die except by God's leave").[115] He also notes that Jesus mentioned the caveat

[111]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 152.
[112]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 152.
[113]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 152.
[114]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 152.
[115]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 152.

to let people know that while he did the fashioning of the birds (3:49), the creating of life in the birds was done by God.[116]

Further, Razi points out that the double use of the proviso in the miracle of the creating of the birds in Qur'an 5:110 above means that the fashioning of the birds from clay as well as the giving of life to the birds, were both done by God's leave.[117] The import of the comments of Razi in relation to the miracle of the creating of the birds is that the giving of life to the birds was the result of the power of God rather than by the creative power of Jesus.[118]

Secondly, the other subject in the exegetical tradition that has relevance to our analysis is the virginal conception. Like the miracles of Jesus which have occupied our attention in this analysis until this point, the classical commentators painstakingly interpreted the relevant verses in order to show that the virginal conception of Jesus could not be used to prove that he was divine. The emphases of their exegesis of Qur'an 19: 17-22 was not on whether the virginal conception could be the basis for Jesus' divinity. Rather, their emphases were laid on how to explain the contribution of the angel Gabriel to the conception of Jesus.[119] Robinson has noted that the early commentators rejected the view that the virginal conception was proof of the divinity of Jesus.[120]

Evidently, this analysis so far has shown that the exegetical tradition rejects the view that Jesus was divine on account of his miracles and the virginal conception. According to the early commentators, the miracles of creating of live birds out of clay, the raising the dead to life by Jesus were all

[116]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 152.
[117]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 152.
[118]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 152.
[119]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 166.
[120]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 166.

done by 'leave of God' or 'permission of God' in order to authenticate his prophetic call. In the same way, they argue that the virginal conception of Jesus was a demonstration of the creative power of God to create by means of the divine fiat 'Be'. Their central argument in relation to the miracles of Jesus and whether that meant that he was divine is that neither the miracles nor the virginal conception suggests that he was divine or was the 'son of God'.

As we saw both in our analyses of the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition earlier, here in the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) too, Jesus is portrayed as a human being, a prophet and a messenger of God. It is clear from the analysis that the keen interest that the exegetical tradition shows in the miraculous aspect of Jesus is only in order that the commentators would show that despite the miracles that he worked, Jesus was still a human being, a prophet and a messenger of God. We should note briefly that this would safeguard, what is the central tenet in Islamic theology, namely, the unity and transcendence of God.

2.2.4 The pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition

By the eighth century C.E. Muslim and Christian scholars were engaged in sophisticated scholarly debates about theology. The scholarly debates were such that while Muslim scholars questioned the basis of key Christian doctrines, notably the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines, Christian scholars wrote treatises in which they defended these doctrines. It is instructive to note that by the time that Muslim scholars began to question the basis of many Christian doctrines, they had become convinced that it was in Islamic doctrine that monotheism was to be found in its purest form.[121] Muslim

[121]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 1-5.

scholars then used the most sophisticated, philosophical, rational and analytical tools to examine Christian doctrines that seemed to them to compromise the absolute unity of God.

Hitherto, Muslim scholars and theologians had engaged in intra-Muslim theological debates and were thus predisposed to examining the beliefs of non-Islamic religious, especially Christianity. [122] The arguments about the Mu'tazilite views of the essence-attributes question and the view that the Qur'an was created as opposed to the Hanbalite views on the same issues are illustrative of the intellectual and theological argumentation that was already commonplace within the Muslim scholarly community.

We shall look at the works of four Muslim scholars who wrote against the divinity of Jesus and his death by crucifixion. In the first part of this chapter we shall consider the divinity of Jesus and the associated Christological doctrines. In the second part we shall focus on the death of Jesus.

The scholarly treatises that are examined below are the works of (1) 'Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, (2) Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, (3) 'Abd al-Jabbar and (4) Ibn Taymiyya, the renowned Syrian Hanbali scholar. These polemical works are among the most comprehensive treatises on traditional Christology in the Islamic tradition.

2.2.4.1 Abu 'Isa al-Warraq

Abu 'Isa al-Warraq was a ninth century scholar who wrote on many subjects. He was a controversial figure in the sense that he was both admired and hated by many at the same time. The comment by Thomas that Abu 'Isa al-Warraq remained unrivalled in the analytical completeness and robustness of

[122]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 3-7.

his polemic against the Trinity and the Incarnation until the appearance of Ibn Taymiyya's treatise, the *Al-Jawab al-Sahih li –man baddala din al-Masih* (The Correct Reply to those who have Altered Christ's Religion) in the fourteenth century is indicative of his scholarly competence.[123]

Abu 'Isa al-Warraq's work which will be the focus of this analysis is his *Kitab al-Radd 'ala al-thalath firaq min al-Nasara* (The Refutation of the creed of the three Christian Sects). One cannot help but notice that it was originally intended to be both a philosophical and rational refutation of the two main Christian doctrines (Trinity and Incarnation) with reference to how they were interpreted by the three leading Christian communities namely, the Nestorians, Jacobites and Melkites.[124] We should mention that his work has been preserved in the *Tabyin Ghalat Muhammad Ibn Harun* by the tenth century C.E. Christian apologist and Jacobite theologian, Yahya Ibn 'Adi (d. 974 C.E).[125]

We shall first look at his critique against the Trinity which is divided into three key (1) the teachings of the Jacobites, Nestorians and Melkites with respect to the relationship between the one substance and the three hypostases, (2) questions about the substance and the hypostases with respect to their individual characteristics and their differentiation and (3) questions about the different characteristics of the three hypostases.[126]

The word 'hypostasis' (the plural is hypostases) is used in Christian theology to describe each of the three members of the Trinity, namely, the

[123] Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity*: *Abu 'Isa al-Warraq's "Against the Incarnation*", ed., and trans., David Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Preface.
[124] Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity*: *Abu 'Isa al-Warraq's "Against the Trinity*", ed., and trans., David Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 55.
[125] Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 3.
[126] Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, i-ii.

Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. According to mainstream Christian theology, these three persons are part of the one God who created the heavens and the earth and everything in them.

The three parts into which his work is divided have some common material in terms of their contents.[127] Firstly, he examines the interpretations of the doctrine as held by the three main Christian groups.[128] He begins by questioning the Nestorians and the Jacobites about the uniformity of the one substance in the three hypostases.[129] In the text itself, he wonders how God (whom he designates as the 'the Eternal One') can be described as existing as one substance in three hypostases and that the one substance is the three hypostases and the three hypostases are the one substance.[130] Al-Warraq's questioning about the nature of the one substance and the three hypostases is meant to test the theological validity of the claim of these two groups who believed that the one substance and the three hypostases are the same.[131]

Next, he focuses on the Melkites and questions them regarding their claim that while the three hypostases are identical with the substance, it is not identical with them.[132] He wonders why the Melkites will not acknowledge that the substance is a fourth hypostasis given the fact that they believe that it is not the same as the three hypostases.[133] Secondly, he focuses on questions about the substance and the hypostases.[134] His overarching concern here is how the

[127]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 55.
[128]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 55.
[129]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 55.
[130]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 67.
[131]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 55.
[132]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 55.
[133]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 67.
[134]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 56.

three hypostases are to be differentiated.[135] In the text of his work itself he elaborates more on what concerns him in the second part of his critique.

According to him, it is difficult rationally to understand how the three hypostases could be differentiated from one another (Father, Son and Spirit) when the one substance that is common to them is 'one in its substantiality, eternal and undifferentiated in its being, not composed of distinct classes?'[136]

Further, he raises other issues about the substance and essences of the three hypostases and implies that it is problematic to distinguish between the substance and essences of the hypostases. For example, he notes that they will be abandoning their teaching that the hypostases are the substance as well as their teaching that each hypostasis has a specific substance if they claim that the séances of each hypostasis is different from the substance of the same hypostasis.[137]

Also critiquing the claim by the three Christian communities that the three hypostases are uniform in substantiality, he argues that this can only be so either because of themselves or an external cause other than them.[138] Thus, he argues that there is a contradiction here because the three hypostases are uniform because of them and differentiated because of the thing that makes them differentiated.[139]

Al-Warraq goes on to argue that a fourth hypostasis is established when the Christians claim that the three hypostases are uniform through the instrumentality of something that is other than them.[140] In this case, he

[135]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 113.
[136]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 113.
[137]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 115-117.
[138]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 117.
[139]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 117.
[140]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 117.

concludes that such a claim invalidates the doctrine of the Trinity.[141] He observes that the claim we have just noted is similar to the claim that the three hypostases are differentiated because of a cause other than them.[142]

Thirdly, he focuses on the three hypostases and their individual characteristics.[143] Intent on demonstrating the illogicality of the three hypostases being of one substance and yet retaining their individual characteristics, he asks whether knowledge of each of the hypostases as Father, Son and Spirit was limited to each hypostasis.[144] In other words, his argument is whether it was the Father who alone knew that he was Father, the Son alone knew that he was Son and the Spirit alone knew that he was Spirit.[145] He then extrapolates this method and raises the question about whether each of the hypostasis was powerful.[146]

Al-Warraq notes that if Christians agree that the three hypostases are both knowing and powerful, it implies that each of them (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) could have created the universe without the other two knowing that had happened.[147] Further, he notes that if it is objected that the knowledge of being powerful was limited to each hypostasis, thus suggesting that each of the three hypostases could have created a world without the others knowing about that would imply that none of the hypostases has knowledge.[148] In that case, the natural conclusion that can be drawn is that none of the three hypostases is divine since as he argues that which does not have knowledge is not divine.[149]

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[141]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 117.
[142]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 117.
[143]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 56.
[144]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 155.
[145]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 155.
[146]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 155.
[147]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 155.
[148]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 157.
[149]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 157.

Fourthly, he focuses on the issue of whether the hypostases are themselves attributes of other hypostases.[150] He investigates this issue in a variety of ways. In the first place he argues that if the knowledge of the Son and the Spirit is only to the Father and not to themselves, it implies that they are deficient of knowledge and thereby excluded from the substance of the Father who alone has knowledge.[151]

Al-Warraq also argues that if it is claimed that unlike the Father, the Son and the Spirit know through a knowledge other than themselves, they do not only contradict the claim that the three hypostases (Father, Son and Spirit) are of one substance but also abandon the doctrine by affirming knowledge (the two sources of knowledge behind the knowledge of the Son and the Spirit) as fourth and fifth members.[152] In this sense, the result would be an innumerable number of hypostases within the Trinity if this were applied to the life, speech, power etc of the Son and the Spirit as has been done to knowledge.[153]

Fifthly, he confines his investigation to what he sees as the internal contradictions within the Trinity with reference to whether the hypostases are attributes of other hypostases as we discussed in the preceding paragraph. According to him, if the knowledge of the Father is the Son, it follows that the knowledge of the Son (which is something that is outside of the Son) and the knowledge of the Spirit (which is something outside the Spirit) can only be the Son's son and the Spirit's son.[154] He argues that if this not the case, it implies

[150]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 159.
[151]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 159.
[152]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 159.
[153]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 159.
[154]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 159-161.

that the Father's knowledge cannot be his son. All of this, he observes, are arbitrary views.[155]

Sixthly, he focuses his argument on the teaching that the Son was generated from the Father.[156] The logic of his argument is that if Father, Son and Spirit have one substance and the Father has generated the Son, the Son and the Spirit being of one substance as the Father must have also generated sons too.[157] Arguing on the basis that the generation of the Son by the Father is comparable to human procreation, he points out that there would be the Son of the Father, the Son of the Son and the Son of the Spirit.[158] The result of this, he argues, will be countless sons, because the Son would generate a son, the Father would generate another and the Spirit would generate another son. This would mean that the Trinity would consist not of one son but of many sons.[159]

Lastly, after critiquing the doctrine of the generation of the Son by the Father, he questions whether the hypostases are properties, attributes or individuals.[160] He argues that if the hypostases are properties of something other than themselves, it would imply that they contradict the doctrine of the Trinity by saying that there is a fourth entity thus making the Trinity consists of four persons instead of three as has traditionally been taught.[161] Similarly, he argued that if the Christians believe that the hypostases are properties of the substance which is other than them, this would imply that Speech must be the

[155]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 161.
[156]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 163.
[157]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 163.
[158]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 163.
[159]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 163.
[160]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 173.
[161]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 173.

property of the substance rather than of the Father, Life will be the property of the substance rather than of the Father or the Son.[162]

Clearly, the critique of the Trinity that we have been concerned with up to this point has been punctuated with theological, philosophical and rational objections. In doing so, Abu ‘Isa Warraq has sought to demonstrate that the doctrine of the Trinity does not provide an adequate explanation of the nature of God because it is fraught with so many contradictions with respect both to the one substance and the three hypostases. For example, he considers it irrational and theologically incoherent to describe God as being one and yet, existing eternally in three person of Father, Son and Spirit simultaneously.

Next, we turn our attention to his critique against the Incarnation, which together with his critique of the Trinity we examined have just examined above, formed a composite work that refuted Christianity. In his analysis of the critique against the Incarnation, Thomas describes the work as comprising two main parts.[163]

The first part is divided into two, the first of which is about why it was only the Son and not the Father or the Spirit who was the subject of the act of Uniting.[164] In the second division of the first part, he looks at motley issues about the uniting against the backdrop of particular stages in the experience of the Messiah especially during the birth and death of the Messiah.[165] The second main part of his critique is about how the human and divine natures united with the Messiah (Jesus) in the teaching of the Melkites, the Jacobites and the

[162]Al-Warraq, *Trinity*, 163.
[163]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 63-64.
[164]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 64.
[165]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 64.

Nestorians.[166] With this outline, we shall now look at his critique of the Incarnation in more detail.

Firstly, Al-Warraq questions why it was only the Son who was the subject of the uniting and not all the three hypostases.[167] In the text of the refutation itself, al-Warraq questions why the uniting is said to be with the Word when the action of uniting itself was by the three hypostases.[168] He argues that by so confessing, the Jacobites, Nestorians and the Melkites whose beliefs about the Incarnation are the target of the refutation imply that the Son was involved in an action in which the Father and the Spirit were not.[169] By inference, based on the argument above, he argues that it possible for each of the three hypostases to both create and control a world without the other two hypostases. According to him, the possibility that this could happen jeopardises the theological basis upon which the teaching rests.[170]

Similarly, he argues that if it was possible for the Word to act alone as he did in the birth of the Messiah, it was possible for either the Father or the Spirit to have united without the Son.[171] He argues that even if it was objected that the uniting was done by all the three hypostases for the benefit of the Son alone, it would still be the case that the Son would still have something that the other two (Father and Spirit) would not have, namely the action of uniting.[172] It would be the same for either the Father or the Spirit if one of them was the benefactor of an action of uniting that was done by all the three hypostases. It

[166]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 63-64.
[167]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 64.
[168]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 97.
[169]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 97.
[170]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 97.
[171]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 99.
[172]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 99.

will still be the case that the benefactor of the action of the uniting whether the Father or the Spirit, would have something that the other two did not have.[173]

Furthermore, Al-Warraq turns his attention to the Melkites from whom he anticipates an objection to his argument because they believe that while the three hypostases have the same substance, the substance is not identical to the hypostases.[174] This teaching would imply that there is a possibility for the action of the uniting to have been an action of the substance alone but not by the hypostases. His response to such an objection is that those who espouse this view of the uniting are guilty of excluding the Father, the Son and the Spirit from the action of Uniting.[175]

Continuing with his critique, he argues that if the above view was taken to its logical conclusion, it would imply that none of the three hypostases cannot neither create anything nor perform any action since any action is attributed to the substance alone. By this reasoning, he argues that the Father, like the Son and the Spirit, has neither power over anything nor know of anything.[176] Again, taken to its logical conclusion this would imply that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are neither divine nor eternal.[177]

After looking at the concept of the Uniting in a general sense as to why it should happen to only the Son, he now applies it to the beliefs of each of the three Christian communities. He refutes the Incarnation by seeking to show that it is incompatible with the human experiences of the Messiah namely, his birth and crucifixion and death.[178] He begins to examine the Incarnation and

[173]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 99.
[174]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 99.
[175]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 99.
[176]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 99.
[177]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 99 -101.
[178]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 107.

the birth of the Messiah from the standpoint both of Jacobite and Nestorian theology.[179] What concerns him is when the Word unity the human taken from Mary?[180] This concern is evident in the following words "When did the Word unite with the human taken from Mary, before the birth, after it, or at the moment of the birth?"[181]

Al-Warraq also contends that the Jacobite view that the eternal united with a complete human being is false because granted that there was a uniting, it was a uniting of the Word with a foetus.[182] He therefore argues that the Jacobite understanding of the uniting as taking place between the Word and an individual human is false because that individual human being is not human until it has been fully formed as a man.[183]

Al-Warraq's critique of the Jacobite understanding of the uniting and the birth of the Messiah reveals a scholar who remains unconvinced that things happened the way the Jacobites hold about the uniting during the conception of the Messiah. His aim in deploying this argumentation is to demonstrate that the teaching of the Jacobites and the Nestorians that the eternal united with a complete human is problematic since the Messiah was not complete but was a foetus at the time of the Uniting.[184]

In order both to press home his point that both Jacobite and Nestorian understandings of the uniting of the Word with the human are unsatisfactory as well as to contrast the two beliefs he now isolates the former and begins to look

[179]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 107.
[180]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 107
[181]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 107
[182]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 107
[183]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 107
[184]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 107

their theology with respect to the uniting in more detail.[185] It is worth recalling that he has already described as false the teaching of the Jacobites that the Word united with an individual human.

Focusing more on Nestorian doctrine, he argues that the view that the uniting was between the Word and an individual human will force them to concede that the divine nature existed as a foetus with the human over a period of time during pregnancy.[186] He argues that this would imply that both the human and divine components of the Incarnation were the same in terms of their duration, both existing at the time of the uniting, throughout the period of the pregnancy until birth.[187] He argues that if pressed to its logical conclusion this reasoning would mean that both the divine and the human were born together.[188] He observes that if as we have already mentioned, both the divine and the human were born together, thus contradicting the belief of the Nestorians that the birth of the Messiah relates to his human nature not to his divine nature.[189]

It is instructive to note that Al-Warraq shows a great deal of familiarity with how Christian scholars used analogy to explain the nature of the Incarnation.[190] Beginning with the analogy of the Incarnation as a 'mingling and mixing', he argues that this could not have happened since this is said to have occurred before he was a man. In this case how could it be a 'mingling

[185]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 109.
[186]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 109.
[187]Al-Warraq, Incarnation, 109.
[188]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 109.
[189]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 109.
[190]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 109.

and mixing' with the human when the human who was born did not exist at the point that the uniting is said to have taken place.[191]

Similarly, the analogies that the Word took him as a 'habitation or a location', the Word put him on 'as a garment', the Word 'dwelt within him and controlled its affairs through him and by means of him', the Word 'appeared in him like the imprint or a seal appears in impressed clay' and finally, that the Word 'appeared in his body as the shape of a person appears in a polished mirror' are all invalidated.[192]

According to him, all of the above analogies are inadequate explanations of the uniting because none of them could have happened before the conception or full development of the human.[193] In a series of arguments, he attempts to demonstrate that the Melkites, Jacobites and Nestorians were all guilty of a number of theological contradictions and inconsistencies due to their teaching about the manner in which the divine and human were united in the birth of the Messiah.[194] He accuses the Jacobites of confessing that Mary gave birth not only to the Messiah, but also to Divinity. The Nestorians are guilty of believing that Mary gave birth to an eternal Divinity since they hold that the Messiah was two substances namely, eternal and temporal.[195]

We noted at the beginning of this analysis that there is a lot of overlap in his arguments. A clear case of this is when he accuses the Nestorians of implying that the Divinity that Mary gave birth to (on the basis of their belief that there was both an eternal and a temporal substance in the Messiah) was the

[191]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 109.
[192]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 109.
[193]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 109.
[194]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 111.
[195]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 113.

one who was crucified, killed and buried even before he has examined the Incarnation in light of the crucifixion.[196]

Al-Warraq clarifies the argument he has made above with regards to the crucifixion by saying that if it was objected that it was only one of the substances (eternal/divine or temporal/human) that was crucified it would be possible to argue that the one was crucified was not the Messiah.[197] Likewise, based on the Melkite doctrine of the Messiah as having two substances (eternal and temporal), they would have to concede that they believe that Mary gave birth to the divine hypostasis and that it was the same divine hypostasis who was crucified, killed and buried.[198]

Secondly, Al-Warraq examines the Incarnation in light of the crucifixion, death and burial of the Messiah.[199] He is concerned here to find out whether there was still a uniting between the Word and the Messiah during these moments.[200] Hence, he argues that only one thing could have happened to the Messiah the uniting of the Word and the Son was destroyed and obliterated.[201] He notes that this would raise a number of important questions about the Messiah, his divinity and the nature of God.[202] It implies that the uniting was restored after his resurrection.[203] Also, it would imply that the person who was crucified was not the Messiah or Divinity or the Son of God, and it would imply that those who killed him were responsible for destroying

[196]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 113.
[197]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation* 113-115.
[198]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 115.
[199]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 117.
[200]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 117.
[201]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 117.
[202]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 117.
[203]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 117.

the uniting and points out in what looks to him to be an irony that it was creatures of the Creator who destroyed his Uniting.[204]

Thirdly, he returns to the subject of the uniting in relation to the conception and birth of Messiah with special reference to Melkite theology in his day.[205] Basing his argument on Melkite theology, he argues that if the Word that united with the Son and was born of Mary was divine, it is tantamount to saying that Mary gave birth to the eternal Divinity in an actual birth.[206] He points out that if this was what happened, it has serious theological implications for the being of God. For example, it would imply that Mary kept the Divine who was born as her son in her womb for a period of time before he was born.[207] Similarly, it implies that the one who was born by Mary must have had the limitations that all bodies that are confined to one place (as in the case of pregnancy) and can be transferred from one place to another.[208]

Abu 'Isa al- Warraq also argues that if these limitations can be predicated of one of the three hypostases (the Son/Word), they are also applicable to the other two (Father and Holy Spirit) because of the Trinitarian view that there is a congruence in their substance.[209] Besides, it compromises their view that the eternal is a substance and not a physical body to which the limitations of physical bodies (like confinement to one place and transferring from one place to another) can be predicated.[210] He points out that their affirmation that the universal human being was the son of Mary is problematic

[204]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 117.
[205]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 125.
[206]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 125-127.
[207]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 127.
[208]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 127.
[209]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 127.
[210]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 127.

because first, it implies that the three hypostases were the children of Mary and second, that Adam and all his children must have been the sons of Mary.[211]

Lastly, Abu 'Isa al-Warraq returns to the crucifixion and the death of the Messiah. He does not look at this from the standpoint of the Jacobites and the Nestorians as seen in this analysis above. Rather, he looks at the death of Jesus from the perspective, as he has done with the conception and birth of Jesus in the preceding paragraph, from a Melkite theological perspective.[212] He aims to find out whether the crucifixion and the death of Jesus happened to only the body (humanity) of the Messiah or to his divine part as well.[213]

According to him, it is problematic to say that the crucifixion and the death happened to the body of the Messiah for then, like the Nestorians, the Melkites will be guilty of drawing a distinction between the body that was crucified and the Messiah.[214] Similarly, he argues that if the Melkites say that the crucifixion happened to the divinity without the body, they would compromise their own theology, namely, that it was the Messiah's body that was crucified.[215] Next, we turn our attention to the critique of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi.

2.2.4.2 Abu Mansur al-Maturidi

Abu Mansur al-Maturidi bequeathed to the next generation of Islamic scholars a huge literary legacy and is credited with works on Islamic law (*fiqh*), exegesis (*tafsir*) and theology (*kalam*).[216] However, his work that is of most

[211]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 127-128.
[212]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 155.
[213]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 155.
[214]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 155.
[215]Al-Warraq, *Incarnation*, 155.
[216]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 79.

concern to us in this analysis is his Book about the Oneness of God (*Kitab al-tawhid*).[217]

The two doctrines that are his main preoccupation in *Kitab al-tawhid* are the status of Jesus as to whether he is human or divine and the view that Jesus was the son of God. He sets out in his work to refute these doctrines and shows interest in neither the Trinity nor the Incarnation except to mention them when they are helpful in clarifying his arguments. Also, he shows no interest in the age-old Muslim claim that Jesus was the forerunner to Muhammad. We now look at his work in more detail. We focus first on his refutation of the divinity of Jesus and secondly, on his critique against the special relationship of Jesus as the 'Son to God'.

Firstly, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi argues that the miracles of Jesus were not unique to him because many prophets and messengers of God who antedated him also worked miracles but were not considered to be divine. Hence, he argued that the miracles of Jesus do not constitute a strong basis for the doctrine of his divinity. Two key issues about the miracles of Jesus are of concern to him.[218] They are (1) whether the miracles of Jesus were greater or more impressive than those performed by other prophets and (2) whether the mode of Jesus' action in relation to his miracles was different from others.[219]

Furthermore, he buttresses the second of the issues above by arguing that the way Jesus performed his miracles was not markedly different from the way that Moses performed his miracles.[220] According to him, both Jesus and Moses would first appeal to God through prayer as the right human approach to

[217]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 1.
[218]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 86.
[219]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 86.
[220]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 86.

God.[221] He therefore challenges Christians to show that Jesus was any different from Moses in the way he performed his miracles. For illustrative purposes, he cites a number of miracles of Jesus with parallels in the Old Testament prophets and Muhammad to show that Jesus' miracle-working feat was matched by the Old Testament prophets as well as by Muhammad.[222]

We should point out that Al-Maturidi's reason for arguing above that there was no difference between the nature of the miracles of Jesus and those performed by other Old Testament prophets was that if Jesus was divine because of his miracles the other prophets who also worked miracles should also be deified.

Secondly, he argues that the manner in which Jesus performed his miracles showed that they came from God rather than from Jesus himself.[223] According to him, just as God permitted Moses to turn a staff into a snake, he was also the agent in the miracles of the healing the sick and the raising of the dead that were performed by Jesus.[224] Also, he argues that the miracles could not be the basis upon which to build the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus because they were evidentiary signs of the authenticity of a prophet.[225]

We should briefly note that the above argument is made on the basis of the view in Islam that the miracles of Jesus were performed by 'the leave/permission' of God (Q.3:49; 5:110). We looked at this phrase in detail earlier when we examined the exegetical tradition's material on the miracles of Jesus and what they say about the person of Jesus.

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[221]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 86.
[222]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 86.
[223]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 86.
[224]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 86.
[225]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 86.

Thirdly, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi uses an implicit dilemma to refute the view that the miracles of Jesus were a strong basis for his divinity. He argues that humanity and divinity are mutually exclusive categories. He proceeds to argue that if Christians believe that Jesus had both a human nature and a divine nature and that the miracles were the result of his divine part it implies that it was God rather than Jesus himself who performed the miracles.[226] He also argues that if the 'divine' part of Jesus was entirely separated from God it would imply that there was a creative source unconnected with God that was the source of the miracles of Jesus.[227] We are not sure about the precise meaning of this argument except to say that it may be based on Jacobite Christology.

Again, we should note that the import of the above argument is that the miracles of Jesus were performed by the power of God rather than by any power innate in him. Likewise, we are not exactly sure why he uses this dilemma. He may have been reminding his readers that the view that Jesus was both divine and human at the same time was theologically unsound, irrational and illogical. He does not explain any further why he thinks that the categories of humanity and divinity are irreconcilable.[228] Thomas has noted that the source of the dilemma Abu Mansur al-Maturidi uses, which we noted above, seems to be based on the different Christological formulations held by the three Christian sects at the time.

We should briefly note that Muslim scholarly refutation of the divinity of Jesus on the basis of the miracles of Jesus has a long history in Islam. Thomas has observed that the comparison of the miracles of Jesus with those

[226]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 87.
[227]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 87.
[228]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 87.

of other prophets (Old Testament prophets and Muhammad) is a well-established polemical technique with a long history in the Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition.[229] We find that the same argument we noted above was employed in the polemical works of Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (d.1013 C.E.) and al-Hasan Ibn Ayyub (died before 990 C.E.).[230] With this argument, he ends his refutation of the divinity of Jesus based on the miracles of Jesus, since as we saw, neither the nature of the miracles nor the mode in which they were performed makes them unique. Clearly, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi is arguing that since other Old Testament prophets worked miracles and yet were not deified, Jesus should not be described as divine because his miracle-working prowess.

Next, we look at his critique of the epithet 'son of God' as applied to Jesus. We should point out at the outset that like the argument we saw in the preceding paragraph, there are precedents in the Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition of how this doctrine was refuted. It is traced to Ibrahim al-Nazzam (d. 845 C.E.) and was preserved in the work of al-Jahiz (d. 868 C.E.).[231] Firstly, he begins with the argument that the mere address of Jesus as 'Son' means nothing because (1) it is unlikely that God would address a creature in such a way and (2) others before Jesus were addressed in this way.[232]

Secondly, he counters the Christian claim that Jesus is the 'son of God' by arguing that there is a distinction between 'friendship' (*khulla*) as used to describe the relationship between Abraham and God and 'Sonship' and the

[229]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 87.
[230]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 87.
[231]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 89.
[232]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 89.

relationship between Jesus and God respectively.[233] According to him, whereas it makes sense to use the former to describe relationships between two members of different species (in that case it would connote affection), as in the case where a man can refer to a dog or an ass as his friend, the same person cannot refer to the dog or the ass as his son.[234] Hence, he argues, it does not make theological sense to use 'son' to describe the relationship between Jesus and God.

We should briefly note that the argument that it is inappropriate to describe Jesus as 'son of God' was well known both before and during the time of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. It has echoes in the work of al-Jahiz for example. He is adamant that God could call a human being his son because of the ontological distinction between God and humanity. For this reason, Al-Maturidi argues that while God could have friends, he could never have a son.[235] From the foregoing, it is clear that Al-Maturidi's contention hinges on his conviction of the humanness of Jesus in comparison to the exalted and unique nature of God, both of which rule out the possibility of any idea of divine 'sonship'.[236]

According to Al-Maturidi, Jesus bore all the characteristics of humanity as seen in the human characteristics that are ascribed to him and his own self-understanding that he was nothing more than a human being.[237] He notes that given the transcendent nature of God, it is unthinkable that he should have a son as this will associate human passions with him.[238] Besides, Al-Maturidi

[233]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 89-90.
[234]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 90.
[235]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 90.
[236]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 91.
[237]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 91.
[238]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 91.

argues that if God had a son, his son would resemble him and share the same characteristics of divinity with him.[239] Overall, his refutation of the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus which he argues has been distorted by Christians. Next, we turn to the work of ʻAbd al-Jabbar.

2.2.4.3 ʻAbd al-Jabbar

ʻAbd al-Jabbar was a leading tenth century C.E. Mu'tazilite scholar with a huge literary legacy. His two works that are of concern to us in this analysis are his major work the *Mughni* (On Divine Oneness and Justice) and the *Tathbit dala'il al-nubuwwa* (The Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophethood). [240] The former is by all accounts, a *summa* of Mu'tazili speculative theological thought about both the oneness (*tawhid*) and justice (*adi*) of God.

It is instructive to point out that *Tathbit* belonged to a completely unique literary genre in which Muslims since Abu Ja'far al-Tabari (d. 923 C.E.) would defend the prophetic claims of Muhammad by appealing to miracle stories attributed to him.[241] Although the historicity of the miracles of Muhammad is peripheral to the aims of both this chapter and the thesis as a whole, it is instructive to note that internal evidence within the Qur'an itself suggests otherwise and points to the sacred text as the only miracle by the Prophet (Q.17:59; 29:50-51).[242]

We shall first look at the *Mughni* in this analysis because it was completed five years before his *Tathbit*.[243] However, we should note that any

[239]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 91.
[240]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 206-207.
[241]ʻAbd al-Jabbar, *Critique of Christian Origins*, ed. and trans., Gabriel Said Reynolds and Samir Khalil (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2010), xlii.
[242]ʻAbu Al-Jabbar, *Origins*. xliii.
[243]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 206-207.

material on the death of Jesus is omitted in this section because we are concerned only with the divinity of Jesus. The refutation of Christianity is placed in Part 5 of the *Mughni* alongside the refutations of other religious traditions that al-Jabbar judged to be dualist.[244]

Structurally, the refutation in the *Mughni* is in three main parts.[245] The first is an introduction of the main Christian beliefs, the second is a refutation of the Trinity and the third examines the Incarnation in its various forms as held by Al-Jabbar's Christian contemporaries.[246] We proceed to look at his critique in more detail.

Firstly, he provides an introductory description of Christian beliefs which he prefaces with quotation from Abu 'Ali al-Jubbai (d. 915 C.E.) but makes little use of it in his analysis.[247] Also, in the first part he mentions that his aim is to show the beliefs about which Christians generally agree and disagree and to demonstrate their irrationality.[248] He then specifically names the main Christian denominations, their views about the Trinity and the Incarnation and in a more detailed analysis, he indicates the areas on which they disagree in respect of these two cardinal beliefs.[249]

'Abd al-Jabbar concludes the introductory part of the refutation of Christian doctrine in his *Mughni* by briefly looking at variant views of the crucifixion, the worship of Jesus and other minority views of the nature of the

[244]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 208.
[245]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 208.
[246]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 208.
[247]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.
[248]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.
[249]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.

Uniting.[250] It is worth pointing out that our analysis of the death of Jesus is deferred to the second main sub-division in the chapter.

Secondly, he focuses on the doctrine of the Trinity. He has already indicated in the introductory part of his refutation which we considered above that the Trinity is one of two Christian doctrines that he sets out to examine in *Mughni*.[251] The other is the Incarnation. He cleverly states his argument in a way that is intended to pose a difficulty for the Christian interlocutor. His argument is about the nature of the three hypostases of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as to whether they are only terminological distinctions or they are real differentiations in the Godhead.[252] He contends that if the hypostases are only terminological distinctions, they would not be real, and conversely, if they were real they would be identical and therefore differentiating between them would be unnecessary.[253]

We should observe that the latter alternative, namely, that the hypostases are identical provides him with more room to examine the doctrine and point out its contradictions and absurdities which he is quick to capitalise on. He argues, in the tradition of some of the Mu'tazili scholars who preceded him that whether the hypostases are terminological distinctions within the Godhead or they are real, Christians could still be accused of believing in three divinities or deities.[254]

Hitherto, Al-Jabbar has confined his argument to the nature of the hypostases and sought to demonstrate that there are contradictions associated with the Trinity. Now, he focuses on the relationship between the one

[250]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.
[251]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.
[252]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.
[253]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.
[254]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.

substance and the three hypostases.[255] He argues that there is a fallacy of logic in claiming that God is one in substance and consists of three hypostases because it implies both differentiation and uniformity at the same time.[256]

Thirdly, he contends that the incoherence is not removed even if Christians were claiming that the hypostases are only attributes as they will have to demonstrate convincingly why the attributes are only three when the divine attributes are more than this number.[257] Similarly, he argues like Abu 'Ali (d. 915 C.E.) that the three hypostases are also agents if the Christians claim that God alone is an agent.[258] We should note that Al-Jabbar's arguments have their origins both in principles that he has already mentioned in *Mughni* and concepts that are characteristic of *kalam.*[259]

Fourthly, he specifically mentions the Melkites (they believe that while the hypostases are not to be differentiated from the substance the latter is not identical with them) whose variant of the Trinity while being unlike that of the other groups (Nestorians and Jacobites), nevertheless has some theological difficulties.[260] At this point in his refutation, he notes that there is still a difficulty in claiming that the Son is at the same time the 'articulated speech' of the Father and eternal and uncreated.[261]

Fifthly, he turns to an argument that had already been used in the Muslim anti-Christian critique over a century before his time.[262] This argument is traced to a group of Christians about whom nothing is known who first used it to justify the theological basis of the appellation 'son of God' as applied to

[255]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209.
[256]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 209-210.
[257]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 210.
[258]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 210.
[259]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 210.
[260]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 210.
[261]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 210.
[262]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.

Jesus. According to this anonymous group of Christians if Abraham enjoyed such intimacy with God that the Qur'an (4:125) itself says that the patriarch Abraham was a friend of God, Jesus could also be called the 'son of God' on the basis of his intimacy with God.[263]

We should point out that there is a theological difficulty that is latent in the above question.[264] On the one hand, for Muslims to deny the intimacy between Jesus and God is to deny the intimacy between Abraham and God and yet on the other hand, they would be contradicting the teaching of the Qur'an if they were to accept that Jesus is the "son of God".[265] He counters this by first arguing that an adoptive explanation of the relationship between Jesus and God raises serious questions about Christian teaching which holds that God is 'eternal Father.'[266] He moves on to question the relationship between Jesus and God in an adoptive sense before he focuses on the comparison between an adopted Jesus and Abraham as a friend.[267]

Drawing on insights from Al-Jahiz whom he gratefully acknowledges, he argues that there is no basis for the comparison we noted above because the meaning of 'friend' as used of Abraham connotes one who is dependent than one who is intimate.[268] He therefore argues that given the above explanation the basis of the comparison between Abraham as a 'friend of God' and Jesus as the 'son of God' immediately breaks down.[269]

Finally, in his critique of the Trinity, he deals with Christian claims that the virgin birth and sayings by Jesus in the gospel accounts are proofs of the

[263]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[264]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[265]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[266]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[267]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[268]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[269]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.

divinity of Jesus.[270] He counters these arguments, especially the one about the sayings in the gospel accounts that are attributed to Jesus by noting that words and terms change when they are transferred from one language to another.[271] In concluding his critique of the Trinity, he notes that the arguments that he has marshalled are potent enough to show that it is theologically erroneous for the Christians to portray that God is a body.[272]

The next subject that he addresses in *Mughni* is the Uniting.[273] It is worth reminding ourselves that the word 'Uniting' was the technical theological terminology that Muslim scholars like 'Abd al-Jabbar used to explain the uniting of the divine and human natures in Jesus. In order for us to appreciate his scathing attack against the Uniting, it is worth pointing out that he keeps making the point repeatedly that it is not possible for God to be so intimately united with a creature as is implied by the union of the divine and human natures of Jesus.[274]

Firstly, he refutes the act of Uniting, according to which it was the divine and human volitions that were conformed to each other rather than a bodily union.[275] He argues that complete conformity of volitions could not have happened because as long as the divine and human volitions remained separate.[276] We are not sure but this may be a reference to Christian doctrine since Chalcedon that the divine and human natures in Jesus are neither blurred nor have they become one, but remain separate thus making Jesus to be divine and human at the same time. According to him, as long as the human and

[270]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[271]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[272]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 211.
[273]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[274]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[275]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[276]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.

divine volitions remained separate, the human could never know what the divine knows and therefore not share the same will as the divine.[277]

Moreover, he argues that if this happened to Jesus it could be argued that it happened to other prophets since there is no reason why Jesus should be seen to stand out from the prophets of God.[278] Furthermore, he argues that it is neither possible for the divine volition to become the human volition or for the volition of Jesus to become the volition of God.[279] The reason why this could not have happened is that in the former case the divine volition would have had to become the volition of all created beings since Jesus has no uniqueness that others do not have.[280] In the latter case, the divine and human volitions function in different ways therefore making it impossible for one volition to become another.[281] It is worth noting that all of his arguments up to this point are modelled on *kalam* logic.[282]

Secondly, he focuses his examination on some analogies that have been used to describe the act of Uniting. It is instructive to observe that these were first listed in the works of Abu 'Isa al-Warraq.[283] The first analogy that he examines is the one that says that the Uniting happened in the form of mixing and close adjacency.[284] He quickly counters this by imply that God has physical and temporal characteristics in the sense that there was a mixing of his nature with that of a human temporal being.[285]

[277]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[278]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[279]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[280]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[281]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[282]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 212.
[283]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 213.
[284]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 213.
[285]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 213.

‘Abd al-Jabbar presses home the point that he has made above in a debate with an anonymous supporter of this view who argues that the analogy is similar to the Muslim belief in the omnipresence of God by saying that whereas Muslims understanding this figuratively but Christians tend to take this literally.[286] He counters this by also arguing that if God became so intimate with Jesus, he must have done the same thing to the prophets, in which case, Jesus will not have any uniqueness in having that intimate adjacency with God.[287]

A second explanation of the close intimacy between Jesus and God which he counters is predicated on the miracles. According to this, Christians claim that the miracles of Jesus showed that he had a special closeness with God.[288] He argues that God can use a prophet to work miracles that would not require that be closeness between the prophet and God. Moreover, he argues that if there anything to be said about divinity in the working of a miracle, it was the blind person who was healed, the dead person who is raised to life again who has a claim to any closeness with God than Jesus.[289]

Next, he examines the view that the Uniting was like the divine inhering in the human. He easily counters this by arguing that for this to happen will require one thing to be within another which is cannot happen with God.[290] Other explanations of the Uniting such as a face in a mirror and a seal imprinted in clay are both dismissed by his insistence that they are irrational and they restrict the divine in physical terms.[291]

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[286]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 213.
[287]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 213.
[288]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 213.
[289]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 213.
[290]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 213.
[291]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 214.

Thirdly, he focuses on the Jacobite understanding of the Uniting in which they say that the human and divine substances in Jesus became one after the Uniting.[292] He counters this by arguing among other things that two things cannot become one, that if the two become one would also mean that the human nature ceases to be human thus depriving the doctrine of Jesus being fully human and fully divine at the same time.[293]

Fourthly, he presses the case further on the basis of the Jacobite Christological formula we noted in the preceding paragraph. According to him this will have implications for the identity of the person who died on the Cross.[294] In other words, this would mean that two things could have happened. The first is that the divine must have been severed from the human during the crucifixion or that the divine denied itself and succumbed to death by crucifixion.[295]

Finally, he summarises a number of points about the Trinity and the Uniting in order to show that they do not stand up to a rational analysis.[296] After this, he moves on to critique Christian books and to show why the information in them could not be relied upon as authentic.[297]

Next, we shall focus our attention on his *Critique of Christian Origins* which is divided into two parts. In the first section, he looks at some key Christian doctrines such as the Trinity.[298] In the second, he carefully examines the Christian teaching on the divinity of Jesus and the crucifixion.[299] ‘Abd al-

[292]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 214.
[293]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 214.
[294]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 214.
[295]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 214.
[296]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 214-215.
[297]Thomas, *Doctrines*, 215
[298]‘Al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 1-22.
[299]‘Al-Jabbar, *Origins*. 30-46.
[299]‘Al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 71.

Jabbar credits Muhammad with having miraculous knowledge of Christian doctrine which is reflected in some statements in the Qur'an that relate to the person of Jesus and the doctrine of the Trinity. He judges that such knowledge was sufficient proof that Muhammad was a prophet of God. Next, we consider his refutation of Christianity in his second work, the *Tathbit*.

Firstly, we look at the critique against the divinity of Jesus. 'Abd al-Jabbar refers to the belief of the three Christian sects, namely, the Jacobites, the Nestorians and the Melkites about the divinity of Jesus and counters that by arguing from the standpoint of the Qur'an that Jesus was neither divine nor the third of three deities.[300] According to him these beliefs are rejected in the Qur'an as theologically absurd and incoherent (Q.5:72-73).[301] He points out that there is a seeming contradiction between the belief that there is a God who alone is the Father and the begetter and who has no beginning and a God who is the begotten Son who is neither the Father nor the begetter.[302] However, he notes that whereas the Christians so confidently assert these views, they are unable to explain them rationally.[303]

Secondly, he returns to a theme that he has already noted above, but has not examined in detail. It is about the divinity of Jesus.[304] Here, he argues that Jesus was only a servant of God by citing some biblical statements to buttress this view.[305] He notes that there is sufficient biblical evidence against the view that Jesus is God. For example, Jesus refers to God as his Lord and the Lord of

[300]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 1.
[301]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 1.
[302]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 2.
[303]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 2.
[304]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 32.
[305]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 32.

his disciples (John 20:17), that he was a messenger of God and that as a man, he had come to do the will of God (John 17:3; 8:37; 6:38; 14:24; 12:49 etc).[306]

Thirdly, he argues that Christians have erred in confessing the divinity of Jesus on the basis of what they think is evidence for this view in Matthew 28:19 and John 8:58 respectively.[307] The former mentions the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in what is thought to be a baptismal formula for those who would believe in Jesus. The latter has the statement 'Isa (Jesus) was before Abraham' and has been understood by Christians as a reference to Jesus' pre-existence before he was born by Mary. It is instructive that 'Abd al-Jabbar notes that this is part of the lies that have been told about Jesus.[308]

Fourthly, we consider his critique of the Trinity. He begins by objecting to the view that the Christian confession of the Trinity as consisting of three hypostases with one common substance is comparable to the Muslim confession 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Benevolent'.[309] He contends that there is no similarity between the Muslim confession and the Christian view of the Trinity. In the same way, the Muslim confession does not equate to the Christian view that the three hypostases are meant to express the nature of God as Living, Omnipotent and Knowing.[310]

Fifthly, he accuses Christians of believing in three deities, despite their claim that they believe in one God.[311] He argues that in doing this, Christians set themselves in opposition to Jesus because they neither hold to his teaching

[306]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 33.
[307]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 36.
[308]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 38.
[309]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 3.
[310]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 3.
[311]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 30.

about God nor live according to his practice.[312] In his view, the proof of Christian opposition to the doctrine and practice of Jesus is seen in their teaching that Jesus, the son of Mary, was neither a prophet nor a righteous servant, but is God the Creator and the Provider.[313]

Sixthly, ‘Abd al-Jabbar accuses Christians of misrepresenting the teaching of the Tawrat in its statement in Genesis 1:26 (“God said, ‘We intend to create humankind according to our form like us’”).[314] He points out that this text does not support the plurality of persons in the Christian understanding of God. However, he does not show why Christians err in understanding the text as evidence for the Trinity.[315] It is clear that ‘Abd al-Jabbar’s critique sits well within the Islamic tradition in terms of what it says about Jesus.

‘Abd al-Jabbar’s rejection of the divinity of Jesus and his insistence that Jesus was both a prophet and a messenger of God shows that his thinking was in agreement with Islamic teaching about Jesus. Similarly, his critique also rejects the Trinitarian understanding of God and insists that God alone is the Creator of everything and there is nothing like him in all of creation. This implies that for ‘Abd al-Jabbar, the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity and the Incarnation are theological absurdities. Next, we turn to the work of Ibn Taymiyya.

2.2.4.4 Ibn Taymiyya

The work that concerns us in this analysis is the main work entitled *Al-Jawabal-Sahihli–man baddala din al-Masih* (The Correct Reply to those who have Altered Christ’s Religion) The writing of *al-Jawab* was occasioned by an

[312]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 30.
[313]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 30.
[314]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 38.
[315]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 38.

anonymous treatise sent to Ibn Taymiyya in which questions were raised about the claims of Islam as a revealed religion and the prophetic claims of Muhammad.[316] Originally written by Paul of Antioch (about the 13th century C.E.), this Christian anti-Muslim work was edited by an unknown Cypriot Christian and sent to Ibn Taymiyya.

We shall see later how Ibn Taymiyya argues that the Trinity is the clearest example of Christian innovation for which there is no support in the prophetic tradition.[317] To substantiate his view that the doctrine of the Trinity is an innovation without any support in the prophetic tradition, Ibn Taymiyya then proceeds to argue that the doctrine was formulated on the basis of unclear expressions in the biblical text.[318] By the 'prophetic tradition', which he probably meant the books of the prophets in the Old Testament. In the detailed analysis below, we first consider the arguments against the Trinity, the Incarnation, the relationship between Jesus and Muhammad and finally, the divinity of Jesus.

Firstly, we begin with his critique of the divinity of Jesus. He questions the view that Jesus is the Creator by noting that there is no precedent for such a teaching in the writings of the prophets.[319] On this view, he notes that like the Trinity and the Incarnation the view that Jesus is the creator is both theologically and rationally deficient. In his detailed analysis of the view that Jesus is the creator, he raises a number of interesting points.

Further, he observes that to say that Jesus is the Creator is tantamount to saying that Jesus is both the creator and the son of Adam and Mary at the

[316]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al Jawab Al-Sahih*, ed., trans. Thomas F. Michel (New York: Caravan Books, 1984), 87-95.
[317]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 99-136.
[318]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 120-121.
[319]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 264.

same time.[320] He also argues that the doctrine implies that Jesus is the creator of Adam and Mary by his divinity and the son of Adam and Mary by his humanity at the same time.[321] Further, he observes that Jesus would still not be the creator of Adam and Mary even if he were an attribute of God since the two (God himself and his attributes) are ontologically unlike each other.

Secondly, he objects to the divinity of Jesus by arguing that Jesus could not be a creature of God and the Creator at the same time. According to him, it is not possible for Jesus to be the Creator at the same time when the Qur'an teaches that not only was he created by the word of God "Be!" but also that he is called the 'word of God' in the Qur'an (19:34).[322] It is instructive to mention that this argument is consistent with the belief in Islam that everything is contingent on God apart from God himself who is the cause of everything in the universe. It seems to this writer that this is the basis of the argument that Ibn Taymiyya uses here.

Thirdly, Ibn Taymiyya counters the argument of Paul of Antioch that the Qur'an both supports the divine and human natures of Jesus. According to the latter, the Qur'an describes Jesus as the messenger of God and as a 'word' and 'spirit' from God based on the Christian polemicist's reading of Qur'an 4:171 ("The Christ, Jesus, the son of Mary, is a messenger of God, His word which he sent down upon Mary, and a 'spirit from Him").[323]

Finally, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the view of Paul of Antioch based on Qur'an 4:171 is a misrepresentation of the teaching of the Qur'an about Jesus. He notes that in contrast to the view of Paul of Antioch, the Qur'an repeatedly

[320]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 283.
[321]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 283.
[322]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 283.
[323]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 303.

depicts Jesus as a human messenger with all the characteristics of a human being. Besides, he notes that Jesus was sent to preach monotheism and to call people to the worship of God (Q.5:17; 5:72, 77; 9:30-34; 43:57, 65).[324] Ibn Taymiyya points to Jesus' request for a blessing from God when he spoke in the cradle (Q.19:30-33) and contrasts it with the Christian claim that it is Jesus who bestows the blessing of God upon people including themselves.[325]

Next, we consider his argument against the divinity of Jesus we turn to his arguments against the Trinity. We should observe that his critique of the Trinity is as scathing as the one on the divinity we examined above. His critique of the Trinity focuses on the foundations of the doctrine. This is found in the edited work of Paul of Antioch in response to which, Ibn Taymiyya wrote *al-Jawab* as we noted earlier. He marshals both rational and scriptural proofs to demolish the belief in the Trinity and to show that it was theologically incoherent and rationally absurd. We now look at his critique in more detail.

Firstly, he looks at the baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19-20 thus "Baptise in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit".[326] He prefaces his treatment of the Trinity with a quotation from the work of the edited letter of Paul of Antioch thus: "They claim, 'If the Muslims knew that by our saying Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we only mean by this to affirm the view that God is living and speaking, they would not reject our belief'.[327] He sets out to show its falsehood.

[324]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 304.
[325]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 304.
[326]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 255.
[327]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 255.

According to Ibn Taymiyya, one major noticeable weakness of the Trinity is that the expressions (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are neither appropriate in describing God as both living and speaking nor do the three hypostases fully account for the attributes of God.[328] Further, he contends that the three hypostases do not exhaust the totality of the attributes of God which include existing, knowing, living, acting, speaking etc.[329] Ibn Taymiyya gives reasons to show why the Trinitarian formula is not adequate enough to describe the nature of God. In the first place, the expression would not readily be understood as a formula that is intended to describe the nature of God in the way that Christians have traditionally understood it.[330]

Moreover, he argues that the expressions, 'Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit' and the meaning that Christians have given to them cannot be traced to the teaching of any of the prophets.[331] In view both of the unintelligibility of the expression to non-Christians coupled with the lack of demonstrable proof that it was ever taught by a prophet, he concludes that it has been invented and neither has a scriptural basis nor a rational basis.[332]

Secondly, he argues that the innate intellectual capacity that God has given to human beings to understand is opposed to such ideas.[333] In other words, he contends that if the doctrine were true, it would be possible for people to understand by rational proof since reason and scripture are not mutually exclusive because scripture only reveals what reason is not capable of revealing.

[328]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 255.
[329]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 255.
[330]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 256.
[331]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 256.
[332]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 256.
[333]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 256.

Ibn Taymiyya argues that whilst the Christians insist that the doctrine is beyond rational verification by human reason, it does not make sense to the intellectual ability in every human being to understand ideas as to their intelligibility or otherwise. At this point, he brackets Christians who believe in the Trinity with groups of Muslims who hold similar ideas and describes both of them as innovators.

In defending his view that it is the teaching of the prophets of God alone rather than that of the Christian and Muslim teachers that is infallible with regards to doctrine, he questions the validity of the innovators in either religion, Islam and Christianity.[334] He argues that even if such scholars and teachers in Christianity and Islam were credited with miracles (these reports could be true or false and if true, such miracles could have been performed by magicians and sorcerers), their miracles would still not constitute any strong basis to believe everything that they taught.[335] It would seem that this argument is intended to counter the view of the Christian writer that the Trinity was not an invention of the Christians but a doctrine that is supported by biblical teaching.

Thirdly, Ibn Taymiyya draws a distinction between the prophets whom he was convinced, consistently taught and preached monotheism and other scholars or teachers (he calls them holy men) who taught doctrines that compromised the unity of God.[336] This is meant to counter the Christian view in the Letter of the Cypriot writer that the words of those who were credited with miracles (*al-rusul*) or the apostles (*al-hawariyyin*) are equivalent to the

[334]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 257.
[335]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 258.
[336]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 258.

teaching of the prophets of God.[337] To counter this, he argues that whereas human beings are obliged to put their faith in the teaching of the prophets in relation to what they taught about the unseen and to obey the ethical commands they had given, the same could not be said about the holy men in Christianity and in Islam who are not prophets.[338] He notes that it is possible to assert that God is living and speaking without using the phrase 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.[339]

Fourthly, he explains that the phrase 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' is irrational from the point of view of a Muslim theological interpretation. He first observes that the Christian groups (Melkites, Jacobites and Nestorians) who believed that the formulation is traced back to Jesus' teaching in the gospels disagree about its meaning.[340] The disagreements among the different Christian groups relate to what the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as used in the phrase under discussion stand for. For example, the Father has variously been referring to as meaning Existence/Goodness, the Son has meant Word/Knowledge, Judge and the Holy Spirit is Life,/Power/All-powerful.[341]

Fifthly, he observes that all the Christian groups (sects) are agreed that all the attributes of God are included in this formulation.[342] This is in spite of the fact that the Christian sects have very different interpretations of the meaning of the formula as we have noted above. Ibn Taymiyya shows his extensive knowledge of Christian doctrine when he notes that the view of Arius (d. 336 C.E.) about the three hypostases (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) is different

[337]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 258.
[338]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 258.
[339]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 258.
[340]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 258.
[341]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 258.
[342]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 258-259.

from the teaching of the various Christian sects that we considered above. He notes that Arius argued that Jesus was a servant of God like the prophets who preceded him.[343]

We should briefly note that Arius did not hold the view as Ibn Taymiyya has argued that Jesus was one of the messengers of God. Rather, Arius argued at the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. that the Son was the first and the greatest of all that God had created, he was closer to God than all others and that the rest of creation could only relate to God through the Son. However, faced with the dilemma of confessing the divinity of Jesus and the belief that there was only one God, he drew a distinction between the Father and Son.

Ibn Taymiyya buttresses his argument against the divinity of Jesus by referring to the theology of Arius on the subject. He observes that Arius believed that whereas the Father was not created and had always been in existence, the Son was created. Hence, he argued that there was a time when the Son was not. Arius subordinated the Son whom he believed to be a created being who did not have the same essence as the Father. In the light of this summary of Arius' understanding of the divinity of Jesus, it is clear that while he believed that Jesus was not divine in the sense in which the term was used and is still being used today, he did not believe that Jesus was a servant of God like the rest of the messengers (prophets) of God.

Sixthly, in relation to what he saw to be the theological absurdity of the Trinity, Ibn Taymiyya notes that the distinction between Jesus' divine nature and his human nature does not resolve the inherent problem.[344] According to

[343]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 259.
[344]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 260.

him, the Christian claim that Mary is the mother of Jesus' human nature and God is the Father of Jesus' divine nature does not prove that the doctrine is problematic.[345] In any case, even if the begetting of Jesus were explained differently as an act that is not analogous to the way humans beget (he calls this intellectual begetting) as some Christians have suggested, it will still be the case that God is the Father of Jesus according to his divine nature.[346] By reason of this, Mary who is the mother of Jesus' human nature would then be the wife of God who is the Father of Jesus' divine nature.[347]

Seventh, Ibn Taymiyya will have to grapple with the meaning of the statement "Baptize in the name of the Father, and the son and the Holy Spirit" in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity as to whether it can be traced to the teaching of Jesus. It is how he understands the expression that is going to concern us here. However, his interpretation of the expression is based on the caveat that both Jesus and the prophets, where prophets here are to be distinguished from both the Christian scholars and the apostles of Jesus for whose teaching one cannot claim infallibility.[348]

According to him, the statement referring to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that we have been seeking to understand its meaning must have a correct meaning if it was made by him (Jesus).[349] He appears to concede albeit unwillingly that the statement is traceable to Jesus but once more he rejects the Christian interpretation on the basis that it is both contradicted by the Qur'an and the earlier sacred books.[350] It is worth pointing out that the caveat that

[345]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 260.
[346]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 260.
[347]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 260.
[348]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[349]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[350]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.

guides Ibn Taymiyya's approach is that the interpretation of the statement if indeed it can be traced to Jesus, has to be consistent with the rest of Jesus' teaching.[351] To this end, he notes that Jesus refers to God as his Father in 'their books' (this phrase may be a way of distinguishing the New Testament books from the Old Testament books) and also calls the servants of God, his sons.[352] Also, without being specific as to the exact book, he points out that God refers to Israel collectively in the Torah as his son ("You are my first-born son") and depicts David as God's son and beloved.[353] Likewise, in the gospel Jesus refers to God as his Father and the Father of his followers/apostles.[354]

On the basis of the cumulative evidence we noted in the preceding paragraph regarding the meaning of 'Father' and 'Son' in the statement under consideration, he posits that by 'Father' is meant the 'Lord' as the merciful and by 'Son' is meant Christ as the one whom God has reared.[355] With regards to the Holy Spirit, he observes that the expression is found in numerous places in the books they possess.[356]

Again, it would seem that this is a reference to the books of the New Testament which by this time were available to both Christians and Muslims in his day. Although he has not attempted to tell his readers what 'Holy Spirit' means, he is categorical that it does not mean the 'life of God' as the Christians confessed since they themselves (the Christians) believed that the Holy Spirit

[351]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[352]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[353]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[354]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[355]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[356]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.

took up residence in such persons as Abraham, Moses, David and other holy people.[357]

Eighth, he argues that both the Qur'an and the prophetic literature contradict the Christian understanding of the expression. In the former, Jesus is said to have been supported in his mission by the Holy Spirit (Qur'an 2: 87; 2: 253; 5:110).[358] In the latter, Muhammad is reported to have made two statements about the Holy Spirit akin to the Qur'anic use of the expression.[359]

Given the examples we have just cited, Ibn Taymiyya concludes that by Holy Spirit is meant the holy angel Jibril (Gabriel) or the revelation, guidance and support that God sends down with or without the mediation of Jibril.[360] Further, after analyzing the statement "Baptize in the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit" from the standpoint of the Bible, the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition in Islam, Ibn Taymiyya questions the validity of the traditional meaning of 'Holy Spirit' as representing the 'life of God'.[361]

According to him, the correct meaning of the statement is that the people were commanded to believe in God, his prophet (he means Jesus) and in the angel who brought down the revelation given to him.[362] Thus, the statement "Baptize in the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit" means that the people were commanded to believe in God, his angels, books and messengers.[363]

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[357]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[358]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[359]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[360] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 261.
[361] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.
[362] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.
[363] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.

It would seem that Ibn Taymiyya has explained the expression "Baptize in the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit" in a way that agrees with Islamic theology given the significance it gives to belief in God, his angels, his prophets/messengers and the revealed books. One cannot resist the temptation of saying that this exegesis looks eccentric and it is doubtful whether this novel meaning of the formula would have been seen to be necessary during Christian baptism.

What is more, the statement has not been understood in this way by Christians since earliest times. Besides, as the analysis has shown, Ibn Taymiyya's Christian contemporaries never gave such an interpretation to the expression. If anything, Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation is novel and does not take into account the reception history of the statement or expression in Christian exegesis. Yet, Ibn Taymiyya contends that his interpretation is superior to the traditional Christian understanding of the statement because it is both rational and agrees with the teaching of the Qur'an.[364]

Ironically, however, Ibn Taymiyya justifies his exegesis and raises questions about the traditional meaning of the statement, namely, that it is the three persons of the Trinity that are meant by pointing out what he sees as the flaws of Christian interpretation of the biblical text.[365] He first notes that his exegesis is not allegorical and that it reflects the intended meaning of Jesus and the rest of the prophets, the Christian interpretation that the Son is begotten of God as the knowledge or the word of God has no support in the biblical prophetic tradition.[366]

[364]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.
[365]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.
[366]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.

Ibn Taymiyya also argues that the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit is neither supported by the language and custom of Jesus himself nor by the language and practice of any of the prophets.[367] The import of his argument is that Christians have corrupted the correct meanings of the books of God in the sense that they have come up with meanings that are contrary both to reason and religion.[368] For example, he alleges that the Christian exegetes are guilty of bad exegesis when they make 'father' and 'son' to be equivalent words.[369] In other words, when the Christians argue that the two words carry different meanings throughout the Bible as opposed to the view that they are univocal terms they are not doing good exegesis.[370]

Ninth, he focuses on the divine hypostases and aims to offer both a theological and rational refutation as we have already seen with other Christian beliefs that we have already considered. He questions why the Christians hold one Essence and confess three entities which they associate with the three attributes of living (Father), speaking (Son/Word) and life (Holy Spirit) when the names of God are numerous as is taught in the Qur'an (59:22-24; 7:180; 17:110; 20:1-8).[371] He supports this by referring to a sound *hadith* that reports a saying of Muhammad in which he mentioned that God has ninety-nine names.[372] In view of the numerous names of God we noted above, he accuses the Christians of falsehood for limiting the names to just three.[373] He also argues that the view that it the Father who is the origin of the other two,

[367]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.
[368]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.
[369]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262.
[370]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 262-263.
[371]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 267.
[372]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 267.
[373]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 267.

namely, speech (Son/Word) and life (Holy Spirit) implies that the Father existed before them.[374]

Hitherto, Ibn Taymiyya has been preoccupied with demonstrating that the view that the baptismal formula 'Baptize in the name of the Father, and the son and the Holy Spirit' is the theological basis for the belief in the Trinity is problematic. He has done this by arguing that such an interpretation does not commend itself to reason. Besides, it is not known that such a belief was taught by any of the prophets and messengers of God. So far, he has argued that the Trinity is neither scriptural nor rational.

Next, Ibn Taymiyya looks at what it means to say that Jesus is the Son, God is the Father and Mary is the mother of Jesus. Firstly, he points out that many Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God in the same way as a human being may be said to have a son.[375] Secondly, he also alleges that many Christians believe, even if they do not verbalise it, that Mary is the wife of God because to give birth implies that one has a spouse.[376] He supports this view with divine revelation (Qur'an 6: 102) as proof that it is a theological absurdity to say that God has a son ("Creator of the heavens and the earth from nothingness how could he have a son when he has no mate? He created all things and has knowledge of all things").

Clearly, Ibn Taymiyya is seeking to compel his Christian interlocutors in his critique to adduce biblical support for the view that 'son' and 'Holy Spirit' are used to refer to the 'speech' and the 'life' of God.[377] He notes that the word 'son' is used consistently in the prophetic books to refer to something

[374]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 267.
[375]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 260.
[376]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 260.
[377]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 263.

that is created.[378] In the same way, he argues that the use of 'Holy Spirit' as an attribute of God that subsists in him has no precedent in the prophetic writings.[379]

Ibn Taymiyya is adamant that the Christian interpretation of the statement "Baptize in the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit" is without any basis both rationally and scripturally. To be sure, he contends that his exegesis is in harmony with the language of the Christians and the books they possess in contrast to their own exegesis.[380] He therefore accuses Christians of perpetrating a lie against God by saying that their doctrine is based on the teaching of the books they possess.[381]

The other key doctrine that Ibn Taymiyya examines in *al-Jawab* is the doctrine of the Incarnation. He treats the Incarnation under the heading 'indwelling of God in Christ' (*hulul*) when reacting to the view by Paul of Antioch that God manifested himself as a man (Jesus Christ) because humankind is the most exalted of the entire creation of God.[382]

Firstly, Ibn Taymiyya clarifies the nature of the indwelling.[383] He points out that if by the 'indwelling of God' (*hulul*) is meant the presence of God's light and guidance, his knowledge and the remembrance of his name and the worship of him in Jesus, that is perfectly acceptable.[384] This is possible in the case of human beings (Abraham, Moses and Muhammad) and in the case of the houses in which the name of God is remembered.[385]

[378]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 263.
[379]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 263.
[380]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 263.
[381]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 263.
[382]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 288.
[383]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 288.
[384]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 288.
[385]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 288.

Secondly, however, he argues that if by 'indwelling' the Christians meant that the essence of God united itself with a human being and thereby assumed two natures (divine and human), it is not possible for God to do so.[386] He contrasts this understanding of indwelling with intellective representation (Q.6:3 and 30:28) in which God is said to remain in the hearts of his people.[387] He illustrates the theological soundness of intellective representation as opposed to general *hulul* or general union with a number of examples.

We shall presently refer to only two examples of intellective representation in order to illustrate Ibn Taymiyya's argument above. It is written in a sound *hadith* that is traced to Muhammad thus "My servant was sick and did not come to Me for treatment". The servant says "O Lord, how can I come to you when you Lord of the universe?" He says, "If you knew that My servant was sick and you came to him you would find Me with him."[388]

Furthermore, he argues on the basis of another sound *hadith* which reads "In Me he hears, in Me he sees, in Me he walks. If he asks of Me I will give him, if he seeks My protection I will guard him. I have not hesitated to do anything I might do (for him), like my hesitation to take the spirit of my believing servant. He dislikes death, and I dislike hurting him."[389] The second example is especially noteworthy as Ibn Taymiyya has suggested that it may have been used as an argument against those who believed in a general union of the divine essence and other groups like the Christians.[390]

We have looked at his critique of the divinity of Jesus, his interpretation of the traditional baptismal formula in Matthew 28: 19. It is clear that while he

[386]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 288.
[387]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 288-289.
[388]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 289-290.
[389]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 289-290.
[390]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 289-290.

has buttressed his critique with biblical passages, there is nothing that is novel about his argumentation. The major theological arguments that he has deployed in *al-Jawab* against Christianity were already part of the common theological fund in the Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition.

It is worth pointing out that his predecessors including Abu ‘Isa al-Warraq and ‘Abd al-Jabbar, whose works we have examined above, had used many of the key arguments that are raised in his work. We should note that overall, his critique sits well within the Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition about Jesus. The second major part of the chapter to which we now turn our attention is the death of Jesus.

2.3 The crucifixion and the death of Jesus

Up to this point, we have examined the divinity of Jesus from the perspective of the pre-modern sources. Now, we focus on the death of Jesus, a subject that has been a staple in Muslim-Christian dialogue since earliest times. It is therefore not surprising that it has been addressed in all the pre-modern sources that will be the focus of our examination in this section using a variety of arguments all of which are meant to deny the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion.

In the analysis below, our primary task will be to examine what the sources say about the death of Jesus. Here, as with the previous analysis, the pre-modern sources that concern us are the Qur’an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the exegetical tradition *(tafsir*) and the early Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition.

As a preliminary comment, we should mention that while there are texts in the Qur’an that refer to the death of Jesus (19:33; 3:55; 5:17; 117), it is the

two verses in Qur'an 4:157-158 that are at the centre of the debate about whether Jesus died a literal death by means of crucifixion or his death was apparent. It is interesting that in interpreting the same verses (Q.4: 157-158) scholars have reached different conclusions.

We should observe that while some scholars and exegetes have argued that the verses (Q. 4: 157-158) affirm the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion, others have concluded that the verses deny the death of Jesus. In the analysis that follows, we shall examine the subject from the perspective of each of the early sources. We begin with the Qur'an as it the starting point for our understanding of Islamic teaching on any theological subject.

2.3.1 The Qur'an

Firstly, we begin with four direct and indirect references to the death of Jesus. In his work on the subject, Lawson has noted that there are three verses in the Qur'an in which there are clear references to the death of Jesus (19:33; 3:55 and 5:117).[391] There is also an indirect reference to the death of Jesus in Qur'an 5: 17. However, the clearest reference to the death of Jesus is Qur'an 4:157-158 which will be central to our analysis as we seek to find out whether the Qur'an asserts or denies the death of Jesus by crucifixion.

It is worth noting that Muslim exegetes have generally read Qur'an 19:33 as futuristic, namely that it refers to Jesus' death after his return to the earth prior both to the Day of Judgement and the Day of Resurrection.[392] Further, it has been argued that the death of Jesus to which the text refers is 'natural death' which is the lot of every human being. The view that the verse refers to Jesus dying a natural death as other human beings is the polar opposite

[391]Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 28.
[392]Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 28.

of the view that Jesus died as a direct consequence of crucifixion on the cross. It is instructive to note that the view that Jesus died by crucifixion has been the theological bone of contention between Muslims and Christians throughout the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Secondly, we consider Qur'an 3:55 and 5: 117 have been rejected as references to the death of Jesus. It has been argued that they do not mean that Jesus died as the direct outcome of his crucifixion. The failure of the exegetes to read these verses as references to the physical death of Jesus is in spite of the fact that they contain a word that is derived from the root *w-f-y* which in other contexts connotes physical death.[393] According to Lawson, the word that is derived from the root *w-f-y* in Qur'an 3:55 appears as the active participle of the Vth form with the possessive second person pronominal suffix *mutawffika* and in Qur'an 5:117 as the second person perfect verb with the objective first person ligature *tawaffaytani*.[394]

Thirdly, we consider a text which is an indirect references to the death of Jesus (Q. 5:17). The phrase in the verse i.e. 'to destroy' translates the Arabic *yuhlika* sixty-eight other instances, derives from the Arabic root *h-l-k*.[395] In both its IVth and first forms, the root means many things including 'to ruin, destroy' and 'to perish, die, be annihilated' respectively.[396]

Despite the fact that a strong case could be made for the death of Jesus in this text (Q.5:17), an important caveat is to understand that the verse aims to assert the humanity of Jesus in opposition to any ideas of his divinity. For this reason, the verse is not a proof-text that Jesus did die by crucifixion as it does

[393]Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 29.
[394]Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 29.
[395]Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 31-32.
[396]Lawson, *The Crucifixion*, 31.

not deal with this subject *per se*. These texts we have considered are those that indirectly refer to the death of Jesus in the Qur'an.

Fourthly, we turn our attention to the text (Q. 4:157-158) which directly refers to the crucifixion of Jesus and has been at the centre of the debate about whether the Qur'an does assert or deny the death of Jesus by crucifixion. It is worthwhile spending time on some key words and roots in the passage that will illuminate our understanding. The first root that concerns us is *s-l-b* ('to crucify') occurs seven times in the Qur'an (including 12:41; 7:124; 20:71; 26:49; 5:33) and in five cases besides Q. 4:157, it is used as a verb to denote 'to crucify'.[397] The five uses of the verb that are illustrative of this are the fate of one of the people who were in prison with Joseph (12:41), the threat of Pharoah to his magicians to interpret his dream (7:124; 20:71 and 26:49) and the punishment that is meted out to those who oppose God and his Muhammad (5:33).[398]

It is not difficult to notice from the texts above that the verb which derives from the root *s-l-b* denotes the punishment of death by crucifixion as the brief analysis above has shown. The second is the phrase *shubbiha lahum* which is one of the most difficult ideas in the text under discussion. It therefore merits our careful consideration. The root from which the above phrase is derived is *sh-b-h*. Lawson has pointed out that although some form of the root *sh-b-h* occurs in the Qur'an (such as 2:70; 3:7; 13:16; 2:118) the most common meaning is a function of the III–form verbal usage which means 'to be similar or nearly identical to the point of confusion of true identity'.

[397]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 31.
[398]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 31.

Three examples of the above meaning are found in Q.2: 70 ("Lo! Cows are much alike to us"), Qur'an 2:118 ("Their hearts are all alike") and Qur'an 13:16 ("Or assign they unto God partners who created the like of His creation (which they made and His creation) seemed alike to them. Lawson has pointed that the root *sh-b-h* also appears as an adverbial VIth- form active participle in the Qur'an.[399] Two texts in which the root is used in this way are Q.2:25 ("And it is given to them in resemblance") and Qur'an 6:141 ("He it is who produceth gardens trellised and untrellised, and the date-palm, and crops of diverse flavour, and the olive and the pomegranate, like and unlike").[400]

The third phrase in Qur'an 4: 157 that is worth considering is 'but it appeared so unto them'.[401] Lawson has noted that the phrase represents the single usage of this form of the root in the Qur'an.[402]As a classic case of *hapax legomenon*, the form of the root presents difficulties in translation as is evident in the different translations of the verse used by translators. For this verse, Arberry has 'only a likeness of that was shown to them', Bell has 'but he was counterfeited for them', Sale has 'but he was represented by one in his likeness', 'Abd al-Haleem has 'they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them, those who disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition, they certainly did not kill him, God raised him up to Himself. God is almighty and wise'.[403]

Fourthly, there is another key word in the verse under discussion (4:157) that is worth looking at closely. It is the word *zann* which derives from

[399]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 32.
[400]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 32.
[401]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 33.
[402]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 33.
[403]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 33.

the root *z-n-n* ('conjecture', 'fancy').[404] The word *zann* occurs many times in the Qur'an and is translated variously as 'thought', 'conjecture', 'opinion', 'suspicion' and 'guess' as in such texts as Qur'an 3:15; 10:60; 48:6, 12; 4: 157; 10:36.[405] It has been suggested that the word is understood in contrast to '*ilm* which is translated as 'knowing', 'knowledge'.[406] The fifth root which appears in Qur'an 4: 157 is *y-q-n*. Its noun form which concerns us is another antonym of *zann* which we looked at in the preceding paragraph. Although the noun form of the root *y-q-n* could have a variety of meanings, it is normally translated as 'certainty'.[407]

Finally, we look at the root *r-f-*' that appears both as a noun and a verb many times in the Qur'an. In its verbal usage (12:100; 13:2; 88:18), it has the idea of lifting something from a surface. In its usage as a noun (2: 253; 6:175; 43:32; 94:4; 4:158), it has the idea of the exalting of a person/thing to a rank or value.[408] It is instructive that the English Muslim translator, Pickthall translates 3:55 as 'And We raised Him to a high station'.[409]

Pickthall's translation does suggest that the raising of Jesus in Qur'an 4:158 may not imply that he was raised alive to God after the crucifixion. It is clear from the analysis so far that the correct meaning of Qur'an 4: 157-158 in relation to the death of Jesus is problematic and is fraught with many exegetical difficulties. For this reason, the traditional interpretation that these verses deny the death of Jesus by crucifixion is not that straightforward. As Lawson has noted, the verses have been read differently by both Muslim and

[404]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 36.
[405]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 36.
[406]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 36.
[407]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 37.
[408]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 38.
[409]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 38.

non-Muslim exegetes with different conclusions regarding whether Jesus did die or did not die.[410]

In view of the exegetical difficulties associated with the verses above, it would seem that the verses do not have a monolithic meaning that either denies or asserts the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion. However, rightly or wrongly, majority of Muslims hold that Jesus did not die by crucifixion on a Cross but remains alive with God in a spiritual realm of existence and will descend to the earth at the end of time and before the Day of Judgement. It is instructive to note that the above interpretation has become the standard meaning of the verse. It will be interesting to see how the authors of the Sunni and Ahmadi works that are examined in Chapter 4 of the thesis interpret the verses and the arguments they adduce for their view of the death of Jesus by crucifixion. It is to the prophetic tradition that we turn next.

2.3.2 The prophetic tradition (*hadith*)

It is worth pointing out at the outset that the concerns that occasioned the prophetic tradition were mainly about the needs of the fledgling community of Muslims after the death of Muhammad. We should call attention to the fact that while looking at the divinity of Jesus and the associated beliefs (Trinity, Incarnation, Jesus as the son of God) in the prophetic tradition earlier, we pointed out that the immediate concern of that tradition was to provide the example and practice of Muhammad for the fledgling Muslim community in Medina. We should therefore understand the paucity of information about the crucifixion and the death of Jesus in the prophetic tradition in the light of the immediate needs of the Muslim community in Medina.

[410]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 2.

In this brief analysis of the prophetic tradition in relation to the death of Jesus, we look at two areas which while not addressing the death of Jesus, relate some information that is relevant to the subject. This information is about the description of the appearance of Jesus when he returns to the earth again and some of the things he will do when he returns that are attributed to Muhammad.[411] In view of the paucity of material in the prophetic tradition on the crucifixion of Jesus, we shall limit our examination to these two areas that we have mentioned above.

Firstly, we begin with the reports about the appearance of Jesus when he returns to the earth the second time. According to a report that is in the collections made by Muslim and attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, Jesus will descend on the top of 'white minaret in Damascus'.[412] Afterwards, Jesus will pursue the anti-Christ (*al-Dajjal* in Arabic) and kill him.[413] Also, in two traditions in Bukhari and Muslim about the physical appearance of Jesus when he returns to the earth again, Jesus is described is described as beautiful in comparison to the anti-Christ (*al-Dajjal*) who is described as having one eye.[414]

Secondly, in traditions in both Bukhari and Muslim that are attributed to Muhammad, there are certain things that Jesus will do when he returns a second time to the earth.[415] Among these are (1) he will be a just ruler (2) he will break crosses and kill pigs, abolish the tax that non-Muslims under Muslim rule pay and (3) the payment of *zakat* (alms-giving for the benefit of the poor will be suspended.[416] In both Muslim and Bukhari, the appearance of

[411]Leirvik, *Images*, 38-41.
[412]Leirvik, *Images*, 38-39.
[413]Leirvik, *Images*, 39.
[414]Leirvik, *Images*, 39.
[415]Leirvik, *Images*, 39.
[416]Leirvik, *Images*, 39.

Jesus on earth will usher in a period of peace and material abundance in which money will be abundant and hatred and jealousy will both cease.[417]

2.3.3 The exegetical tradition (*tafsir*)

Compared to the prophetic tradition we just examined above, the exegetical tradition has more information on the death of Jesus by crucifixion. The material on the death of Jesus in the exegetical tradition is larger and more detailed than that which is found in the Qur'an itself. It is instructive to note that this is so because the exegetical tradition was not only dealing with what the Qur'an said about the death of Jesus, but was also responding to Christian views expressed in polemical works written by Christian writers. This is the reason why there is so much Christian material in the exegetical tradition about the interpretation of Qur'an 4: 157-158.

Lawson has examined the material in the exegetical tradition in three parts namely the pre-Tabari *tafsir*; the classical and medieval *tafsir* (he dates it from 923-1505 C.E.) and the modern developments of the crucifixion and death of Jesus. We find this schema helpful and simple and have adapted it in the analysis below. However, we shall restrict our analysis to the first two divisions in Lawson's schema because the thesis does not cover the exegetical tradition in its entirety. Hence, the modern developments of Muslim *tafsir* on the crucifixion and death of Jesus which is the third division in the schema used by Lawson will not be explored in this analysis. The analysis below aims to find out whether Qur'an 4: 157-158 asserts or denies the death of Jesus by crucifixion.

[417]Leirvik, *Images*, 39.

Firstly, we look at the material on the death of Jesus in the pre-Tabari *tafsir* and then, the classical and medieval *tafsir*. First, we begin with the pre-Tabari *tafsir* in relation to what it says about Qur'an 4:157-158 in relation to the crucifixion and death of Jesus. The exegetes who addressed the crucifixion question in relation to Qur'an 4: 157-158 agree that someone was crucified but few agree on the identity of the victim.[418] We should note that all the exegetes agree that the victim who died was not Jesus.[419]

Further, having rejected that it was Jesus who died as we saw above, the exegetes advanced the 'substitution hypothesis' to account for their view that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus on the cross.[420] The hypothesis subdivides into two namely 'voluntary substitution' and 'punishment substitution'.[421] The latter is also referred to as 'retributive substitution'. Two exegetes who were active in the pre-Tabari *tafsir* period are worth mentioning here. They are Ibn Qutayba (d. 889 C.E.) and Ja'far Ibn Muhammad Al-Sadiq (d.765 C.E.) whose exegesis of the verses under discussion raise questions about the basis of the traditional interpretation namely that Jesus did not die by crucifixion.

Ibn Qutayba's work, *Kitab tafsir gharib al-Qur'an* above deals with the difficult texts in the Qur'an.[422] He exegetes Qur'an 4:157 focusing on '*yaqnan*' rather than via '*shubbiha*' or '*rafa-a*'.[423] Using the obscure word '*yaqnan*' (which can be translated as 'certainty') in the text contrary to the established exegetical practice then prevalent, he argues that the word in the text means

[418]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 66.
[419]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 66.
[420]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 67.
[421]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 67.
[422]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 65.
[423]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 65.

that the Jews did not have 'absolute certain knowledge' that they had killed Jesus.

It seems from the exegesis used by Ibn Qutayba above that the uncertainty is not about the death of Jesus. Rather, it is about the 'certainty of the knowledge' of the Jews that they had killed Jesus. Thus, his view in his *tafsir* is that the text does not deny that Jesus died. Although Ja'far Ibn Muhammad Al-Sadiq belonged to the Shi'a, he was also regarded by Sunnis as a very learned scholar. He rejects the substitution hypothesis and advances the view that the text (Q. 4: 157-158) means that Jesus died and was spiritually exalted.[424] In other words, Ja'far Ibn Muhammad Al-Sadiq's view is that Jesus was not raised while he was alive.[425] Rather, the raising of Jesus in Qur'an 4:157-158 does not imply being raised to God alive but that he was raised to a 'throne of intimacy' with God.[426]

Secondly, we focus on the classical and medieval *tafsir* which covers the period from 923-1505 C.E.[427] Two things characterise this period with respect to the crucifixion and the death of Jesus on the basis of what is thought to be taught in Qur'an 4: 157-158. The first is that many of the *tafsirs* support the substitution hypothesis.[428] The second is that there are exceptions to this. In other words, *tafsirs* emerged within this period that rejected the traditional interpretation of the text that posited that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus.[429] Two examples of classical and medieval *tafsirs* will help to

[424]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 58.
[425]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 58.
[426]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 58.
[427]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 68.
[428]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 68.
[429]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 68.

explain this new development in *tafsir* with regards to the crucifixion and the death of Jesus.

The first is the work of the influential scholar, al-Qasim ibn Ibrahim al-Rassi (d. 860 C.E.). He believed in the historicity of the crucifixion, he taught that the Qur'an did not deny the historicity both of the crucifixion and the death of Jesus.[430] It is important to point out that he explained the crucifixion as a 'ransom to God'.[431] The second example is the 'Brethren of Purity' whose theology was the result of an intellectual synthesis of Greek philosophy and Islamic scripture.[432] Without going into great detail, the 'Brethren of Purity' taught that it was Jesus who was arrested, tortured and crucified on the Cross.[433] However, they believed that it was the 'bodily' or 'human' part of Jesus that was crucified and died on the Cross.[434]

Two views have emerged in our analysis of the *tafsir* in relation to the meaning of Qur'an 4:157-158.The first, which has become the popular view in Islam is that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus on the cross. This is explained as a miracle that God used in order to save Jesus from dying by crucifixion on the cross. The second view, which is supported by a minority of exegetes in the Islamic tradition, holds that it was Jesus, rather than a substitute, who died on the Cross.[435]

Given the analysis of the exegetical tradition in relation to what it says about the death of Jesus with special reference to the meaning of Qur'an 4:157-158, there seems to this researcher to be serious exegetical and historical

[430]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 77.
[431]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 77.
[432]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 85.
[433]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 86.
[434]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 86.
[435]Lawson, *Crucifixion*, 68.

difficulties associated with the 'substitution hypothesis' which posits that someone other than Jesus himself died by crucifixion.

Despite both the exegetical and historical difficulties we noted above in relation to the 'substitution hypothesis', majority of Muslims believe that Jesus did not die by crucifixion. According to many Muslims, especially Sunni and Shia, Jesus exists in spiritual form somewhere, pending the period just preceding the Day of Judgement to return to the earth. Next, we turn our attention to the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition.

We shall look at the works of two scholars and examine the arguments they have made for or against the view that Jesus died literally by means of crucifixion. Our aim here as in the above analysis, is to find out what Qur'an 4: 157-158 says about the death of Jesus by crucifixion.

2.3.4 The pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition

Like the divinity of Jesus and its associated doctrines which we explored above, the crucifixion of Jesus was one of the subjects on which early Muslim scholars and theologians published volumes of anti-Christian polemical works. We noted in Chapter 1 in connection with the historical contexts of the early sources that the Muslim anti-Christian polemical treatises that were published by Muslim scholars in medieval times were written at responses to Christian anti-Muslim polemical treatises that sought to explain Christian doctrine in ways that were intelligible and meaningful to Muslims.

In the detailed analysis below, we shall see how 'Abd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya supported their arguments against the literal death of Jesus as they did against his divinity and the cognate beliefs with biblical arguments that are not mentioned in the Qur'an itself. This implies that they like other medieval

Muslim polemicists were writing at a time that Muslims had access not only to the sources of Christian doctrine but also to the treatises that were written by Christian scholars.

2.3.4.1 ‘Abd al-Jabbar

We first examined the work of ‘Abd al-Jabbar in relation to the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation above. Here, we focus on his critique of the crucifixion of Jesus. Both critiques of the divinity and the crucifixion of Jesus are treated in his *Christian Origins*. It is in the second part of his *Christian Origins* that he examined the crucifixion of Jesus by offering a two-pronged argumentation. We begin with the objection to the literal death of Jesus which argues that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus.

Firstly, ‘Abd al-Jabbar examines the veracity of the crucifixion on the basis that it was only apparent to them which corresponds to the Qur’anic statement “so it was made to appear to them” (Arabic: *shubbiha lahum*) as found in what we have described in Chapter 4 as the so-called denial verses (Qur’an 4:157-158). His aim seems to justify what he thought was the correct interpretation of the text we have referred to above, namely that the Qur’an denies the literal death of Jesus through crucifixion.

Secondly, he introduces a literary technique via which he reads the gospel accounts of the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus with suspicion. Like many polemicists before him, ‘Abd al-Jabbar advances the view that it was the wrong person who was arrested, tried and was crucified on the cross. His first argument that Jesus did not die by crucifixion in treated in his work under the

title the 'Passion according to Jews and Christians'.[436] The second version of the crucifixion that he is willing to accept that a victim died on the cross but the victim was not Jesus is treated under the heading the 'Authentic Passion account'.[437]

Thirdly, he begins with what he describes as the Jewish and Christian account of the passion.[438] In order to do this, 'Abd al-Jabbar summarises the gospel accounts about the arrest of Jesus.[439] Among other things, he observes that Jesus was delivered by Pilate the Roman to the Jews because of the complaints of the latter.[440] According to him, Jesus is put on a donkey and made to face its rear by the Jews, made a crown of thorns for him and assaulted him from behind and in front of him till such time that he was thirsty and asked for water.[441] Jesus is then is brought before Pilate the next day and flogged before finally crucified on the wood.[442]

Fourthly, he juxtaposes what he has already described as the Christian account of the passion of Jesus with the claim of Muhammad and his followers which may be a reference to Qur'an 4:157-158 which he understands as a text that Jesus died by crucifixion.[443] 'Abd al-Jabbar then draws the attention of his readers to what he sees as the denial of the crucifixion in the Qur'an, arguing that the event was only apparent.[444] According to him, Muhammad said that the

[436]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*. 46.
[437]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 71.
[438]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 46.
[439]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 47.
[440]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 46.
[441]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 47.
[442]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 47.
[443]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 48.
[444]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 48.

Jews and the Christians saw the crucifixion but it was only a supposition to them.[445]

Fifthly, he argues that since Muhammad was not educated, the only source from which he could have known that Jesus was not crucified was through revelation.[446] He notes that although Muhammad was concerned to live in harmony with the Jews and the Christians, he refuted their views regarding the death of Jesus and declared them to be liars.[447]

'Abd al-Jabbar argues that it would have been easier for Muhammad to have accepted the claim of the Jews and the Christians that Jesus did die by crucifixion for two reasons. In the first place, Muhammad would have been fearful and intimidated to assert that Jesus did not die because if it turned out to be as the Jews and the Christians had claimed, he (Muhammad) would lose his followers.[448] Apart from this, it would strengthen his case against the Christians who believed that Jesus was both their god and their Lord.[449] In this case, Muhammad would let them see the absurdity in their god and Lord being arrested, crucified and killed at the hands of his enemies.[450]

Sixthly, 'Abd al-Jabbar defends his view that Muhammad's account of the crucifixion is valid on the basis of two more reasons. The first reason is that in spite of the fact that Muslims had repeatedly heard from Christians that Jesus was crucified, they were never convinced that it happened as they were told. In other words, the fact that Muslims remained sceptical about the

[445]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 48.
[446]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 48.
[447]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 48.
[448]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 49.
[449]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 49.
[450]'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 49.

historicity of the death of Jesus by crucifixion means that the Christian account was a fabrication.

According to ‘Abd al-Jabbar, the Muslims would have been convinced of the truth of the Christian account the same way that they themselves were convinced if it was true.[451] Another reason for the validity of Muhammad’s account of the crucifixion and the death of Jesus is that many people would have both refused to follow him and accepted his message if what he said about the event was false. In other words, people would have told him that he was a liar for saying that Jesus was not crucified if what he said was a falsehood.[452] He argues that the fact that people recognised the prophetic claims of Muhammad and followed him meant that what he said about the crucifixion was valid compared to what the Jews and the Christians believed.[453]

Seventh, we look at ‘Abd al-Jabbar’s ‘Authentic Passion Account’, on the basis of which he argues that Jesus was neither crucified nor killed.[454] He notes that one account of the Passion is what the Christians and the Jews have relied on.[455] Essentially, the authentic account of the passion that he alludes to is actually the account in the gospels. He argues that if the Christians went back to the four gospels and depended on the accounts there, they would discover that it was not Jesus who was crucified.[456]

It is worth observing that ‘Abd al-Jabbar has not referred once to a biblical text in the gospels as the grounds for the lack of certainty that it was Jesus who was crucified. In view of this, one wonders how this view can be

[451]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 50.
[452]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 63
[453]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 64
[454]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 71
[455] ‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 71-72.
[456]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 71-72

substantiated. It is true that each gospel writer relates the account of the arrest, trial, crucifixion etc of Jesus in ways that reflect who their readers were, yet no strong case can be made that their accounts prove that it was another person other than Jesus who was arrested.

It is instructive to note that in contrast to ‘Abd al-Jabbar’s account, all the gospel writers are agreed that it was Jesus who was arrested. Given the lack of any shred of evidence in the gospel accounts to suggest that it was another person other than Jesus who was arrested as we have just noted, ‘Abd al-Jabbar argues that neither the Jews nor the guards who were authorised to arrest Jesus knew him personally.[457]

Eighth, he explains the role played by Judas Iscariot in the arrest of Jesus for which he received thirty pieces of silver as proof that the Jews did not know Jesus personally as a result of which they needed some help from someone (Judas Iscariot) to arrest Jesus.[458] He seems to make heavy weather of this and suggests that it was the wrong person who was arrested. As he argued, the arrest of Jesus happened at a time when Jerusalem was filled with people who had from everywhere to celebrate the holiday (maybe a reference to the Passover).[459] According to this hypothesis, Judas Iscariot did lead the Jews to a man whom he kissed and who was arrested by the Jews and the guards.[460]

‘Abd al-Jabbar observes that while the person who was arrested protested his innocence by crying uncontrollably both before the people and Herod before whom he stood trial, he was taken to Pilate.[461] Finally, Pontius Pilate washed his hands in a basin of water to show that he was innocent of the

[457]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 72
[458]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 72.
[459]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 73.
[460]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 73.
[461]‘Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 74.

blood of the man because he had found no wrongdoing in him.[462] According to this argument, the Jews who did not know Jesus personally and could not identify him from among a group of people paid some money to Judas Iscariot to identify Jesus from among his disciples. According to him, Judas Iscariot had told the Jews that because Jesus was a friend he was going to identify him (Jesus) with a kiss and then, the Jews could arrest him.[463]

Ninth, he argues that the innocent person was brought before Pilate in a state of anxiety, fear and nervousness as he had shown before Herod earlier.[464] ʻAbd al-Jabbar mentions that unable to gather any information from the anxiety-stricken man apart from his excessive crying and weeping in order to prove or disprove the accusations or charges brought by the Jews against him, Pilate sent him back to Herod concluding that he was mentally deficient and stupid.[465] He was put in prison under the orders of Herod when he was brought to him a second time since night had already fallen.[466]

We should note a few things about his critique that will help us to appreciate how he arrives at the conclusion that it was someone other than Jesus who was arrested, tried and crucified. The first thing is that he appears to embellish his account of the gospel story of the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus at the outset so that he would provide evidence that it was not Jesus who was crucified.

Clearly, ʻAbd al-Jabbarʼs account of the crucifixion raises very important questions in relation to their historical reliability. It may be asked how the public could not have known that it was the wrong person who was

[462]ʻAbd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 74.
[463]ʻAbd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 72-73.
[464]ʻAbd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 74.
[465]ʻAbd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 74.
[466]ʻAbd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 75.

arrested because while the Jews and the guards did not know him according to his account, there must have been others in Jerusalem at the time who knew Jesus. Looking at the account given by ʻAbd al-Jabbar so far, one is justified in asking why the innocent man who was arrested was not identified by the public during his trial before Herod and Pilate on the Friday before his eventual crucifixion is problematic.

Moreover, it is important to note that the gospel accounts themselves which are our primary sources for our understanding of the crucifixion do not suggest anything that would corroborate the account of ʻAbd al-Jabbar. Another interesting thing that is worth noting is that ʻAbd al-Jabbar has Judas both return to the Jews to tell them that the person he betrayed and whom they had crucified was 'innocent blood' and to return the thirty pieces of silver.[467] This is yet another instance of literary emendation by ʻAbd al-Jabbar which may be intended to provide a good reason that it was the wrong person who was arrested.

According to ʻAbd al-Jabbar the argument against the crucifixion of Jesus is premised on a number of things such as the lack of knowledge of the Jesus by the Jews and the Romans, the lack of information about the accused, his nervousness and anxiety, his reticence to provide information for and against the charges brought against during his trials before both Herod and Pilate.[468]

Lastly, ʻAbd al-Jabbar argues that the accused person (whom he believes was not Jesus) both wept and cried and kept quiet and said nothing during his trials before Herod and Pilate is an embellishment that is not borne

[467] ʻAbd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 75.
[468] ʻAbd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 75.

out by the gospel account. Quite the contrary, there is evidence in the biblical accounts that the accused person (whom the writers identifies as Jesus) answered the questions put to him by both Herod and Pilate.

It is fair to say that like other writers before and after him who wrote on the crucifixion and death of Jesus from a Muslim perspective, the main arguments are present in ‘Abd al-Jabbar’s work. For example, frantic efforts are made to account for what is thought to be what happened to Jesus namely that he survived death by crucifixion on the cross according the interpretation of Qur’an 4: 156-157. In the second place, the account in the Qur’an is judged to be more textually reliable in comparison to the biblical account.

The sources that ‘Abd al-Jabbar uses to critique the death of Jesus explain why he distinguishes between the Christian account and the Qur’anic account of the crucifixion. The former is unreliable and the latter is credible in terms of what they record both about the crucifixion and the death of Jesus.

We have seen that the work of ‘Abd al-Jabbar rejects the view that Jesus died by crucifixion at the hands of the Jews. Rather, he has argued that whereas it was common knowledge among the Jews and Christians that Jesus was arrested and crucified, it was unknown to them that the Jews had arrested someone other than Jesus and crucified that person.

The critique of ‘Abd al-Jabbar has so much in common with the traditional view about the death of Jesus by crucifixion in Islam. Not only does it argue that Qur’an 4:157-158 supports the view that Jesus was miraculously saved from dying on the cross by the intervention of God, it also questions the textual reliability of the gospel accounts of the Passion to transmit a credible historical account of the death of Jesus. It is no wonder that he dismisses the

literal death of Jesus by crucifixion. Next, we turn our attention to Ibn Taymiyya's critique.

2.3.4.2 Ibn Taymiyya

We first examined *Al-Jawab* when we considered the divinity of Jesus earlier in this chapter. Here, we consider his views of the death of Jesus. We should note that the material in *Al-Jawab* on the crucifixion is scant compared to the material on the divinity of Jesus we examined earlier.

Firstly, he notes that God did not state anywhere that Christ (Jesus) had died or was killed.[469] He supports this view by referring to a number of texts in the Qur'an (3:55; 5:117; 4:155-161. However, he does not exegete these verses to show that they reject the view that Jesus died a literal death by crucifixion. Second, he cites Qur'an 4:156 noting that the Jews are condemned in the verse for claiming that they killed the Messiah.[470]

Secondly, Ibn Taymiyya places the responsibility for the crucifixion on the shoulders of the Jews and observes that no single Christian was present as a witness of the event.[471] According to him, the apostles kept at a distance because of fear.[472] As a result, he notes that Christians who passed on the tradition about the crucifixion were merely telling others about what they had been told by the Jews who informed them that they had crucified Jesus. Ibn Taymiyya raises historical questions about the crucifixion by suggesting that the tradition about the death of Jesus may have been a lie that was told by the Jews.[473]

[469]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 305.
[470]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 305.
[471]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 305.
[472]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 305.
[473]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 305.

Thirdly, Ibn Taymiyya supports his view that Jesus did not die by crucifixion by referring to a sound *hadith* to the effect that the son of Mary will descend among you as a just judge, a righteous *imam,* he will break the cross and kill the pig and impose the *jizya*.[474] It is clear that like ‘Abd al-Jabbar whose work was examined above in relation to the death of Jesus, Ibn Taymiyya rejects the view of the Jews that they killed Jesus.

Clearly, his critique of the death of Jesus is modelled on the traditional Islamic view that Jesus survived death by crucifixion by being taken miraculously to be with God. This may be so because like other medieval Islamic scholars, he was sceptical about the biblical accounts of the Passion. Hence, he has focused exclusively on the meaning of Qur’an 4: 157-158 in relation to whether the literal death of Jesus.

Given our analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s critique of the literal death of Jesus by means of crucifixion, we make a couple of observations. Firstly, he is clearly in agreement with ‘Abd al-Jabbar that Jesus did not die but was taken to be with God. Secondly, like ‘Abd al-Jabbar, he believes that Jesus will return to the earth before the Day of Judgement.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Ibn Taymiyya is within the Islamic tradition both in terms of his views about the death of Jesus and his (Jesus) return to the earth before the Day of Judgement. To reiterate, Ibn Taymiyya rejects the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion by arguing that what is traditionally referred to as the ‘Passion Account’ in the gospels is not historical in the sense that Jesus was neither arrested and tried nor sentenced and crucified.

[474]Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 305.

2.4 Conclusion

Two important issues have been our main concern in this chapter, namely, (1) the divinity of Jesus and (2) the death of Jesus by means of crucifixion from the perspective of Qur'an 4:157-158. With regards to the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines, all the pre-modern sources are united in rejecting the traditional Christian view that Jesus was both human and divine at the same time. Predicating their scathing attack of the doctrine on the unity/oneness of God, all the sources have argued that there can be no other God apart from the God who created the heavens and the earth.

Four main reasons have been given as the basis for the rejection of the divinity of Jesus in the pre-modern sources. They are (1) the doctrine compromises the unity of God, (2) the doctrine is a contradiction of both the teaching of the Bible and the Qur'an namely, that Jesus is a creature and a servant (*abd*) of God, (3) the doctrine contradicts the teaching of both the Bible and the Qur'an that Jesus was a prophet (*nabi*) and a messenger (*rasul*) of God and (4) the doctrine is theologically flawed because it makes a human being (Jesus) who is a creature into a divine being (deity).

Two key reasons have been given by 'Abd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya for their rejection of the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion, namely, (1) that it was the wrong person who was arrested and crucified ('Abd al-Jabbar) and (2) that the crucifixion and death of Jesus was a Jewish fabrication that the Christians believed as a historical event (Ibn Taymiyya). Thus, their interpretations of Qur'an 4: 157-158 is that the text denies the death of Jesus by crucifixion.

Similarly, the pre-modern sources rejected the associated doctrines on the basis that they are inadequate explanations of the nature of God. Moreover, the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemicists argued that the associated doctrines introduce plurality, materiality and change in the nature of God. All the pre-modern sources we examined above describe Jesus as a human being, a prophet and a messenger of God, a devout Muslim who worshipped God, called others to worship God and performed his religious duties of prayer (*salat*) and alms-giving (*zakat*).

In our analysis of the death of Jesus, the two pre-modern sources argued that Qur'an 4:157-158 denies the literal death of Jesus. Consequently, it is not surprising that the pre-modern sources argued that having survived death by crucifixion, Jesus will return to the earth and die before the Last Day. All the sources that we have examined have portrayed Jesus as have been miraculously born by Mary and endowed with the power of God.

On the basis of the arguments we have noted above, all the pre-modern sources are categorical that Jesus did not seek faith in himself and that he did not claim that he was either divine or that he was the 'son of God'. Also, all the sources we have examined in this chapter have argued that Jesus did not die a literal death on the Cross. As we pointed out earlier in Chapter 1, the analysis in this chapter is the theological benchmark for our understanding of how Jesus is portrayed in the Islamic tradition.

However, it remains to be seen how the key points in this analysis are going to be reflected in the works of the contemporary Muslim polemicists in relation to the divinity of Jesus, the associated Christological doctrines (Trinity,

Incarnation, the view that Jesus is the Son of God etc.) and the death of Jesus by crucifixion in Chapter 3 Chapter 4.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEMPORARY SUNNI AND AHMADIYYA VIEWS ABOUT THE DIVINITY OF JESUS IN GHANA

3.1 Introduction

This thesis examines contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Ghana in the light of four pre-modern Islamic sources. These sources which are examined in Chapter 2, are the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the Islamic exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition.

The traditional Christian doctrines that were explored in Chapter 2 are the divinity of Jesus, the associated doctrines (Trinity, Incarnation, the appellation 'son of God'), the death of Jesus and the Muslim claim that Jesus was the precursor of Muhammad. The rationale was to provide a theological benchmark that would be used to assess the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

The thrust of the present chapter is to investigate the divinity of Jesus, the associated doctrines and the claim that Jesus was the precursor of Muhammad from the perspective of the works of the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists. In all, nine polemical works comprising six Sunni works and three Ahmadiyya works will be examined in this chapter. We shall assess the arguments raised in each polemical work in the light of the analysis in Chapter 2.

Structurally, this chapter consists of five main sections. Section 1 describes the order in which the analysis in this chapter will be done. Section 2 examines six contemporary Sunni treatises. Section 3 examines three

contemporary Ahmadiyya works. Section 4 compares the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines. Section 5 is a summary of the key issues that have been raised in the chapter.

The analysis of the nine polemical works in this chapter will be done alphabetically based on the surnames of the polemicists. This will remove the difficulty of determining which polemical work should be analysed first given the fact that some of the treatises do not have any details about the year and the place they were published.

3.2 Sunni polemical works

The six Sunni works that will be examined in this section are the two works each of Ahmed Deedat and Ustaz Adam Dwomoh and the one work each of Ayoub Ofosuhene Asare and Mohammed Braimah Youseph. Apart from Deedat, the other three polemicists are Ghanaian Muslims.

3.2.1 Ahmed Deedat

Two treatises of Deedat that critique the divinity of Jesus will be examined in this chapter. The first is *Christ in Islam* which is forty-eight pages long.[475] The purpose of this treatise is to refute the deity of Jesus and to prove that he was a human being and a prophet of God. Like many other treatises that are examined in this thesis, it contains neither details of where it was published nor when it was written. The critique consists of four parts.

Part 1 begins with the portrayal of Jesus in the Qur'an, perhaps, this is meant to lay the foundation for the refutations of the traditional views of Jesus that are to follow.[476] Part 2 looks more like a comparative analysis of the portrayal of Jesus in the Bible and in the Qur'an. Part 3 which is entitled

[475]Ahmed Deedat, *Christ in Islam* (no place and date of publication), 48.
[476]Deedat, *Christ*, 2-20.

'Answer to Christian Dilemmas' focuses on some passages in the Qur'an that appear to be critical of so-called Christian excesses in their perceptions of Jesus and are therefore emphatic that he was human and prophet of God (Q.4:171; 3:59).[477]

In Part 4, Deedat returns to the Bible and questions whether the miracles of Jesus and the verse in the prologue to the gospel of John ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God") could constitute any sufficient basis for believing in the divinity of Jesus.[478]

Deedat introduces his critique by first making reference to a statement by one Mr. Bill Chalmers with whom he debated about the person of Jesus in October 1983 to the effect that there is more accommodation and sympathy for Jesus among Muslims than there is for Muhammad among Christians.[479] He also cites Qur'an 5:85 ("….And nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say 'We are Christians' because among these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant").[480]

It is difficult to tell what the real intentions of Deedat are both for referring to the statement of Mr. Chalmers and citing this verse in this work except to say that perhaps, he wants to underline the point that there is a special relationship Christianity and Islam. This however, remains purely speculative and we will never be able to know what his reasons are for doing so at all.

Firstly, as we indicated in the rough outline of his critique above, Deedat begins with the portrayal of Jesus in the Qur'an 2:87 ("…We gave

[477]Deedat, *Christ*, 31-39.
[478]Deedat, *Christ*, 40-48.
[479]Deedat, *Christ*, 1- 2.
[480]Deedat, *Christ*, 2.

Jesus the son of Mary clear signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit), 3:45 ("… O Mary! God giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary…) and 4:171 ("…Christ Jesus, the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of God".[481] In these three texts, both Jesus and his mother Mary are portrayed in a positive light which become the basis for Deedat to argue that Muslim display a 'true spirit of charity' towards both Jesus and Mary.[482]

Deedat also argues that apart from the twenty-five times the name Jesus appears in the Qur'an, there are other honorific titles that are used for him in the Qur'an including the epithets 'the word of God', "the spirit of God" and "the sign of God".[483] Similarly, the Qur'an speaks about Mary like it does about Jesus with decorum as in 3:42-43 ("Behold! The angels said: 'O Mary! God hath chosen thee above the women of all nations'.[484] At this point, he adds some interesting details to the account about Mary to the effect that the maternal grandmother of Jesus (the mother of Mary) Hannah prayed to God for a son but was disappointed when God gave her a daughter Mary.[485]

Furthermore, he argues that the source of the praiseworthy assertions about Mary in the Qur'an is nothing other than God.[486] In that case, he argues, Muhammad no option but to recite these praiseworthy things about Mary, a Jewess.[487] He observes that this is in spite of the racism in the Hebrew Bible which describes Sarah as the legitimate wife of Abraham and Hagar as a

[481]Deedat, *Christ*, 4-5.
[482]Deedat, *Christ*, 4.
[483]Deedat, *Christ*, 5.
[484]Deedat, *Christ*, 8.
[485]Deedat, *Christ*, 9-10.
[486]Deedat, *Christ*, 11.
[487]Deedat, *Christ*, 11.

'bondswoman' implying that the Arabs are inferior to the Jews.[488] It is not surprising then, he argues that the Qur'an being the revelation of God rather than the words of Muhammad, have honoured Mary by naming a whole chapter after her, namely, Chapter 19.[489]

Secondly, Deedat merely rehearses the points he made earlier with regards to the account about Jesus in the Qur'an with special emphasis on 3:45 ("Behold! The angels said: 'O Mary! God giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him: his name will be Christ Jesus the Son of Mary held in honour in this world and the hereafter….those nearest to God'".[490]

However, he stresses that the phrase 'a word from him' in the text should not be interpreted as if it was a piece of evidence that supports the Christian teaching that Jesus is God-incarnate.[491] Again, Deedat contrasts what he argues is the first miracle of Jesus, namely, that he defends his mother in the case of the charge of adultery that was brought against her (19: 29-33) with his first miracle recorded in the canonical gospels (John 2: 1-10).[492]

Thirdly, he compares and contrasts the accounts of the message of Jesus' conception to Mary from the Qur'an (3:42-49) and the Bible (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35) and argues that while there is no substantial differences in both passages, the differences in the reply to Mary are noteworthy.[493] He argues that whereas the biblical texts are likely to give the atheist and the skeptic a chance to ask in what way the Holy Ghost or the Most High would come upon Mary, the Qur'an removes that difficulty by telling Mary that God

[488]Deedat, *Christ*, 11.
[489]Deedat, *Christ*, 11.
[490]Deedat, *Christ*, 12.
[491]Deedat, *Christ*, 13.
[492]Deedat, *Christ*, 16-19.
[493]Deedat, *Christ*, 21-24.

will only say 'Be' and it is.[494] However, almost immediately after conceding on the basis of the accounts in the Bible and the Qur'an that Jesus was conceived and born by the decree of Allah which required no human intervention and agency, he questions whether this miracle would be sufficient proof of his divinity.[495] In other words, he argues that the fact that Jesus was born by a decree of God does not imply that he was divine.

The basis of the above argument is Qur'an 3:59 ("The similitude of Jesus before God is that of Adam; he created him from dust, then said to him; 'Be': and he was").[496] He observes that while the Qur'an recognizes Jesus as a great prophet, it is critical of views that hold that he is either God or he is the 'son of God' as exemplified in the verse above.[497] He buttresses his argument that both Jesus and Adam were human because they were created by God. He also argues against the divinity of Jesus by pointing out that a stronger theological argument could be made for the divinity of Adam rather than for that of Jesus on the basis that whereas the latter had a human mother (Mary), the former had neither father nor mother.[498]

Fourthly, he refutes the view that the epithet 'Son of God' as applied to Jesus denotes divinity.[499] He uses a number of biblical texts including, Luke 3:38 ("…Adam, was the son of God"), Genesis 6: 2, 4 ("And when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them…") and Exodus 4:22 ("…Israel is my son, even my firstborn") to argue that the

[494]Deedat, *Christ*, 24.
[495]Deedat, *Christ*, 25.
[496]Deedat, *Christ*, 25.
[497]Deedat, *Christ*, 25.
[498]Deedat, *Christ*, 26.
[499]Deedat, *Christ*, 28.

expression does not connote divinity when used for Jesus.[500] According to him, it is a common Jewish expression that is used among the Jews to describe righteous people who followed the will and plan of God.[501]

Fifthly, he argues that the phrase 'begotten son of God' used for Jesus implies 'to beget' is an animal act that cannot be predicated of God.[502] Hence, Muslims take exception to the use of the phrase. He observes that the expression 'son of God' would be more preferable to him than the expression 'begotten son of God' because the former would mean that Jesus was more faithful to God than 'anyone of us can ever be'.[503] Thus, Deedat observes that it would be acceptable to describe Jesus as 'preeminently' the son of God.[504]

Although he recognizes that the appellation 'son of God' could be used for Jesus in the same sense as it has been used for all righteous people in the Jewish Bible, he concludes this part of his critique by noting that God is neither black nor white, but is a spiritual being far above what the human mind can imagine.[505] For this reason, he insinuates that the expression 'the begotten son of God' has been used to create a feeling of superiority of white Christians over black Christians. This researcher is not sure what the connection is between the phrase 'begotten son of God' as used for Jesus and white Christian superiority in contrast to black Christian inferiority.[506]

Sixthly, he cites two key texts from the Qur'an to buttress his argument that Jesus did not claim to be divine. They are 4:171 ("O people of the book! Commit no excesses in your religion…..Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no

[500]Deedat, *Christ*, 28.
[501]Deedat, *Christ*, 28.
[502]Deedat, *Christ*, 29.
[503]Deedat, *Christ*, 29.
[504]Deedat, *Christ*, 29.
[505]Deedat, *Christ*, 30.
[506]Deedat, *Christ*, 30.

more than) an apostle of God, and his word, which he bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from him: so believe in God and his messengers...") and 5:119-121 ("And behold! God will say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God?' He will say: Glory to thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing….Thou art the Exalted in power, the Wise.").[507]In this part of his critique he aims to answer what he describes as some 'Christian dilemmas'.[508]

Apart from the above text itself, there are no clues as to the nature of the dilemmas that he intends to answer here. However, the texts he has cited above suggest that such dilemmas may include whether Jesus is God or not, where in the Bible it is categorically stated that Jesus claimed that he is God and was therefore, worthy of worship. In that case, the texts he has cited are relevant because they answer the two important questions that Jesus is not divine.

Qur'an 4:171 for example, would therefore be read as one that is making a strong case against the divinity of Jesus by teaching that he (1) the son of a woman and therefore, a human being, (2) he was a prophet and a messenger sent from God with a mission, he was created by the decree of God 'Be' and (4) he was not God but a 'spirit' proceeding from God.[509] Similarly, Qur'an 5:119-121 will be read as a denial of the divinity of Jesus because he himself (Jesus) rejects that he was divine.[510]

[507]Deedat, *Christ*, 31-34.
[508]Deedat, *Christ*, 31.
[509]Deedat, *Christ*, 33.
[510]Deedat, *Christ*, 34-35.

Seventh, Deedat refutes the argument that the divinity of Jesus is taught in John 1:1 ("in the beginning was the Word …the Word was God").[511] The reasons he assigns for this are (1) the words are not the words of John but the words of Philo who antedated both Jesus and John and (2) that the English translation of the original text of the verse is inaccurate.[512] To buttress the second point, he argues that the Greek word for God in the text 'and the Word was with God' is *hotheos* (the God) while the Greek word for God in the second time the word is used in the text 'and the Word was God' was *tontheos* (a god).[513]

Deedat's contention in relation to the words *hotheos* and *tontheos* above is that the translators of the text have shown some inconsistency in translating the first 'the God' (with a capital G) and the second as 'a god' (with a small g). He also refers to Exodus 7:1 where Moses is described as 'a god to Pharoah'.[514] He therefore questions why a small 'g' is used for the reference about Moses while a capital 'G' is used for 'Word' in the phrase 'and the Word was God'.[515] It is worth pointing out that contrary to the argument about the correct meaning of '*hotheos*' (the God) and *tontheos* (a god) above, the two words are properly written as 'the God' where the Greek words *ho* and *ton* are translated as 'the' and 'towards' respectively.

Eighth, he argues that the prodigious miracles of Jesus are not hard evidence divinity of his divinity because in his own teaching, miracles are not even a confirmation that someone was a true prophet of God.[516] He observes

[511]Deedat, *Christ*, 40.
[512]Deedat, *Christ*, 40.
[513]Deedat, *Christ*, 40-41.
[514]Deedat, *Christ*, 41.
[515]Deedat, *Christ*, 41.
[516]Deedat, *Christ*, 42-43.

that miracles are not in themselves hard evidence of prophethood because false prophets and could also work miracles (Mathew 24:24).[517] He even argues that if the miracles that Jesus performed were the basis of his divinity, it could be argued that both Moses and Elisha worked far more prodigious miracles than Jesus.[518] The former changed a stick into a serpent/snake (Exodus 7:10) while the latter brought a dead person back to life by merely touching the corpse (2 Kings 13:21).[519] He therefore insinuates that Moses and Elisha should have been deified on account of their miracles.

Ninth, he argues that the power to perform miracles was not innate in Jesus himself but came from God as is seen in these verses, namely, Matthew 28:18 ("…I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you"), John 12:28 ("I can of mine own self do nothing…" and Luke 11:20 ("…I with the finger of God cast out devils…").[520] He illustrates the dependence of Jesus on God to work his miracles with the account of the raising of Lazarus in John 11: 41-42. He observes that a few things in the text are noteworthy including 'the groaning' of Jesus which implies that 'he was pouring out his heart and praying to God', 'thou hearest me always' implies that every miracle that he performed was done through the instrumentality of God.[521]

Tenth, he reminds his readers about two more things about Jesus from the point of view of the portrayal of Jesus in the Qur'an namely, (1) that Jesus was not crucified[522] and (2) that Muhammed was the natural successor to

[517]Deedat, *Christ*, 43-44.
[518]Deedat, *Christ*, 44.
[519]Deedat, *Christ*, 44.
[520]Deedat, *Christ*, 45.
[521]Deedat, *Christ*, 45-46.
[522]Deedat, *Christ*, 42.

Christ, a subject on which he proposes to write a booklet.[523] Deedat prefers the spelling 'Muhammed' to the more traditional spelling 'Muhammad' which is the spelling we have used in this thesis. The crucifixion of Jesus is explored in Chapter 4 which looks at the death of Jesus. The second subject, namely, the relationship between Jesus and Muhammed is examined below.

Finally, although little has been said in his critique about whether it was necessary for Jesus to die, he concludes with that subject albeit indirectly. He observes that the way of salvation based on the teaching of Jesus as with all his predecessors (by which he means the prophets and messengers who preceded him), and he adds 'as well as his successor' (whom he mentions by name as Muhammed), was that it was obtained by believing in God and keeping his commandments.[524]

Given the arguments that Deedat has raised from both the Qur'an and the Bible, it is clear that he has made his point that Jesus was a human being, a prophet and a messenger of God. However, it is not in doubt that Deedat has privileged the testimony of the Qur'an above that of the biblical text regarding the identity of Jesus. It is even doubtful whether he has stayed close to the Bible in allowing it to be used to interpret itself as we saw in his examination of John 1:1. Invariably, Deedat looks at the biblical passages either through the prism of Islamic theology or the prophetic claims of Muhammad in order to determine what their meanings could be.

Next, we turn our attention to his second work entitled *Muhammed: The Natural Successor to Christ*. It is a seventy-one page booklet, the central argument of which is that Muhammad was the natural successor to Jesus. The

[523]Deedat, *Christ*, 42.
[524]Deedat, *Christ*, 42.

argument is in six parts. The first part of the argument is that no other prophet came after Jesus except Muhammed.[525] In the second, the argument focuses on what is thought to be a prophecy of Jesus about the coming of Muhammad in Qur'an 61:6.[526] Part 3 of his critique focuses specifically on the passages about the coming of the "Comforter" in the gospel of John.[527]

In Part 4, Deedat argues that Muhammed is the promised 'Comforter' because he provided total guidance to all of humankind.[528] In Part 5, he argues that Muhammed was the natural successor to Jesus because he fulfilled prophecy.[529] The final part of the argument is that Muhammed condemned doctrinal extremism in the manner of Qur'an 4: 171.[530] Now, we look at his critique in more detail below.

Firstly, Deedat begins his critique with a historical argument according to which the coming of Jesus followed that of Moses 1300 years later, then Jesus six centuries later as the latter's successor and finally came Muhammad as the successor to Jesus.[531] He also points out that the call to the prophetic office was a divine prerogative whereby God called the prophets and messengers in the order and times according to which they came.[532]

Deedat notes for example, that it was God who called Moses, then Jesus to succeed him and finally, called Muhammed to be the successor of Jesus.[533] Further, he notes that in calling his prophets and messengers, God uses

[525]Deedat, *Successor to Christ* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Services, no date of publication), 12.
[526]Deedat, *Successor*, 12.
[527]Deedat, *Successor*, 23.
[528]Deedat, *Successor*, 40.
[529]Deedat, *Successor*, 55.
[530]Deedat, *Successor*, 66.
[531]Deedat, *Successor*, 2.
[532]Deedat, *Successor*, 2-3.
[533]Deedat, *Successor*, 2-3

standards that human beings cannot understand.[534] In the particular case of Muhammad, Deedat points out that he fulfilled Qur'an 62:2 ("It is He who sent amongst the unlettered a messenger from among themselves to rehearse to them His signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest error").[535]

Secondly, arguing from Deuteronomy 32: 21 ("They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they (the Jews) have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation"), Deedat notes that the calling of Muhammed implies that the Jews had lost their place as the 'special people of God' to the Arabs and thus, replaced the Jews.[536] He observes that whreas the Persians, the Egyptians and the Romans did not recognize the Arabs, God 'picked them up from the depths of darkness and transformed them into torch-bearers of light and learning to the world'.[537]

Thirdly, he argues for the predecessor-successor relationship between Jesus and Muhammed on the basis of Matthew 21: 43 ("Therefore I say unto you (Jews), the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you (Jews), and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof").[538] As with Deuteronomy 32:21 that we referred to above, Deedat sees the Matthean text as a prediction of the change in the fortunes of the Arabs from not being a special people to God to suddenly becoming a privileged people by virtue of the fact that Muhammed was called to the prophetic office from among the Arabs.[539]

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[534]Deedat, *Successor*, 2-3.
[535]Deedat, *Successor*, 8.
[536]Deedat, *Successor*, 10.
[537]Deedat, *Successor*, 10.
[538]Deedat, *Successor*, 11.
[539]Deedat, *Successor*, 11-12.

Fourthly, he cites Qur'an 61:6 ("And remember Jesus, the son of Mary, said ' O children of Israel I am the messenger of God (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me and giving glad tidings of a messenger to come after me whose name shall be Ahmed") as a prediction of Jesus about the coming of Muhammad.[540] Deedat notes that Muslims are convinced that this is a prophecy about the coming of Muhammad that was made by his predecessor, Jesus.

Again, he notes that Muslims are puzzled at what he describes as the stubbornness of Christians who do not see that this is a prophecy about the advent of Muhammed.[541] He therefore likens Christians who do not see this text as a prophecy about Muhammed to the Jews who despite the scores of prophecies about Jesus, the Messiah in the Old Testament, did not recognize him when he came.[542] He explains the refusal of Christians to recognize the obvious (a reference to Qur'an 61:6) in terms of the prejudices with which they have been brought up since childhood days.[543] The text is so important to Deedat that he encourages his Muslim readers to memorize it so that they are better equipped to share their '*deen*' (faith/religion) with non-Muslims.[544]

Fifthly, Deedat focuses on John 16:7 ("Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you") in relation to the prediction about the advent of Muhammad in the gospel of John.[545] Suffice to say that this verse has traditionally been read in historic Christianity as a

[540]Deedat, *Successor*, 12.
[541]Deedat, *Successor*, 12-13.
[542]Deedat, *Successor*, 13.
[543]Deedat, *Successor*, 13.
[544]Deedat, *Successor*, 13.
[545]Deedat, *Successor*, 15.

prediction of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Deedat reads and interprets John 16:7 above in conjunction with Qur'an 61:6 which we considered above. He observes that Qur'an 61:6 should be read in conjunction with John 14:16 and John 15: 26 because they deal with the same subject-matter and therefore, belong together. Although he does not explain the reason for reading the verse (John 16:7) in the way he has read it, he argues that the 'Comforter' in John 16: 7 is the 'Ahmed' in Qur'an 61:6. He therefore argues that the word 'Comforter' is what has been referred to as 'Ahmed' in Qur'an 61:6.[546]

Sixthly, having already argued that Qur'an 61:6 is a prediction of the coming of Muhammad and parallels the 'Comforter' in the texts in John we cited above, Deedat divides the text into two parts and proceeds to prove why that is the case. His first division is described by the phrase 'no new religion'.[547] Here, he argues that Jesus did not bring a new religion but came with a message that was a confirmation of the Law which came before him, namely, the message of Jesus.[548] He argues that the evidence of the continuity between Jesus' message and those of his predecessors is seen in Matthew 5: 17-19 ("Think not that I am come to betray the law (Torah), or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill, for verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one title shall in no wise pass from the law (Torah), till all be fulfilled").[549]

Further, Deedat argues that Muhammed came with the Qur'an to 'confirm, correct and complete the divine revelation or whatever was left of it

[546]Deedat, *Successor*, 15.
[547]Deedat, *Successor*, 15.
[548]Deedat, *Successor*, 18.
[549]Deedat, *Successor*, 18.

in unworthy hands.[550] His second division of Qur'an 61:6 is described by the rubric 'the good news'.[551] This is the part of the text that appears to be a prediction of somebody to come in the future. Apart from referring to the commentary of the text by Yusuf Ali, Deedat does not argue on the basis of a strong exegetical reason for his assertion that the words are a prediction of Muhammed.

Again, he argues that the words are a prediction of the advent of Muhammed by his predecessor (Jesus Christ) because 'Ahmed' or 'Muhammed' which he translates as 'the Praised one' is a translation of the Greek word '*periclytos*'.[552] Quoting verbatim from Yusuf Ali's commentary of the text, he notes that the word '*paracletos*' (found in John 14: 16; 15: 26 and 16:7) in Greek is a corrupt reading of the Greek '*periclytos*'.[553]

On the basis of the above argument, Deedat concludes that in the original words of Jesus (John 14: 16; 15: 26 and 16:7), there was a prophecy of the coming of the prophet Ahmed by name.[554] He has not quite argued his case for interpreting the text this way and it may be briefly said that his argument that there was a prophecy about the coming of Muhammad in the gospel of John is not convincing enough.

Seventh, Deedat hinges his argument on the ways in which Muhammed fulfilled the prediction about the coming of the 'Comforter' in John (14: 16; 15: 26 and 16:7). He is able to do this because he has already argued that *paracletos* should be read *periclytos* because the original words of Jesus contained the latter word. This latter word is translated 'the praised one' by

[550]Deedat, *Successor*, 19.
[551]Deedat, *Successor*, 20.
[552]Deedat, *Successor*, 21.
[553]Deedat, *Successor*, 21.
[554]Deedat, *Successor*, 21.

Deedat and would be the translation of 'Ahmed' in Qur'an 61:6. It is worth noting that we have not yet questioned the validity of the view of Deedat regarding which of the above two words, namely, *paracletos* and *periclytos* is found in the gospel of John. So far, we have only been interested in following his argument as it is presented in his work. It is also worth noting that he includes some extraneous material in his critique that does not relate directly to the subject under consideration which has been excluded in our analysis.

Regarding his view that the 'Comforter' was a prediction of the coming of Muhammed as we briefly noted above, Deedat offers some interesting reasons. In the first place, he argues that the phrase 'which is the Holy Spirit' which throws more light onto the person whose coming was predicted by Jesus in John and indicates the identity of the same person is an interpolation that ought to be in parenthesis.[555]

On the view that the phrase 'which is the Holy Spirit' is an interpolation, Deedat argues that 'Holy Spirit' should be read as 'Holy prophet'. This would then make the words of Jesus to be a prediction of the coming, not of the 'Holy Spirit' but the coming of Muhammed. He argues for the validity of this exegesis on the basis of a parallel reading in 1 John 4:1 ("Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world").[556] To him, the word 'spirit' is used in the above text as a synonym for 'prophet'.[557] Deedat therefore, observes that for the writer of the gospel of John and 1 John, the

[555]Deedat, *Successor*, 26.
[556]Deedat, *Successor*, 27.
[557]Deedat, *Successor*, 27.

Holy Spirit is the same as the Holy Prophet (Muhammed) because to 'be a true spirit is to be a true prophet'.[558]

The second reason why Deedat argues that the prophecy about the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John looked to the coming of Muhammed is because of the word 'another' in John 14: 16 ("And I will pray the father, and he shall give you another comforter, that may abide with you forever") refers to him (Muhammed).[559]

Deedat argues that if the prediction is about another 'Comforter' who was of the same kind and yet different from Jesus, it would be hard to argue that the text looked forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit since the latter was not of the same kind as Jesus.[560]However, he notes that if Jesus was the first 'Comforter' as Christians believe, it is Muhammed rather than the Holy Spirit, who was the 'another' in the words of Jesus. If so, he argues that it is clear that Muhammed was like Jesus because he was susceptible to the same human conditions of hunger, thirst, fatigue, sorrow and death.[561]

The third is that all the prophetic figures are 'Comforters' at the same time and it could be argued that they all abide with us (he may mean humankind here) forever through their teachings.[562] Hence, he argues that Moses, Jesus and Muhammed are still with us today through their teachings. He finds biblical support for the view that the prophets are still with humankind today through their teachings in Luke 16:31 ("But Abraham said, 'If they (those still alive on earth) won't listen to Moses and the prophets, they

[558]Deedat, *Successor*, 27.
[559]Deedat, *Successor*, 28.
[560]Deedat, *Successor*, 28-29.
[561]Deedat, *Successor*, 29.
[562]Deedat, *Successor*, 29.

won't listen even though someone rises from the dead (to warn them)'.[563] He notes that the fact that Jesus made reference to these prophets many years after they had died means that he had their teachings in mind. In the same way, he argues that the phrase ''that may abide with you forever' in relation to the 'Comforter' (Deedat argues that it is Muhammed) who was to come after Jesus is not about the person but the perpetuity of the teachings of the person.[564]

The fourth is that the prophecies in the gospel of John about the coming of the 'Comforter' which have been the focus of our analysis so far were fulfilled by Muhammed rather than the coming of the Holy Spirit.[565] The basis of his argument is that whereas the coming of the 'Comforter' was conditional upon the departure of Jesus that of the coming of the Holy Ghost was not.[566]

To buttress his argument that the 'Comforter' was Muhammad rather than the Holy Spirit, he cites biblical texts in which the Holy Ghost (the Holy Ghost and the Comforter are different to him) was active both before and after the birth of Jesus.[567] We cite two examples of each. Two examples of the activity of the Holy Ghost relate first to John the Baptist who would be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15) and Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist) who was filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:41).[568] Two instances of the activity of the Holy Ghost after the birth of Jesus are the filling of Simeon with the Holy Ghost (Luke 2:26) and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Jesus after his baptism (Luke 3:22).[569]

[563]Deedat, *Successor*, 30.
[564]Deedat, *Successor*, 30.
[565]Deedat, *Successor*, 31.
[566]Deedat, *Successor*, 31.
[567]Deedat, *Successor*, 31.
[568]Deedat, *Successor*, 32.
[569]Deedat, *Successor*, 32.

Eighth, in addition to his argument that the Holy Ghost had been active prior to and during the time of Jesus as seen in the examples we have noted above, Deedat argues that it was the Holy Ghost (to be distinguished from the Holy Spirit) who was helping Jesus throughout his ministry on earth.[570]According to him, the phrases 'finger of God' (Luke 11:20) and 'Spirit of God' (Matthew 12: 28) are synonymous and are references to the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:31).[571] Besides, he argues that we are mistaken when we think that after Jesus had breathed the Holy Ghost on the disciples in John 20: 21-22 (" …as my father hath sent me, even so I send you (the disciples). And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost"), they had to wait again for sometime before they were given the Holy Ghost.[572]

Ninth, he wonders how could Jesus' words "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (John 16:7) be a reference to the Holy Ghost when before and after his coming the Holy Ghost was already active in the lives of individuals including John the Baptist, Elizabeth, Zachariah, Simeon, Jesus' disciples and himself as we saw above.[573] On this view, Deedat argues that the Comforter and the Holy Ghost are distinguishable from each other.[574] He also argues based on John 20: 21-22 ("…as my father hath sent me, even so I send you (the disciples of Jesus). And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive the Holy Ghost") that the Holy Ghost had already been given to Jesus' disciples.[575] He therefore argues that

[570]Deedat, *Successor*, 33.
[571]Deedat, *Successor*, 33.
[572]Deedat, *Successor*, 33-34.
[573]Deedat, *Successor*, 34.
[574]Deedat, *Successor*, 34.
[575]Deedat, *Successor*, 34.

the Holy Ghost and the Comforter are different, for whereas the former was active before and during the ministry of Jesus, the latter was not sent until after Jesus had left this earth.

Tenth, he focuses on some phrases in John 16 to argue that the prediction of the coming of the Comforter was fulfilled not in the coming of the Holy Spirit traditionally thought to have happened on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 but in the coming of Muhammad.[576] To do this, he uses the phrases 'ye cannot bear them now' in John 16: 12 ("I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"), the phrases 'Spirit of truth' and 'guide you into all truth' in John 16:13 ("Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come").[577]

Although Deedat is determined to read the texts about the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John as predictions of the coming of Muhammad, it seems to this researcher that he notices a problem with John 14: 16 ("And I will pray the father, and he shall give you another comforter, that may abide with you forever"). It seems to this researcher that the phrase 'may abide with you forever' is problematic in terms how to justify that it can apply to a mortal like Muhammad which is exactly what Deedat aims to do in his critique. He therefore argues that since Jesus was mortal, the 'Comforter' (Muhammed) who was to succeed him after his departure would also be mortal.[578] In that case, he argues that it was not the 'Comforter' himself who was going to abide

[576]Deedat, *Successor*, 34-35.
[577]Deedat, *Successor*, 35-40.
[578]Deedat, *Successor*, 29.

with the disciples forever because Qur'an 3:185 teaches that every soul has to taste death ("Every soul shall have a taste of death").[579]

Deedat argues in relation to the Comforter and his abiding with the disciples forever in the above paragraph that it was the message that the promised 'Comforter' was going to bring that would abide forever with the disciples forever.[580] This however, does not resolve all the difficulties associated with reading the texts as if they pointed to the coming of Muhammad. For example, one difficulty still remains namely, when (what time frame) and among whom was the fulfillment of the coming of the 'Comforter' going to take place. In other words, how soon or how long (within or after the lifetime of the disciples) was the prophecy going to be fulfilled and among whom (the disciples or another generation of people separated from the disciples by hundreds of years).

This researcher is of the view that the above questions must be addressed if the interpretation that is being suggested by Deedat, namely, that Muhammad was the successor of Jesus based on his reading of the texts in the gospel of John that we have cited above and Qur'an 61:6, is to be accepted. The key question about the texts in the gospel of John is whether their fulfillment was going to be among other people other the disciples to whom the words were first addressed.

It is instructive to note that Deedat has already made a number of interesting observations in relation to his novel interpretation of the verses in John that have traditionally been read as predictions about the advent of the Holy Spirit. It would help to remind ourselves about these observations. He has

[579]Deedat, *Successor*, 29.
[580]Deedat, *Successor*, 29.

argued that one; the Holy Ghost (he uses the King James Version) is different from the 'Comforter', that two; the word 'spirit' in the verses is synonymous with the word 'prophet' in which case the 'Spirit of Truth' means the 'Prophet of Truth', that three; the Holy Ghost was at work both before and during the ministry of Jesus and that four; the coming of the Comforter was linked to the departure of Jesus.[581]

Deedat has made these observations on the basis of two reasons. They are that the Comforter (whom he identifies with Muhammad) would both teach the disciples what they 'could not bear now' (John 16: 12) i.e. during the lifetime of Jesus as well as 'guide you into all truth' and 'show you things to come (John 16: 12-13).[582] He argues that Jesus' disciples were not yet ready for his teaching because they were 'men of little faith' (Matthew 8: 26; 14: 31; 16: 8; Luke 8:25).[583] He also describes Jesus in the context of his prophetic ministry as a *persona non grata* who was rejected not only by his nation and disciples but by his own family.[584]

Furthermore, Deedat observes that Jesus was frustrated with his disciples' unpreparedness to receive his teaching because of their lack of faith, the scorn and mockery of his own nation and his own family who thought that he was mad.[585] Deedat notes that faced with his own rejection by his nation, his disciples and his family, Jesus entrusted to his successor whom he calls 'The Spirit of Truth', the responsibility of disseminating his teaching which the disciples were not ready to receive during his own lifetime.[586] Further, he

[581]Deedat, *Successor*, 23-28.
[582]Deedat, *Successor*, 35-40.
[583]Deedat, *Successor*, 36-40.
[584]Deedat, *Successor*, 36-39.
[585]Deedat, *Successor*, 36-38.
[586]Deedat, *Successor*, 39.

argues that Jesus' successor also had the responsibility of 'guiding the disciples into all truth and showing them all things to come'.[587]

This researcher would like to point out that there seems to be a difficulty here in the argument of Deedat that the promise of the coming of the Comforter was fulfilled by Muhammad rather than by the Holy Spirit. It is worth pointing out that Deedat has already argued above that the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit are not the same. According to him, the former was prior to the latter.

The contradiction in his argument above is that whereas he has already argued that the indictment of the lack of faith was not in respect of the Jews but the lack of faith of the elect (which can only mean his disciples because he qualifies this with the phrase 'his very own elect'),[588] he does not see that his argument is weakened by the fact that Muhammad came nearly six centuries after the disciples had died. In this case, the prediction of the Comforter could not have been fulfilled by the advent of Muhammad whom he describes variously as 'The Prophet of Truth' and 'The Prophet of Righteousness'.

In this work as in the previous one, Deedat limits his arguments to the Bible and the Qur'an. After beginning with Qur'an 61:6 as the starting point of his argument that Muhammad was the natural successor to Jesus he limits his argument to the passages in the gospel of John which have traditionally been interpreted as predictions of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

We should draw attention to the fact that in interpreting the texts about the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John, Deedat has read them in conjunction with Qur'an 61:6 and argued that the 'Ahmad' of Qur'an 61:6 is the same as

[587]Deedat, *Successor*, 40.
[588]Deedat, *Successor*, 36.

the ‘Comforter’ in those texts. In his analysis, he has argued among other things that the predictions about the ‘Comforter’ could not be about the Holy Spirit since he was both active before and during the time of Jesus. Besides, he argued, it was the Prophet Muhammad, not the Holy Spirit, who was to lead them (the disciples) into all truth. One wonders why Deedat appeared to overlook the commonsense implication that if it was the disciples who were addressed in the Gospel of John, it would make sense to argue that the fulfillment of the prophecies about the ‘Comforter’ would take place amongst them or during their time.

The above considerations did not seem to matter so much to Deedat. Thus he succeeds in arguing that based on what he describes as a prophecy about Muhammad by Jesus in the Qur’an (61:6) coupled with the prophecies about the ‘Comforter’ in the gospel of John, Muhammad came in 570 C.E. as the natural successor to Jesus. It is instructive to note that the preoccupation of the two booklets is (1) the identity of Jesus, (2) the theological validity in referring to Jesus as the ‘son of God’ and (3) the relationship between Jesus and Muhammad. In neither of the booklets did Deedat examine the associated doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

3.2.1.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

We aim in this assessment to identify the areas of similarity and dissimilarity between the arguments of Deedat in *Christ in Islam* and in *Muhammed: The Natural Successor to Christ* and in the pre-modern sources that were examined in Chapter 2 with regards both to the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation.

Firstly, we saw that the key argument in *Christ in Islam* was that Jesus was a human being, a prophet and a messenger of God. Hence, Deedat's critique of the divinity of Jesus is comparable to the teaching of the Qur'an, which while recognising the miraculous nature of his birth and the many miracles he performed still argues that he was the Messiah and was no more than a human being. Deedat buttresses this argument with evidence from both the Bible and the Qur'an to show that Jesus was a human being through and through although he was born miraculously. Also, in *Muhammed: The Natural Successor to Christ*, Deedat argued on the basis of Qur'an 61:6 that Jesus was the precursor of Muhammad.

Secondly, like the exegetical tradition in which the scholars and early commentators were careful not to use the miracles of the raising of the dead and the creation of birds from clay as the basis for the divinity of Jesus, Deedat is careful to point out that Jesus performed the miracles by 'leave of God' or with the permission of God. In that case, it becomes clear that the miracles of Jesus pointed to the power of God and only served to authenticate his prophetic credentials. Similarly, he is within the tradition of the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian tradition when he argues that Jesus was a prophet and a messenger of God.

Thirdly, his argument in *Muhammed: The Natural Successor to Christ* sits well within the entire pre-modern Islamic tradition. For example, his argument that the prediction about the coming of the 'Comforter' in the Gospel of John was fulfilled by Muhammad is to be found in both the exegetical tradition and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. In both sources, as well as in the Qur'an itself (61:6) as we saw in Chapter 2, it is

claimed that there are predictions of Muhammad in the Bible. It is little wonder that the claim that Jesus was the forerunner of Muhammad has been made by Muslims since earliest times as seen in the above text in the Qur'an. Given what we have said about the work of Deedat above, it is clear that his treatises have advanced the same arguments both about who Jesus was and whether Muhammad was his successor. We therefore conclude that the assessment has shown that there are continuities between his work and the pre-modern Islamic sources on the two theological issues that he has investigated in his treatises.

However, there is one area in which Deedat contradicts the testimony of the pre-modern sources that were examined in Chapter 2, namely, his argument that Jesus was literally crucified on the Cross but did not die there. This view contradicts what seems to be the traditional Muslim interpretation of Qur'an 4: 157-158. According to this view as we saw in the pre-modern Muslim texts that were examined in Chapter 2, both 'Abd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya reject the view that Jesus was literally crucified.

While 'Abd al-Jabbar posits that a wrong person other than Jesus was mistakenly arrested and crucified, Ibn Taymiyya completely rejects the biblical account of the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus and argues that the crucifixion account was a fabrication of the Jews. In contrast to these views, Deedat argues on the basis of some biblical texts that it was Jesus himself, rather than an unnamed substitrute who was crucified.

Overall, it is worth noting that Deedat's critique of the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines seems to this researcher to be influenced in part by his assessment of the Bible in general and the gospel accounts in terms of whether they convey a reliable historical account of the life, teaching and final

days of Jesus on earth. The comparative religions approach used by Deedat against Christianity rests on five key arguments, namely, (1) that the Bible has been edited by Jews and Christians and has suffered from textual corruption (*tahrif*), (2) that Jesus is neither divine nor the 'son of God', he was only a prophet, (3) that the doctrine of the Trinity which was invented by Christians makes them (Christians) guilty of associating partners with God (*shirk*), (4) that it was Paul who both founded Christianity and distorted the original message of Jesus and (5) that there are prophecies about the coming of the prophet Muhammad in the Bible.[589]

3.2.2 Ayoub Ofosuhene Asare

Asare examines the divinity of Jesus in his booklet entitled *Who Really is Jesus*? It is hundred and twenty-eight pages long. It is written from a Sunni Islamic theological perspective and his purpose is to show that both the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines are theologically unsustainable.

It is difficult to give a rough outline of the argument as we have done with other booklets because the structure of his work does not lend itself to be described in that way because his treatment of some topics is longer than a single page. For instance, his examination of the topics 'In the beginning was the Word' (John 1:1) and 'God created by his Word' both occupy only one page in his work.[590]

In view of the brevity of his treatment of the topics in his work, it is difficult to describe the progression in his argument, except to say that he examines key Christological themes taken from the Bible. These may be the topics that are germane to Muslim-Christian doctrine. In all, twenty-four topics

[589]Goolam Vahed, *Ahmed Deedat: The Man and his Mission* (Durban: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 2014), 89-90.
[590]Ayoub Ofosuhene Asare, *Who Really Is Jesus* (Accra: Heralds of Islamic Message, 2009), ii.

are treated in his hundred and twenty-eight page booklet, many of which are developed under fewer than ten pages. Asare gives three reasons for writing the book. The first reason is that the book aims to present to readers 'the true picture of our beloved Jesus'.[591] The second is to point readers to the false view held by Christians that Jesus is the almighty God.[592] The third is to help 'true' Christians to see the 'true light' that Jesus is not God.

Firstly, he questions the divinity of Jesus on the basis that argues Jesus was sent into the world to do the will of his father (John 4:31-34), it would be theologically wrong to say that he is divine at the same time.[593] He observes that doing the will of God was not only required of the followers of the prophets but also required of the prophets themselves.[594] He therefore argues that if Jesus' preoccupation during his earthly ministry was to do the will of God as we noted above, it implies that he was not God. Rather, he was a messenger of God who lived in obedience to the will of God and taught others to obey the will of God.

Secondly, Asare cites the prologue to the gospel of John for the first time in order to examine the view that Jesus was the pre-existent word (John 1:1).[595] Although he does not raise any textual questions about the text, he does apply a Muslim hermeneutic to it in respect of what it means. Thus, he notes that if God wants to create anything, all he says is "be" and that thing comes into being.[596] The import of his argument is that 'word' in John 1:1 is not to be identified with Jesus. Rather, he argues that 'word' there refers to the 'word of

[591]Asare, *Jesus*, ii.
[592]Asare, *Jesus*, ii.
[593]Asare, *Jesus*, 3.
[594]Asare, *Jesus*, 4.
[595]Asare, *Jesus*, 5.
[596]Asare, *Jesus*, 5-6.

command' with which God creates things.[597] He adduces more evidence to show that God created everything by His word (Isaiah 46:25-26; Psalm 33:6-9). On this view, he argues that by saying that the 'word that was with God in the beginning became flesh' means that the same word of God (Asare understands 'word' to be the same as the 'command' of God) that brought the heavens and the earth into being created Jesus.[598]

Thirdly, Asare contends that Jesus believed in the existence of one God whom he consistently addressed as his father during his earthly life (John 17: 1-3).[599] In addition to this, Asare finds support for his argument that Jesus himself believed in the existence of one God in the text in which Jesus was answering a question put to him by a scribe who wanted to know what the greatest commandment was (Mark 12:28-30). According to him, the belief in the existence of one God was the message that was brought by all the prophets including Jesus himself.[600] The underlying reason why he cites these texts is to show that the fact that Jesus believed in the existence of one God meant that he knew that he was not God.

Fourthly, he argues on the basis of the teaching the Qur'an according to which Jesus is described as a messenger of God (4:171).[601] Perhaps, as we noted in Chapter 1 regarding the historical context within which the revelation of the Qur'an took place, it seems this verse must have been revealed in circumstances involving debates about who Jesus was between Muhammad and some Christian groups. These revelations must have been given to stress the humanity of Jesus in contrast to his divinity.

[597]Asare, *Jesus*, 6.
[598]Asare, *Jesus*, 7-8.
[599]Asare, *Jesus*, 12.
[600]Asare, *Jesus*, 12.
[601]Asare, *Jesus*, 13.

Fifthly, he cites John 14:8-12 which forms part of Jesus' discourse with the disciples before his passion. In interpreting it he focuses on the statement by Jesus that whoever (in his address to Philip) had seen him had seen God. Asare broaches a number of issues that are worth noting. One, he notes that if indeed Jesus meant to say that he was God he would have been more direct in his response by saying emphatically "I am the Father" rather than respond by telling Philip that "he that has seen me has seen the Father".

Asare contends that Jesus' aim was to show both the ignorance of Philip and his lack of understanding of the scriptures which teach that God cannot be seen with the eyes of human beings as illustrated in the response to Moses (Exodus 33:18-20). He notes that the ignorance of Philip in asking to see God visibly is explained by the fact that Jesus had already told the disciples that God is spirit. This would suggest that God cannot be seen visibly with human eyes. Asare adduces more biblical evidence to buttress this point to the effect that no human being has ever seen God (I John 4: 12).

Up to this point, Asare has attempted to defend his position that Jesus' statement in John 14:8-12 does not imply that he was making any claim that he was divine. Having done this, Asare is now in a position to raise another objection to prove that Jesus could not be God by any stretch of imagination as far as the passage under consideration is concerned. He asks rhetorically "how can it then be that when Jesus came into the world he was seen literally by his contemporaries; the Jews, his disciples and others, yet nothing of the dire consequences involved in seeing God visibly are recorded to have taken place?[602] The 'dire consequences' he has in mind are a reference to what could

[602]Asare, *Jesus*, 15.

happen to a person if they were allowed to see God visibly. He does not describe the nature of these dire consequences.

Sixthly, Asare considers a verse (John 10:30) which he says that many have used as the basis to teach that Jesus is the same as God the Father.[603] He argues that the oneness that exists between Jesus and his Father is simply on account of the fact that the former obeys the latter and continues to do his will at all times as is seen in the following passages in the gospel of John (5:30; 7:14-18). On the strength of these texts, Asare argues that obedience to the will of God is required of all creatures including the prophets and the angels perhaps, to imply that Jesus is no exception.

Seventh, Asare attempts a refutation of the divinity of Jesus via the phrase 'took upon himself a human form'.[604] This researcher thinks that the idea he has expressed is based on Philippians 2:5-11 although there is no explicit reference to the passage in the treatise apart from the phrase we have noted above.[605] Asare then refers to a view held by Christians that Jesus did not want to say that he was God openly because of the Jews because they would neither have believed him nor let him go free but would have killed him for making a claim as grave as that. He notes that the inability of those who hold this belief to show where it is found in the Bible shows that there is no support for the view.

It seems to this researcher that Asare is unable to show the relevant text in which the self-emptying of Jesus is found as a result of which, he refers to other passages in the Bible (John 8:38-44; Romans 8:14; Numbers 23:19) that he thinks counter this view that God became incarnate in Jesus. He notes that

[603]Asare, *Jesus*, 16.
[604]Asare, *Jesus*, 20.
[605]Asare, *Jesus*, 20.

in the first of the texts cited above (John 8:38-44), Jesus states clearly that he had not come on his own but was sent by God and in the second (Romans 8:14), being a child of God or of the Devil does not connote physical biological generation either by God or by the Devil but has more to do with whether the person is righteous or evil.[606]

Further, Asare argues that Jesus could not be God because he describes himself not as God but as a 'man who had told the Jews the truth from God' (John 8: 40). Asare notes that in addition to the evidence against the divinity of God in the texts we have considered above, the Bible categorically teaches that God is neither a man nor the 'son of man' (Numbers 23:19) so that he will lie or repent.[607]

Eighth, he examines the statement by Jesus that he was before Abraham and that Abraham was glad to see his day.[608] Although he does not explicitly cite the verse, it is clear that he is referring to John 8:56-58. He now attempts to offer an alternative interpretation as he has done to other verses that we have already considered in this section.[609] Asare's re-interpretation of the passages focuses on two phrases, namely, 'your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and was glad', and 'before Abraham was I am'.[610]

Regarding the meaning of the former phrase above, he argues that Jesus himself bore witness to the fact that Abraham saw Moses' ministry in his teaching and preaching. This conclusion is in spite of the writer's admission that Moses never met Abraham on earth.[611] What seems to be the basis for

[606]Asare, *Jesus*, 22.
[607]Asare, *Jesus*, 22.
[608]Asare, *Jesus*, 23.
[609]Asare, *Jesus*, 23-24.
[610]Asare, *Jesus*. 23-24.
[611]Asare, *Jesus*, 24.

Asare's conclusion is the phrase 'They have Moses and the prophets let them hear them' (Luke 16: 19-31).[612]

The contention of Asare regarding his comparison that we noted above is this: if Abraham saw Moses' day (Asare understands 'Moses' day' to mean the prophetic ministry of Moses to the Jews) although the two were not contemporaries, it is not strange for Jesus to say that Abraham saw his day and was glad. In the second phrase i.e. "before Abraham was I am", Asare cites some verses from the Bible (Jeremiah 1:5) and one text from the Qur'an (Q. 7:172-174) in support of his view. Whereas the biblical text refers to the fore-knowledge of God with particular reference to the prophetic commissioning of Jeremiah, the Qur'anic text means that 'all human beings were created the day Adam was created in the spiritual realm'.[613]

In view of the arguments he has made so far, he observes that the phrase "before Abraham was I am" does not imply that Jesus is divine. He therefore notes that the insistence by Christians that God had revealed himself earlier to Moses (Exodus 3:14) as "I am that I am" for which reason the statement of Jesus "Before your father Abraham was I am" (John 8:56-58) does not prove that Jesus is divine since Paul himself said something similar "by the grace of God I am what I am".[614]His contention is that no Christian believes that Paul was divine because of this statement.

Ninth, Asare argues on the basis of the statement of Jesus in Luke 18: 18-19 that only one is good where the reference is to God, as a veiled admission on the part of Jesus that he did not consider himself to be God.[615] He

[612]Asare, *Jesus*, 25.
[613]Asare, *Jesus*, 26.
[614] Asare, *Jesus*, 28.
[615] Asare, *Jesus*, 29.

supports his argument by referring to passages in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Job 25:4-6; Ezekiel 18:20) that show that all human beings are sinful.[616] In view of this, he questions why Christians would refer to verses in the Qur'an that refer to the sins of Muhammad when the Bible teaches that all human beings are sinful. He observes that it is only God alone who is both righteous and the ultimate Judge to whom all human beings are answerable.[617] He observes that while all prophets are righteous, they are still required to ask for the forgiveness of their sins and Muhammad is no exception. Hence, he is commanded in the Qur'an to ask for the forgiveness of his sins.[618]

Tenth, he contends that the inability of Jesus to grant salvation (Matthew 20:20-23) in relation to the request by the mother of James and John for places of honour in the kingdom meant that he was not God.[619] Asare defends his argument by noting that the granting of salvation is a prerogative of God alone. Hence, Jesus' inability to grant salvation meant that he neither thought nor pretended that he was God.[620] He points out that the power to grant salvation was not given to any of the prophets whom God had sent into the world.[621]

Eleventh, the author examines the basis upon which Jesus is addressed as God in the Bible. In doing this he opts for a consideration of Isaiah 9: 6 and John 20:28. He notes that these are two texts that have been used by 'those who try to make Jesus into God'.[622] A number of questions that relate to how the

[616] Asare, *Jesus*, 30.
[617] Asare, *Jesus*, 31-32.
[618] Asare, *Jesus*, 31-32.
[619] Asare, *Jesus*, 34-35.
[620] Asare, *Jesus*, 35.
[621] Asare, *Jesus*, 35-36.
[622] Asare, *Jesus*, 40.

prophecy could be historically identified with the birth of Jesus are raised by Asare.

Twelfth, he calls attention to what he sees to be the differences in the phrases "unto us a child is born" compared with "a child will be born" implying that the former refers to the birth of a child whereas the latter refers to a child to be born in the future. He questions whether Jesus was born during the time of Isaiah and concludes by asking a second question as to what the basis is for seeing this verse as a prophecy about the birth of Jesus. He also questions how a child who is named after his father can be said to be the same as his father, granted that the verse (Isaiah 9:6) is about the birth of Jesus?

In relation to Thomas' statement (John 20:28), he summarises his argument regarding why it cannot be interpreted as a text that supports the belief in the divinity of Jesus by saying that it is common for great men and leaders to be addressed as God in the Bible. So far, what he has been concerned to do is to safeguard the unity and oneness of God (*tawhid*). To do that he marshals all the proofs against the divinity of Jesus which he can find both in the Bible and the Qur'an to demonstrate that Jesus was a creaturely prophetic figure albeit, a great messenger of God.

3.2.2.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

We pointed out at the end of our analysis of Asare's work that his preoccupation was to defend the oneness of God. It is this point that at once, shows that there a key theological continuities between his work and the critique against the divinity of Jesus in all the four pre-modern Islamic sources.

Firstly, the belief in the existence of one God as so clearly enunciated in the Qur'an is the key thing that is common to his work and the pre-modern

sources that were examined in Chapter 2. Like both the early commentators and exegetes, Asare also argues that the miracles of Jesus should not be the basis for his divinity since they were performed by the permission of God.

Secondly, Asare argues that the miracles were no proof that he (Jesus) was divine. He therefore moves on from there to show via a variety of arguments that Jesus was human. For example, he argues that Jesus saw himself as one who had been sent into the world to preach monotheism. For that reason, Asare argued that Jesus always referred to doing his Father's will. Moreover, Asare argues that there were things that Jesus could not do, such the granting of eternal life to his two disciples, James and John when they asked to be allowed to sit at Jesus right and left hand in his kingdom.

Thirdly, Asare argued that the miraculous conception of Jesus did not constitute any hard evidence that he was divine, but as we saw in the analysis in Chapter 2, it showed the power of God in creating with the divine fiat 'Be' and things were created. Therefore, the miraculous conception was something that demonstrated what God can do rather than that it is proof of the divinity of Jesus.

The arguments we have been examining in Asare's critique against the divinity of Jesus are the same arguments that were used in the pre-modern sources in Chapter 2. Like those sources, he has made a case against the divinity of Jesus, namely, that he was only a human being, a prophet and a messenger of God.

3.2.3 Mohammed Braimah Youseph

Yousseph's work is entitled *Muhammed the Comforter*. Its purpose is to critique the Christian belief that the 'Comforter' predicted by Jesus in the

gospel of John was the Holy Spirit (14: 16-17; 15: 26; 16:7-15). The key argument in his critique is that it was Muhammad who fulfilled the prophecy about the coming of the 'Comforter'. It is further argued in the critique that in the verses in the gospel of John, Jesus predicted the advent of his successor, Muhammad.

We should mention that this work was written during the turbulent days in the 1980s when Muslim-Christian relations were at their lowest ebb as exemplified in the three cases of Muslim-Christian disturbances we cited in the introductory chapter of the thesis above. These three incidents are only illustrative of the strained relations between Muslims and Christians from the 1980s until the first decade of the 1990s. Many more incidents of Muslim-Christian conflict that were witnessed by this researcher could be cited. The spasms of both intra-Muslim and Muslim-Christian violence that were cited in Chapter 1 illustrate the hostile relations between Muslims and Christians during these times.

The method he uses in his critique is to argue that the Christian writers who had argued that the predictions were not about Muhammad were mistaken both in their reading and interpretation of the passages. We shall confine our analysis of his work only to the evidence that he has referred to in the New Testament as the focus is on the predictions about Muhammad in the gospel of John. We shall only cite some Old Testament passages only to illustrate or to clarify any arguments in the critique.

Firstly, he begins with an exegesis of John 14:16, focusing on the word *paracletos* which is translated 'Comforter' in the English translations of the text. He argues that there are two words associated with the text namely,

periclytos and *paracletos*. He makes two deductions from the text, namely, (1) that the coming of another 'Comforter' was necessary because the first 'Comforter' (Jesus) did not finish his work and (2) that the message of the first 'Comforter' or 'Advocate' (Jesus) was not fully understood by the people. Hence, it was necessary for another 'Comforter' to come. In this way, he is able to build the argument that Muhammad was the 'Comforter' who came after Jesus in order to make the message of the latter clearer to the people.

Secondly, he brackets John 14:16 ("I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Counsellor, that he may abide with you") which we just considered above with Deuteronomy 18:17-18 ("I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto me, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him").

In his critique, he aims to show that the prediction of the coming of Muhammad in the Bible antedated the coming of Jesus in which case, the words of the latter (Jesus) in the gospel of John were merely a confirmation of an established biblical tradition that looked forward to the coming of Muhammad. It is important to point out that his bracketing of the two texts (Deuteronomy 18:17-18 and John 14:16) we noted above is not unique to his argumentation but is generally characteristic of Muslim scholars and polemicists who have examined what is thought to be prophecies about Muhammad in both testaments of the Bible.

Thirdly, he contends that John 1:19-21 ("…. when the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask, who art Thou? And he confessed, and denied not, but confessed I am not the Christ…. And he saith, I am not. Art Thou that prophet? And he answered no") is some additional piece of evidence that supports his

argument that the prophecies about the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John were fulfilled by Muhammad.

In relation to John 1: 19-21 above, he notes that the Jews were expecting two figures namely, the expected Prophet and the Messiah.[623] In that case, because Jesus had fulfilled the prophecy of the Messiah, the prophecy about the 'Comforter' referred to no other than Muhammad. In this case, Deuteronomy 18:17-18 and the predictions about the advent of the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John are the Old Testament and the New Testament predictions about the coming of Muhammad respectively.

Fourthly, Youseph examines what he describes as the 'attributes' of the 'Comforter' focusing on John 16:13 ("Howbeit when He (Comforter) the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, He shall speak, and He will show you things to come"). Almost immediately, he points out that the Christian view that it is the Holy Spirit who is meant here does not fit the description. He notes that one does not need to be an erudite scholar in order to that the prophecy refers to a human being and not to the Holy Spirit.[624]

Fifthly, he argues that the third person pronoun 'he' which is used six consecutive times in the text (John 16:13) suggests that it was a human being that is meant here not the Holy Spirit. Moreover, he argues that when this text is read in conjunction with other texts in John, it becomes clear that the 'Comforter' would be a human being because among other things, he will 'teach', 'remind' (14:26) and 'guide' (16:13). He therefore contends that the Holy Spirit is incapable of doing any of these, on the basis of which he argues

[623]Muhammed Braimah Youseph, *Muhammad, the Comforter* (no place of publication, 1990), 17.
[624]Youseph, *Comforter*, 18.

that it was not the Holy Spirit whose coming was predicted in these texts in John – the texts are a prediction of the coming of Muhammad.

Sixthly, he observes that the Greek word *pneuma* used by Jesus which is translated 'spirit' in the English translations of the New Testament is in the masculine gender and should have been referred to with the word 'it' rather than 'he' as we find in the these texts of John.[625] Although Youseph is right in asking why the pronoun 'he' should be used of a neuter Greek noun (*pnuema*), he seems to be unaware that elsewhere it is 'himself' rather than 'itself' that is used of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:12-16). It is therefore not a strong argument to say that 'it' should have been used in translating the Greek *pneuma* since there is a biblical precedent for using pronouns such as 'himself' or 'he' to refer to the Holy Spirit.

Seventh, on the basis of John 15:26-27 ("When the Counsellor comes.....from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also, must testify for you have been with me from the beginning"), Youseph argues that the 'Comforter' was a human being. According to him, the words of Jesus in the text imply that if the Spirit is to testify about him as his disciples are commanded to do, the 'Spirit of truth' must be a human being in order to do so.[626] The import of his argument is that the humanity of the disciples to whom the commission of witnessing about Jesus was given implies the humanity of the 'Spirit of truth' if he was going to bear witness to Jesus.

Eighth, Youseph refers to a saying (he does not indicate its source) that is attributed to the third century Church theologian, Augustine of Hippo, to the

[625]Youseph, *Comforter*, 18.
[626]Youseph, *Comforter*, 18.

effect that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit constitute a unity of one substance that is indivisible.[627] He also points out that the Athanasian Creed describes the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost as co-eternal and co-equal which implies that they all have the same knowledge of things.[628]

On the basis of the argument he has made above that the three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) have been traditionally understood in historic Christianity to be both co-substantial and co-equal, he questions how we should understand that the 'Spirit of truth' if he is the 'Holy Spirit' can hear from another source that is higher and greater than himself.[629] His contention here is theological: How can the Holy Spirit hear from and take from another source when he himself is part of the Trinity? He aims to show that his argument will rule out the Holy Spirit as the person whose coming was predicted in the gospel of John. This would imply that the predictions could only have been fulfilled by Muhammad.

Ninth, on the basis of John 14:16 ("And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that may abide with you forever"), he argues that since Jesus (whom he identifies as the first Comforter) was a human being, it follows that his successor, the 'another Comforter' had to be a human being.[630] Also, he argues that the second 'Comforter' (Muhammad) had to be like the first 'Comforter' (Jesus) in terms of having human frailties such as hunger, sorrow, death etc. Hence, it was Muhammad who had these frailties not the Holy Spirit.[631]

[627]Youseph, *Comforter*, 20.
[628]Youseph, *Comforter*, 20.
[629]Youseph, *Comforter*, 20.
[630]Youseph, *Comforter*, 21.
[631]Youseph, *Comforter*, 21.

Furthermore, he argues that in view of the affinity between the first Comforter (Jesus) and the second 'Comforter' (Muhammad) in terms of their humanness, he points out that the phrase 'will abide with you forever' (John 14:16) which has been used by Christian polemicists to support the view that the prophecy was about the Holy Spirit should not be taken literally as if it meant that the 'Comforter' would be immortal.[632] He argues that the meaning of the phrase is that the message of the 'Comforter' whose advent is predicted in this text would abide with us forever.[633]

In justifying his interpretation of the text in John (John 14: 16), he cites Luke 16:31 ("If they (those still alive on earth) will not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not listen ....someone rises from the dead"). He therefore contends that the eternality of the 'Comforter' in John was a reference not to himself but to the message that he would bring to humankind. Here, Deedat's contention is that when John talks about the 'Comforter' abiding with the people forever (John 14:16), he meant the message that would be brought by the 'Comforter' rather than the Comforter' himself.

The argument that Youseph has made throughout his work is clear. It is that the texts in the gospel of John about the coming of the 'Comforter' although traditionally read and interpreted as predictions about the coming of the Holy Spirit, were predictions about the coming of Muhammad. Suffice to say briefly that his argument raises very interesting hermeneutical questions which lie outside of both this chapter and the thesis as a whole.

It is worth noting that Youseph's work is one of the earliest Muslim responses to the plethora of Christian anti-Muslim treatises in the 1990s in

[632]Youseph, *Comforter*, 21.
[633]Youseph, *Comforter*, 21.

Ghana. It thus served an important pastoral purpose in reassuring Muslims in Ghana that the traditional view that Jesus predicted the coming of his successor, Muhammad, is well-founded and remain solid both from the point of view of the Bible and the Qur'an.

3.2.3.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

Youseph's critique agrees with the outcome of the analysis in Chapter 2 in respect of the view that Jesus was the precursor of Muhammad and that he (Jesus) predicted the advent of the latter in the gospel of John. Both his arguments and his conclusions agree with the teaching of the Qur'an (61:6), the exegetical tradition, the prophetic tradition and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. His work thus helps to reinforce the view that Jesus predicted the coming of Jesus as his successor.

3.2.4 Ustaz Adam Dwomoh

Two polemical treatises of Ustaz Adam Dwomoh concern us in this analysis. The first is thirty pages long and is entitled *Pentecost Spirit: Holy or Evil*? His main argument is that the prediction about the coming of the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John (14: 16-17; 15: 26; 16:7-15) was not fulfilled by the Holy Spirit, who in Christian tradition, came on the day of Pentecost but by Muhammad.

Dwomoh has identified three key sources of the prediction that was made by Jesus about the 'Comforter' namely, the Bible, the Holy Qur'an and the gospel of Barnabas.[634] His second treatise is hundred and ten pages long and is entitled *Was the Word God or God's?: John 1:1 Versus Psalm 33:6*. We first examine the former work as the latter is its sequel.

[634]Dwomoh, *Pentecost Spirit* (no place and date of publication), 1.

We first note some key comments that are made at the beginning of his critique. He observes that there is a great deal of disagreement between Muslims and Christians over the identity of the 'Comforter' who was promised by Jesus and laments the failure of Muslims to examine what he describes as the 'Pentecost Spirit' with reference to what it is, where it came from and what it came to do.[635] The preposition 'it' is used in our analysis because Dwomoh prefers it to the pronoun 'he'. He argues that the latter word is not appropriate to the 'Pentecost Spirit'.

The second observation is that it was not the Holy Spirit who fulfilled the prophecy about the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John because it (Holy Spirit) did not play the roles that were assigned to the 'Comforter'.[636] His entire work is punctuated with questions and answers about aspects of the character or actions of the Holy Spirit. There are twelve of such questions in all.

Firstly, he argues on the basis of John 13:7 that the 'Comforter' was to bring 'ablution' (the ritual washing of some parts of the body before prayer by Muslims) to perfection. He does not tell us anything more about the relevance of the text to the prediction about the coming of the 'Comforter'. Therefore, we can only surmise that his aim is to argue that whereas Muhammad prescribed ablution as a necessary ritual before prayer for his followers, there is nothing in the biblical account to suggest that the Holy Spirit said anything about it.

Although we are not sure why he has cited the text, in which case whatever we have said is speculative, there remains a fundamental difficulty here about how the washing of the feet of the disciples by Jesus could be read and understood as ablution before prayer as there is no evidence to show that

[635]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 1.
[636]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 3.

Jesus and his disciples prayed after this. Rather, internal evidence would suggest that Jesus was teaching his disciples about humility and the importance of serving one another. There can be no other interpretation of the passage (John 13:7-17) than that it was humility that Jesus sought to inculcate in his disciples. Be that as it may, he argues on the basis of this text that the prediction about the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John was not fulfilled by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, he argues that the 'different tongues' that were spoken by those upon whom the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) have nothing to do with the work of the 'Comforter' in John 16: 8 ("When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness").[637]

According to Dwomoh, a natural reading of John 16:8 would imply that the 'Comforter' would 'reprove the world of sin' and of 'judgement and righteousness'.[638] He notes that the Holy Spirit fulfilled neither of these on the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, he argues that the 'Comforter' whose coming was prophesied in the gospel of John could not have been the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, Dwomoh contends that the Holy Spirit did not fulfill the predictions about the 'Comforter' because he did not receive any utterances from God.[639] His argument is on the basis of John 16:13 ("But … Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth…. not speak on his own, he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come"), the 'Comforter' would hear from God and then communicate to humankind.[640] He

[637]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 4.
[638]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 4.
[639]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 4.
[640]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 4.

points out that the Holy Spirit neither received any utterances from God nor from Jesus but spoke by his own authority.[641] Although he does not explain in detail what he means when he says that the Holy Spirit did not receive any utterances from God but spoke on its own authority, it may be a reference to the Day of Pentecost where those who spoke in other languages were empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so (Acts 2:1-4).

Fourthly, he argues that we cannot be certain that the Holy Spirit had come from heaven merely on the basis that the text (Acts 2:1-4) says so because there is biblical evidence to suggest that both good and evil spirit dwell in the heavens (Ephesians 6:12). In view of this, he cautions that we ought to be skeptical about accepting that the Holy Spirit came from God.[642]

It is worth noting that up to this point Dwomoh has argued that the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was not the fulfillment of the promise of the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John and leaves the reader then to conclude that it was Muhammad who was the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Fifthly, he argues that the Holy Spirit was not the fulfillment of the prophecies in the gospel of John because it (Holy Spirit) failed to be a guide to the disciples into all truth on the basis of John 16:13 ("But … Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth…. not speak on his own, he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come").[643] He argues that the 'dumb and mute' character of the Holy Spirit and its inability to guide the disciples into all truth was obvious when the question about the circumcision of

[641]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 4.
[642]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 4.
[643]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 5.

Gentile Christians in order to qualify them for salvation and inclusion into the Church arose (Acts 15:1-6).[644]

He notes with reference to the dispute about Gentile circumcision that we mentioned above that not even Paul and Barnabas who had been baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:24; 13:9) could provide guidance in the resolution of the dispute without going up to Jerusalem where they met with the apostles and the elders.[645]

Further, he contends that the fact that the proceedings of the Council of Jerusalem were characterized by 'much disputing' (Acts 15:7) in itself meant that the occasion was a gathering for the sharing of ideas where the resolution to the problem was the direct result of a suggestion by James (Acts 15: 19-20).[646] According to him, it is clear that the Holy Spirit did not play any role in the decision of the Council of Jerusalem.[647]

Sixthly, in addition to the failure of the Holy Spirit to guide the disciples into all truth as we noted in the preceding paragraph, he argues that it (Holy Spirit) caused disunity within the Church.[648] He adduces evidence for this from Acts 15:37-40 ("Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark with him…..Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work….had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus….Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord"). His contention here is that the Holy Spirit was behind the disagreement. In that case, the Holy Spirit had failed to guide the disciples into

[644]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 5.
[645]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 5.
[646]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 5.
[647]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 5-6.
[648]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 6.

all truth. He therefore asks rhetorically, 'Why was the 'Pentecost Spirit' not able to prevent Paul and Barnabas from having such a sharp disagreement?'[649]

Seventh, he argues why the Holy Spirit was unsuccessful in preserving the gospel of Barnabas if it was the fulfillment of the 'Comforter' whose coming Jesus predicted in the gospel of John.[650] Referring to a work by a Christian apologist, Iskander Jadeed, who describes the gospel of Barnabas as spurious and a forgery, Dwomoh asks 'who was the writer of the gospel they condemned at three Councils', namely Nicaea, Galasius and Innocent?[651]

We know that matters about the canon of scripture were addressed in the Gelasian Decree during the reign of Pope Gelasius. What is not historically verifiable is his argument that it condemned the gospel of Barnabas. We are unsure if there is any historical evidence to substantiate this view. We are not aware of a Council that was presided over by Pope Innocent at which the gospel of Barnabas was condemned.

Also, we are not aware that besides looking at the doctrine of Jesus with special reference to his relationship with God, the Council of Nicaea which was the first ecumenical council to be convened in 325 C.E. also discussed the canon of scripture. In view of this, we question the validity of his argument that the gospel of Barnabas was rejected or as he put it, condemned at three successive councils.

Eighth, Dwomoh argues on the basis of Acts 23:1-5 ("I did not know that he was the High Priest") that the Holy had failed to guide Paul because he was unaware that the person who was trying him was the High Priest and that

[649]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 7.
[650]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 7-8.
[651]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 8.

he was required to speak to him with decorum.[652] According to Dwomoh, Paul's ignorance was in spite of the fact that Jesus had said that the Holy Spirit would guide the disciples into all truth (John 16:13). He therefore questions how the Holy Spirit could have been the 'Comforter' when it failed to guide Paul on this occasion thereby leaving him with no option but to render an apology after he had shown disrespect to a religious leader of the status of the High Priest.

Ninth, Dwomoh argues that whereas Jesus had instructed and warned his disciples never to preach the gospel to Gentiles until after his second coming in Matthew 10:23 ("When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes"), Peter preaches the gospel to Gentiles in Joppa under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:19-20).[653] In pitching what he argues is the teaching of Jesus himself in relation to confining the preaching of the gospel to the twelve tribes of Israel against the preaching of the gospel by Peter to Gentiles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Dwomoh argues that the Holy Spirit is the Anti-Christ – it could not be the Comforter' whose coming is predicted in the gospel of John.[654]

Tenth, he argues that the 'Pentecost Spirit' did not glorify Jesus, which was one of the key things that the 'Comforter' would do based on John 16: 14-15 ("He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you"). [655] He

[652]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 9.
[653]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 10.
[654]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 10.
[655]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 11.

specifically mentions five criteria that showed that the Holy Spirit failed to glorify Jesus. They are (1) it did not uphold the unity/oneness of God (John 17), (2) it failed to show that Jesus had come to the earth from God (John 8:12), (3) it failed to teach that the source of sin was the human heart rather than something that was inherited from Adam, (4) it failed to predict the future as seen in John 16:13-14 ("But when he the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own, he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come") and finally, (5) it failed to testify that Jesus was only a human being as seen in Matthew 20:28 ("just as the Son of Man did come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many").[656]

Eleventh, he argues that the Holy Spirit was not the 'Comforter' because it (Holy Spirit) led Peter and Barnabas astray in the case in which they withdrew from having fellowship with Gentile believers in Antioch when some Jewish brothers were visiting from Jerusalem (Galatians 2:13-14).[657] In the words of Paul which he quotes, Peter and Barnabas 'walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel'.[658] According to him the two leaders were led astray despite the fact that they had both been baptized by the Holy Spirit.[659]

Finally, he argues that whereas Christians believe that the Holy Spirit gives boldness to those in whom he dwells, there is evidence to the contrary both in the Bible and in real life.[660] He cites examples in the Bible where the lives of Christians are characterized by fear and weakness rather than by

[656]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 11.
[657]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 11.
[658]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 11.
[659]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 11.
[660]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 12.

boldness. Peter is mentioned in connection with the incident we have already cited namely his withdrawal from having fellowship with Gentile Christians in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14) when some Jewish Christians were visiting Antioch from Jerusalem.[661] He notes that these instances of fear are to be contrasted with Acts 1:8 ("But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth").[662]

Similarly, Paul is also mentioned as an example of the weakness of Christians in connection with the 'thorn in his flesh' in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 ("To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"). He notes that like Peter we mentioned above in order to point out his fearfulness, although Paul was baptized by the 'Pentecost Spirit', he is described here as weak because of the thorn in his flesh. He argues on the basis of these examples that if the 'Pentecost Spirit' who baptized Peter and Paul was the 'Comforter' it would have both emboldened and made the two leaders stronger that what is said about them in these biblical texts.

The argument of Dwomoh that the predictions about the coming of the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John were not fulfilled by the Holy Spirit is quite clear. However, this researcher is not sure whether his critique has been faithful to the biblical texts that he has had to exegete in order to show that the promised 'Comforter' is other than the Holy Spirit. His analysis does not seem

[661]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 12.
[662]Dwomoh, *Spirit*, 12.

convincingly enough. Nevertheless, his work is an important contribution to Muslim anti-Christian works on the subject in Ghana.

We now turn our attention to his second work, *Was the Word God or God's?: John 1:1 Versus Psalm 33:6*. It is hundred and ten pages long. The primary purpose of this work is to show that John 1:1 is not a proof-text for the divinity of Jesus. Like Psalm 33:6, the 'word was God' means that it is the creative word of God (which belongs to God because he is the speaker) rather than Jesus who is described here as God. In this sense 'word' in John 1:1 does not mean 'God' but something that belongs to God in a possessive sense. The key argument in this work is that Jesus was a human being, a prophet and a messenger of God. He is therefore concerned to prove that there is no evidence in both the Bible and the Qur'an to support the Christian claim that Jesus was divine. According to him, the motivation for his work is the inadequate treatment of the subject by Muslim writers.

We now look at his work in more detail. Firstly, he argues against the divinity of Jesus on the grounds of the oneness and transcendence of God, which precludes the possibility of having another God.[663] He describes God as the greatest name that 'conjures the idea of a Supreme Being' as the person who alone created the world and sustains it and that the name of God surpasses all excellence, greatness and power.[664] To illustrate this, he cites Exodus 20:5 ("You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God") and Isaiah 45:21 ("Declare and present your case .....Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God ….; there is none besides me"). On this view, he argues that God does not have a rival and

[663]Ustaz Adam Dwomoh, *Was the Word God or God's?: John 1:1 Versus Psalm 33:6* (No place of publication : 2014), 14.
[664]Dwomoh, *Word*, 14.

cannot be described in the plural.[665] Although he does not indicate the source (maybe a reference to Luke 4:8), he observes that Jesus confirms the unity of God when he told Satan "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."[666]

He buttresses his argument about the unity of God and his greatest as attributes that preclude any idea of another deity by observing that the evidence for the uniqueness of God in the Qur'an is no different from that of the biblical testimony we considered above and cites Qur'an 112 ("And there is none co-equal or comparable unto him") and Qur'an 17: 110 (" Say (O Muhammad) Invoke Allah or invoke the Most Gracious (Allah), by whatever Name you invoke Him (it is same), for to Him belong the best names") in support of that[667]

Also, Dwomoh argues that the universality of God is seen in the different names that describe him noting that Muhammad called the Supreme Being in Arabic *Allah*, Jesus called him in Aramaic *Alaha* and Moses called him in Hebrew, *Eloha*.[668] In view of this, he observes that the practice in modern Christianity where all the sixty-six divine attributes (no explanation is given for how he came by this number) are ascribed to Jesus is problematic.[669]

Secondly, he cites Mark 5:25-30 ("And there was a woman who had a flow of blood ....And Jesus perceiving in himself that power (spirit) had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, who touched my garments") as evidence against the divinity of Jesus.[670] His argument is that

[665]Dwomoh, *Word*, 14.
[666]Dwomoh, *Word*, 15.
[667]Dwomoh, *Word*, 15.
[668]Dwomoh, *Word*, 15.
[669]Dwomoh, *Word*, 15.
[670]Dwomoh, *Word*, 29-30.

if Jesus loses power as a result of a single woman touching him and required that power to be replaced, he could not be God.[671] He does not explain clearly in what sense this text relates to the subject under investigation except that he uses 'power' and 'spirit' interchangeably. Hence, his argument is that if Jesus lost power when one woman touched him, how much power (spirit) would Jesus have lost if four of such women had touched him.[672]

In contrast to the loss of power (spirit) he has noted above, Dwomoh argues that all people draw their strength from the one true God and yet he does not need to have such strength replaced as in the case of Jesus above.[673] The import of his argument is that how could Jesus be God when unlike God, he did not have the capacity to be the source from whom all people would draw their strength.

Thirdly, he focuses on the doctrine of the Trinity and aims to demonstrate in what ways the doctrine is both theologically unsound and also, unsupported by the teaching of both the Bible and the Qur'an. We should observe that he alluded to the Trinity early in his work but did not look at in detail.[674] It will also be recalled that he also pointed out that Muslim writers had failed to offer a strong critique of the Trinity because they are not aware that the Trinity that is mentioned in the Qur'an is not exactly the same Trinity that Christians believe in today.[675] As part of his arguments against the doctrine of the Trinity in terms of its unscriptural basis in both the Bible and the Qur'an, he notes that the idea of three gods was a commonplace in the ancient world.[676]

[671]Dwomoh, *Word*, 30.
[672]Dwomoh, *Word*, 29-30.
[673]Dwomoh, *Word*, 30.
[674]Dwomoh, *Word*, 11.
[675]Dwomoh, *Word*, 11.
[676]Dwomoh, *Word*, 32.

According to him, the ancient world grouped their gods into triads such as the Egyptian Trinity which comprised Horus, Osiris and Isis and the Hindu Trinity which consisted of Siva/Shiva, Brahman/Vishnu among others.[677] On the basis of this he argues it was such pagan beliefs that crept into Christianity and resulted in the doctrine of the Trinity.[678] He therefore contends that the Trinity of Father (God), Jesus (Son) and Mary (mother) that is addressed in the Qur'an (5:73, 75) is modelled on these pagan beliefs.[679] Hence, the writer describes it as the ancient Trinity.

Fourthly, he focuses on the 'modern Trinity'. It is worth pointing out that Dwomoh has two forms of the Trinity in his work namely, the ancient Trinity[680] which is mentioned in the Qur'an and consists of God, Jesus and Mary and the modern Trinity[681].which consists of Father, Word and Holy Spirit. He therefore notes that the change from the ancient to the modern Trinity was necessitated by the fact that it became difficult for Christians to make a strong theological case for the deity of Jesus, thus it was felt that it would be helpful to add 'Word' as one of the hypostases.[682]

It is difficult to understand the explanation given by Dwomoh for the change from the ancient Trinity to the modern Trinity above. The reason for the change seems unconvincing to this researcher given the fact that historic Christianity has always identified Jesus as the 'Word' that became flesh (John 1:1) and was born by Mary. Besides, the Trinitarian formula Father, Son and Holy Spirit go back to Nicaea in 325 C.E. and antedated the birth of Islam. In

[677]Dwomoh, *Word*, 32.
[678]Dwomoh, *Word*, 32.
[679]Dwomoh, *Word*, 32.
[680]Dwomoh, *Word*, 32.
[681]Dwomoh, *Word*, 37.
[682]Dwomoh, *Word*, 36.

this case, we may have to look elsewhere to explain the Trinitarian formula of God, Jesus and Mary in Qur'an 5:116 "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 any such 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".[683]

Fifthly, the Dwomoh questions why 1 John 5:7 ("There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one") has 'Father' while John 1:1 ("In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God") has 'God'.[684] He also questions the basis for the use of the word 'Father' in the former instead of 'God' as in John 1:1 when the birth (perhaps referring to the birth of Jesus) had not taken place.[685] According to him, 1 John 5:7 and John 1:1 are an example of two different authors who were 'apparently confused' about whether it was most appropriate to use 'Father' or 'God' in describing the relationship between the two persons of the Trinity in which case, one author opts for the use of 'God' (John 1:1) whereas another author opts for 'Father' instead (1 John 5:7).[686]

Sixthly, he argues that 'word' has a different meaning apart from being part of the Trinity as suggested by the two texts that we considered in the preceding paragraph.[687] He adduces evidence from both the Bible and the Qur'an in support of the view that 'word' refers to the 'creative word' of God

[683]Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 79.
[684]Dwomoh, *Word*, 37.
[685]Dwomoh, *Word*, 37.
[686]Dwomoh, *Word*, 37.
[687]Dwomoh, *Word*, 37.

(Genesis 1: 3, 6; 2:7; Qur'an 15: 28; 3: 59).[688] He notes that there are four different ways that 'word' is used in the Bible and three ways it is used in the Qur'an. However, he observes that the commonest way in which 'word' is used in both scriptures (Bible and Qur'an) is "Be! And it is".[689]

Seventh, he observes that there is only one instance in which 'word' is used in the Bible that is contradicted by the Qur'an, that is when 'word' is deified and therefore, ceases to mean what it means in all cases, 'Be! And it is" (*kun fayakuun*).[690] On this view, he contends that 'word' is used in both the Bible and the Qur'an to denote the creative power of God to bring things into being.[691]

It is instructive that Dwomoh notes that on some occasions in history, God gave permission to some of the prophets to use this creative word we referred to above to raise the dead back to life again (Ezekiel 37: 1-10; 1 Kings 17: 20-23; 2 Kings 4: 32-35).[692] He notes that an example of 'word' as the creative power of God is proffered in Psalm 33:9 ('word' is used in the sense of 'Be') as exemplified in the conception and birth of Jesus.[693] He observes that while Mary had doubts about how she could have a child without a husband, the Qur'an says that all that God did was to say "Be! and it is" (*kun fayakuun*").[694]

Eighth, he returns to the heart of his argument namely, identifying Jesus with 'word' in John 1:1 and raises a number of questions both about the text

[688]Dwomoh, *Word*, 40.
[689]Dwomoh, *Word*, 41.
[690]Dwomoh, *Word*, 41.
[691]Dwomoh, *Word*, 42-3.
[692]Dwomoh, *Word*, 42-3.
[693]Dwomoh, *Word*, 42-43.
[694]Dwomoh, *Word*, 44.

and its author.[695] Among these are: Why does the writer give priority to the 'Word' than he does to God? Does the writer have an ulterior motive? Could the 'word' have been there without God? Is 'with' God the same as 'from' God'? Is the ulterior motive of the writer not seen in the deification of 'word' in the verse, John 1:1?[696] He is now concerned with what 'word' stands for in John 1:1. In order to address this, he asks what category 'word' in John1:1 belongs?[697] He observes that Christian theologians have bracketed 'word' in John 1:1 with 'word' in Revelation 19:13.[698]

Dwomoh notes that some Christians including the Muslim convert to Christianity and founder of the Converted Muslims Christian Ministry (CMCM), Ahmed Agyei, have argued that Jesus is described as the 'word of God' in the Qur'an.[699] It is worth noting that we first mentioned the name of Ahmed Agyei in connection with the Muslim-Christian disturbances in Ghana in the 1980s in Chapter 1. Dwomoh observes that Christians face the dilemma of distinguishing between 'word' when it is used as a designation and when it is not.[700] On this view, he argues that whereas 'word' is used in John 1:1 as a reference to the creative power of God 'Be! and it is (*kun fayakuun*), it is used in Revelation 19:13 'only as a designation.'[701]

Ninth, he returns to the point he raised above regarding the Christian argument that the Qur'an describes Jesus as the 'Word of God' (*kalimatullah*).[702] While he concedes that Jesus is described as the 'word of God' in the Qur'an, he also argues that Jesus is not described as 'Word is

[695]Dwomoh, *Word*, 55.
[696]Dwomoh, *Word*, 56.
[697]Dwomoh, *Word*, 56.
[698]Dwomoh, *Word*, 56.
[699]Dwomoh, *Word*, 56-57.
[700]Dwomoh, *Word*, 60.
[701]Dwomoh, *Word*, 60.
[702]Dwomoh, *Word*, 60.

Allah' (*kalimatu Allahu*). He therefore contends that whereas the Qur'an rightly describes Jesus as the 'Word of God', John 1:1 wrongly describes Jesus as the 'Word is God'.[703] It seems to this researcher that Dwomoh is interpreting John1:1 from the point of view of Islamic theology. What is clear is that he fails to adequately show by way of providing proof why the verse should not be read as one that supports the divinity of Jesus. Interestingly, he notes that whereas Psalm 33:6 uses 'word' as the medium via which God created the world, John 1:1 makes the 'Word' both a co-partner with God in creation and the Creator himself. In his view, John1:1 should be understood as the 'word' belonging to God rather than the 'word' being God himself. In other words, 'word' in John 1:1 was not deity, but was God's 'word', that is, it belonged to God.

Tenth, he provides ten arguments to show why 'word' in John 1:1 should be understood as 'belonging to God' rather than 'being God' himself.[704] The proofs are (1) the prologue to John can neither be attributed to Jesus nor can the words themselves be accepted as revelation, (2) John 1:1 begins with the phrase 'In the beginning' but does not tell us the beginning (the beginning of what?) he has in mind, (3) the use of the definite article 'the' three times in the phrase means that John is referring to something that is already known namely, the expression "Be! and it is" ("*kun fayakuun*) and (4) the words "All things were made through him (the writer prefers 'it' here instead) and without him ('it') was not made that was made is an explanation of John 1:1 and are an

[703]Dwomoh, *Word*, 60.
[704]Dwomoh, *Word*, 62.

allusion to Psalm 33:6 where the reference is to the word of God with which he created everything.[705]

According to him, his reason for arguing that 'word' in John 1:1 is a reference to the creative power of God and therefore equates to 'belonging to God' rather than 'being God' suggests that not only is John misquoting Psalm 33:6, he is also personalising and deifying 'word' without any basis for doing so.[706] We consider three more arguments here. They are (5) 'word' in John 1:1 refers to the 'word of God' (the word that belongs to him) as seen in Isaiah 55:8-10 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways.....So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent (uttered) it".

In another set of arguments to show that 'word' in John 1:1 refers to the creative power of God he has(6) the Qur'an 4:171 proves that 'word' in John 1:1 should be understood as 'belonging to God' rather than 'being God' himself. It reads ("O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah (God) aught but the truth… son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah (God) and his Word ("Be! and it is") which He bestowed on Mary....." (7) Qur'an 3:39 ("Then the angels called to him (Zechariah) while he was standing in prayer in the chamber (saying) Allah (God) gives you glad tidings of John (the Baptist) believing in a 'word' from Allah (God), noble, keeping away from sexual relations with women, a Prophet, and one of the righteous").[707] He juxtaposes

[705]Dwomoh, *Word*, 63-69.
[706]Dwomoh, *Word*, 69.
[707]Dwomoh, *Word*, 75.
[707]Dwomoh, *Word*, 75.

this text with 1 Corinthians 3:23 (And you are Christ's and Christ is God's (Revised Standard Version). He questions why the text could not have been written in the opposite thus "And you are Christ, and Christ is God").[708]

We now consider the last set of three reasons. They are (8) in the Qur'an 'word' means the word of God that makes things happen as we have seen above in the prophecy about the birth of John (the Baptist), is illustrated further in Luke 1:31 ("And behold, you shall call his name Jesus" Mary replied, Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word").

Further, Dwomoh argues that the response of Mary clearly shows that it was the word that the angel had spoken that would bring about what had been promised to her. Continuing his argument, he notes that as in other parts of the Qur'an that we have already considered, 'word' means the creative command of God, namely, "Be! and it is" (*kun fayakuun*), (9) 'word' in John 1:1 should be understood as 'belonging to God' rather than 'being God' because God is immutable ("Malachi 3:6 (NIV): "I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed").and cannot change and become flesh (John 1:14) and (10) Jesus did not take his deity back (cease to be a human being after his incarnation, his death and resurrection) but continued to be human. In order words, if Jesus was God before the Incarnation, why did he not take up his deity but continues to be a human being.[709] With reference to this last argument, he observes that Jesus' continuing existence as a human is sufficient proof that Jesus was created as a human being by God.[710]

[708]Dwomoh, *Word*, 70-75.
[709]Dwomoh, *Word*, 77.
[710]Dwomoh, *Word*, 75-77.

Regarding the Holy Spirit, Dwomoh advances six arguments to show why the doctrine is theologically problematic and argues that the Holy Spirit is not part of a Trinity. It is worth recalling that the Holy Spirit is one of the three hypostases within his modern formulation of the Trinity. Two of the three (Father and Word) have already been looked at above. In what follows, we look in detail at his critique of the nature of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, he notes that although Muslims are in agreement with Christians about the 'holiness' of God, they dispute the grounds on which the Holy Spirit has been deified in Christian theology.[711] Citing Qur'an 59:23 ("He is God beside whom ... the King, the Holy, the One free from all defects ...Glory be to him! Above all they associate as partners with him"), he argues that nowhere in the Qur'an is God described as 'Spirit'.[712]

Similarly, he cites Qur'an 112:1 ("Say (O Muhammad): He is Allah, (The) One") and Hosea 11:9 "I will not carry out my fierce anger nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim; for I am God and not man. The Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath" to support his argument. On the basis of these texts, he argues that God is God and Spirit is God's.[713] The implication of his argument is that the Spirit is God's Spirit and cannot at the same time be referred to as being a third member of a Triune God.

Secondly, he argues that there are four forms of the 'Holy Spirit' are discernible both from the Bible and the Qur'an. The first form is what he describes as the 'impersonal Spirit', support for this use of 'Holy Spirit' is seen in a number of texts in both the Bible and the Qur'an including Genesis 2:7 "And God breathed into him of his spirit and man became a living being") and

[711]Dwomoh, *Word*, 81.
[712]Dwomoh, *Word*, 81-82.
[713]Dwomoh, *Word*, 82.

Qur'an 15:29 ("So when I have fashioned him completely and breathed into him (Adam) the soul which I have created for him, then fall (you) down prostrating yourselves unto him").[714] He sheds more light on this view of the 'Holy Spirit' by noting that it is this 'active life force' which makes humans living beings and it is this 'spiritual body' that is separated from the human body at death.[715] He also points out that the nature of the Holy Spirit can never be comprehended as seen in the Qur'an ("And they ask you (O Muhammad) concerning the Spirit: say: The Spirit is one of the things, the knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little").[716]

The second form of Holy Spirit' is the angel Gabriel.[717] The evidence for this is two-fold. In the first place, the Bible in Hebrews 1:14 ("Are not angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?") shows that angels are spirits.[718] It is difficult to understand why Dwomoh thinks that the text is proof that the Holy Spirit in Christian doctrine means the same thing as angels.

According to him, a second piece of evidence that Holy Spirit is a reference to angels is in Qur'an 2:87 ("And indeed, We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Messengers, And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear signs and supported him with Holy Spirit (Gabriel). Is it that ...."). On the basis of this verse in the Qur'an, Dwomoh argues that the designation 'Holy' or 'Holy Spirit' is specifically used in the Qur'an for angel Gabriel, the Messenger of Allah (God).[719]

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[714]Dwomoh, *Word*, 83-84.
[715]Dwomoh, *Word*, 83.
[716]Dwomoh, *Word*, 85.
[717]Dwomoh, *Word*, 86.
[718]Dwomoh, *Word*, 86.
[719]Dwomoh, *Word*, 86.

The third sense in which 'Holy Spirit' is used is to refer to a 'prophet', a 'righteous man' and a 'man of God', examples of this use of 'Holy Spirit are found in both the Bible and the Qur'an.[720] He cites Matthew 12:32 ("Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man (himself) will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit (Holy Prophet) will not be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come").

Another text that he cites is Acts 7:51-52 ("You stiff-necked people uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the Prophets did not your fathers persecute ....?" It is interesting that he identifies 'Holy Spirit' in the former verse above with the 'Comforter' to come after Jesus.[721] Similarly, in the latter text above, the writer identifies the reference to the prophets in the speech by Stephen with the 'Holy Spirit'.[722]

Dwomoh does not fully account for why he has identified the 'Holy Spirit' with the promised 'Comforter' or his identification of the Holy Spirit with the killing of prophets in the two texts above. His views here are in stark contrast to his views in his work entitled *The Pentecost Spirit* in which he argued that it was Muhammad rather than the 'Holy Spirit' who fulfilled the predictions about the advent of the 'Comforter' in the gospel of John. In that work, which we examined first, he argues that the Holy Spirit was not the same as the 'Comforter' whose coming was predicted in the gospel of John. In this treatise, it seems to this researcher that he is contradicting that view.

[720]Dwomoh, *Word*, 88.
[721]Dwomoh, *Word*, 90.
[722]Dwomoh, *Word*, 90-91.

The fourth sense in which Holy Spirit is used in the Bible is found only in I John 5:7 in the King James Version.[723] We have already looked at this text and pointed out that it is not found in any other translation of the Bible. The writer notes that it is only in this text that the Holy Spirit has been deified.[724] He notes that the deification of the Holy Spirit has no support whatsoever, in the Bible. Rather, he points out that the mistake has arisen because Christians, believing that God is spirit, have concluded that 'Spirit' is therefore Allah (God).[725]

Finally, Dwomoh concludes his critique by looking at the designation 'son of God' as used for Jesus in Christian theology. He describes this by the phrase 'divine sonship of Jesus'.[726] He observes that his critique of the Trinity will be incomplete without analysing the 'divine sonship of Jesus' as the two are always mentioned together in the Qur'an.[727] Dwomoh argues that the epithet 'son of God' is inappropriate for Jesus for one major reason, namely, that the epithet is neither supported by the Qur'an nor the Bible.

We look at this in more detail below. Firstly, he notes that the Qur'an does not teach that Jesus is the son of God in a special sense. Rather, he points out that Jesus is unambiguously described as the 'son of Mary' in the Qur'an. He argues that it was uncommon among the Jews for children to be named after their mothers. Further, he argues that the Qur'an however, breaks this tradition by describing Jesus as the 'son of Mary' thus elevating the position of Mary to one of prominence.[728] Moreover, the Qur'an teaches that God is the

[723]Dwomoh, *Word*, 92.
[724]Dwomoh, *Word*, 92.
[725]Dwomoh, *Word*, 92.
[726]Dwomoh, *Word*, 95.
[727]Dwomoh, *Word*, 95.
[728]Dwomoh, *Word*, 96.

source of the heavens and the earth and does not have children because he does not have a wife (Q. 6:101). In that case, the taking of Jesus by Christians as Lord is not based on truth (Q. 9:31).

Secondly, he argues that it is an unpardonable sin to say that God has begotten a son because it does not suit the greatness of God to do so (Q. 19:88-92).[729] According to him, the biblical evidence is that the epithet 'son/sons of God' was used both for all of the Israelites as well as for individuals (Deuteronomy 32: 3-6; 17-19). For example, God called Solomon (David's son) his own son (2 Samuel 7:8-14), David is described as the begotten of God (Psalm 2:6-12) and Israel as a nation is described as the firstborn son of God (Exodus 4:22-23).

Furthermore, Dwomoh argues that there is support in the New Testament that the title, when properly understood, was not used exclusively for Jesus. For example, those who love their enemies even when they are persecuted are the 'sons of God' (Matthew 5:44-45).[730] In addition to this, Satan is even referred to as having children where the Jews are described as his children (John 8:44). He questions whether the Jews would then be described as the literal 'begotten children' of the devil. He answers in the negative.[731]

Thirdly, on the basis of the aforementioned reasons advanced in relation to the designation 'son of God' as applied to Jesus, he contends that it is blasphemous if by it is meant that Jesus had a special relationship with Jesus that is not shared by any other person or persons. He therefore concludes that Muslims believe that Jesus is not the son of God in the sense in which

[729]Dwomoh, *Word*, 106-107.
[730]Dwomoh, *Word*, 99.
[731]Dwomoh, *Word*, 100.

Christians understand the phrase. To Muslims therefore, God has no wife and can therefore not have a son.[732]

Dwomoh's argument above, namely, that the divinity of Jesus cannot be built on the basis of John 1:1 is predicated on the view that 'Word' in John 1:1 does not refer to Jesus but to the creative 'word' which is analogous to the Islamic view that God created the world by his 'word', 'Be'. Dwomoh therefore argues that Christians misunderstand the verse when they think that 'Word' there refers to Jesus. According to him 'Word' there (John 1:1 is analogous to 'Word' in Psalm 33: 6.

It is worth pointing out that Dwomoh has consistently re-interpreted the text under consideration (John 1:1) throughout his critique to make it read in a way that will justify his contention that 'word' as used in that text does not suggest that Jesus was divine. Rather, as he has argued throughout, 'word' in John 1:1means 'belonging to God'.

3.2.4.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

In this brief analysis we shall focus on three areas of agreement between the critique of Dwomoh and the pre-modern sources in relation to the divinity of Jesus and the Trinity. Firstly, both Dwomoh and the pre-modern sources make monotheism the basis of their argument. He argues that his rejection of the divinity of Jesus is based on the theological axiom that there is one God who created the universe and who also, has no rival. The implication is that to say that there is another God (Jesus) would contradict the existence of the one God who made the universe and controls it.

[732]Dwomoh, *Word*, 108.

The second reason is that Jesus lacked the power to be God. Dwomoh cites as evidence for this the account in the gospel where Jesus is reported to have said that power had gone out of him when a woman who suffered from bleeding touched him. Dwomoh argues that this meant Jesus had limited power compared to God who is the source of power to whom all people run and yet, he never needs to have that power replenished.

Thirdly, he points out that Jesus was not God because he had been sent into the world as a prophet and a messenger of God. Similarly, in his critique against the appellation 'Son of God' as applied to Jesus, he argues that it is blasphemous to say that about God because it is only humans and animals that procreate.

Among other things, Dwomoh identifies the Holy Spirit with the angel Gabriel and thereby, argues that the Trinity is not thought in the Bible but found its way into Christianity through the influence of the pagan environment from within which Christianity grew as it advanced beyond its Jewish cradle especially through the instrumentality of Paul after his conversion.

3.3 Ahmadiyya polemical works

The three works that will be examined are written by Hussaini Yusuf Mabera, Tahir Ahmad and Nurudeen Muhammed Asante. Asante is the only Ghanaian Muslim, the other two are non-Ghanaian Muslims. We should mention that the works of Tahir Ahmad and Asante will also be used in the analysis in Chapter 4 in relation to the death of Jesus.

3.3.1 Hussaini Yusuf Mabera

Mabera critiques the divinity of Jesus in his fifty-four page booklet entitled *Is Jesus son of God?* His argument is in four parts. The first seven

pages serve as the introduction to his critique. Chapter 2 which is the refutation proper focuses on reasons that are given as the basis for the view that Jesus is the son of God. All of these are refuted and reinterpreted by Mabera.[733] In Chapter 3 more reasons are given as the basis for the epithet, all of which are refuted and re-interpreted by Mabera.[734]

As in the previous chapters, Chapter 4 looks at statements from which the epithet could be inferred, all of which again are refuted and given new meanings.[735] In Chapter 5, Mabera refutes more reasons that are given in support of the epithet 'son of God' as applied to Jesus.[736] In this chapter, Mabera mentions the gospel of Barnabas as another source of evidence against the epithet 'son of God'.[737] In the final part of his critique he calls for reflection on the part of his readers, introduces the account of the birth of Jesus from the standpoint of the Qur'an and observes that there is confusion in the Churches about the status of Jesus as the son of God etc.[738]

However, he does not tell us more about the nature of the confusion. Although we are not sure what means by such an assertion he probably wanted to say that there is misunderstanding about what is meant by the phrase 'son of God' as applied to Jesus among Christians. This is purely speculative on the part of this researcher. After sketching the broad outline of his critique, we now look at its main arguments in more detail. Some comments are in order. In order to illustrate the theological importance that Mabera attaches to the appellation 'son of God', we shall first consider what he says about it. He notes

[733]Hussaini Yusuf Mabera, *Is Jesus son of God?* (Kaduna: Sarumedia Publishers, 2007), 12-17.
[734]Mabera, *Son*, 18-26.
[735]Mabera, *Son*, 28-34.
[736]Mabera, *Son*, 39-46.
[737]Mabera, *Son*, 39-46.
[738]Mabera, *Son*, 47-55.

that it is among the most controversial doctrines in Muslim-Christian dialogue and from the point of view of Islam, it one of the 'blasphemies and deceptions' in Christianity.[739] He also notes that it is both a confused and irrational doctrine that will be the reason why countless Christians will go into the fires of hell.[740]

Firstly, Mabera begins his critique by looking at the attributes of God. Supporting his argument both with texts from the Bible (Job 25:4-6) and the Qur'an (10:68), he is insistent that God is unique and totally other.[741] He contends that it is impossible for God to have sons and daughter since he is not comparable to humans and animals as taught in the texts we have cited above.[742] He further argues that given the fact that Jesus was born by a human being (Mary), it is only right that he should be described as a human being since as he illustrated, a tiger comes out of a tiger and a goat comes out of a goat.[743]

Mabera briefly observes without providing further explanation that it would not be a strong argument for Christian to build the doctrine of Jesus being the 'son of God' on the basis of the supernatural miracles that Jesus performed.[744] He notes that Christians would be overlooking the miracles that other prophets who antedated Jesus performed if they made his miracles of Jesus the basis for this appellation.[745]

Secondly, he contends that the eternal nature of God, described in Isaiah 44:6, Deuteronomy 10:16 and Qur'an 76:1 as the one without a beginning or ending implies that Jesus could not be the 'son of God' since

[739]Mabera, *Son*, 7.
[740]Mabera, *Son*, 7.
[741]Mabera, *Son*, 7-8.
[742]Mabera, *Son*, 8.
[743]Mabera, *Son*, 8.
[744]Mabera, *Son*, 8.
[745]Mabera, *Son*, 8.

these texts refer to a time in the past when there was no one else with God before anything was created.[746] He therefore argues that the Christian view that Jesus has always been the eternal 'son of God' from eternity will collapse in the light of these texts.[747]

Thirdly, he questions the theologically validity of the appellation on the basis that because God is the author of life and is therefore susceptible to death, it is needless for him to have a son.[748] The import of his argument is that it human beings who are mortals who need a son so that the kingdom will go to him after their demise.[749] He contends that since this does not arise in the case of God, the need to have a son becomes unnecessary.[750] Hitherto, we have confined our analysis to the introductory part of Mabera's critique. Next, we look at the refutation of the doctrine in more detail.

In the second part of his critique, he aims to refute four arguments that he has identified constituting the basis for the appellation 'son of God' in Christianity. They are (1) The miraculous conception of Jesus, (2) The biblical evidence for the appellation, (3) The description of Jesus as the 'word' and the 'spirit' of God and (4) the supernatural miracles performed by Jesus. However, he ends up discussing only one of them in this part of his critique. The other three are discussed in other parts of his work. The first is the miraculous conception of Jesus.[751] He notes that there is no disagreement between the Bible (Luke 1:26-31; Matthew 1:18-25 and the Qur'an (3:42-49; 19:16-36) and by extension between Christians and Muslims about the supernatural

[746]Mabera, *Son*, 9.
[747]Mabera, *Son*, 10.
[748]Mabera, *Son*, 10.
[749]Mabera, *Son*, 10.
[750]Mabera, *Son*, 10.
[751]Mabera, *Son*, 12.

conception of Jesus.[752] However, he points out that the differences relate to how and who was responsible for the miraculous conception of Jesus.

According to him, in believing that the father of Jesus is God and Mary is his mother, Christians do not believe the miracle of the conception of Jesus.[753] Given the views expressed here by Mabera, namely that Christians believe that God is the father of Jesus and Mary is his mother, it is clear that Mabera understands the appellation 'son of God' in a physical sense. However, he argues that from the point of view of the Qur'an, God created both Jesus and through the divine fiat 'Be' (3:59). Still arguing against the inappropriateness of describing Jesus as 'son of God, Mabera observes that in view of the fact that they (Adam and Jesus) were both created by the word of God, they each deserve to be described as the 'word of God'.[754]

This researcher would like to briefly note that in spite of the fact that Mabera has argued that both Adam and Jesus were created by the divine command 'Be', nowhere in the Qur'an is the former described as the 'word of God'. The latter however, is described as the 'word of God' (4:171). One is therefore, not sure whether it is theologically appropriate from the point of view of the Qur'an to describe Adam as the 'word of God'. Furthermore, he contends that it is not theologically convincing for Christians to build the divine sonship of Jesus around his miraculous conception because it is possible for a woman to have a baby when she has not had any sexual relations with a man.[755] He describes this as partheno-genesis. On the basis both of the miraculous conception of Jesus through the divine command 'Be' and the

[752]Mabera, *Son*, 12-13.
[753]Mabera, *Son*, 13.
[754]Mabera, *Son*, 16.
[755]Mabera, *Son*, 17.

possibility that a baby could be born through partheno-genesis, Mabera contends that the conception of Jesus was not unique.[756] Hence, he argues, the miraculous conception of Jesus cannot be the basis for the describing him as the 'son of God'.[757]

In the third part of his work, Mabera focuses on the voice that spoke from heaven at the baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:21-22; Matthew 3: 16-17; John 1:35).[758] Firstly, he critiques the words of the heavenly voice that addressed Jesus thus: '....thou art my beloved Son in thee I am pleased' (Luke 3:21-22).[759] He argues that one cannot accept the words spoken from heaven as a validation for the epithet 'son of God' for three main reasons namely, (1) that it was neither God nor Jesus who reported the words from heaven, (2) the words contradict the words of in the prophecy of Isaiah that characterise Jesus as 'the beloved servant of God' (Isaiah 42:1) and (3) the words of the heavenly voice were given to Luke by another person because he was not one of the twelve apostles (Luke 1:2-3).[760] He contends that besides the aforementioned issues, there is the testimony of the Qur'an whereby Jesus is described not as the 'Son of God' but as the 'servant of God' (19: 30; 43: 59; 4:172).[761]

Secondly, he questions the source of the voice and argues that it was not from God because up until that time the disciples had not heard any voice from God nor seen his shape.[762] He therefore argues that it was either Jesus who was speaking the truth (in that case the disciples had not heard from God which implies that the voice was not from God) or the gospel writers were right

[756]Mabera, *Son*, 17.
[757]Mabera, *Son*, 17.
[758]Mabera, *Son*, 18.
[759]Mabera, *Son*, 18.
[760]Mabera, *Son*, 18-20.
[761]Mabera, *Son*, 23.
[762]Mabera, *Son*, 24.

because the voice was from God.[763] This researcher is unable to tell whether this is a case in which Mabera is intentionally being disingenuous or one in which he has not checked all his facts. Interestingly, the audience of John 5:37 are not the disciples but the Jews. In that case, his argument that the disciples had not heard and voice from God (which implies that the voice was not from God) does not apply because the text does not apply to the disciples.

Thirdly, he argues that the source of the voice that spoke in Luke 3:21-22 was the voice of the unclean spirits (Devil).[764] The reason for associating the voice in Luke 3:21-22 with evil spirits is that it is these spirits that always confess that Jesus is the 'son of God'. He finds support for this in Luke 4:41 ("And devils also come out of many crying out...thou art Christ the Son of God...) and Mark 3:11-12 ("And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him and cried out, saying, thou art the Son of God...").

We should call attention to the fact that we have already pointed out that his argument that God had not spoken to the disciples (based on his reading of John 5:37) was misplaced. This implies that for him to identify the source of the voice from heaven as coming from unclean spirits is not borne out of the evidence in the Bible. This implies that the voice that spoke from heaven was not the voice of evil spirits. It is reasonable, given the evidence available to us in the Bible on which Mabera has sought to build his critique, to say that the voice was from God.

Fourthly, he argues that Jesus himself categorically denies that he was the son of God.[765] The occasion was when he was interrogated by the High priest during his trial after he was arrested. The text is Luke 22:66-71 ("....Art

[763]Mabera, *Son*, 24.
[764]Mabera, *Son*, 25.
[765]Mabera, *Son*, 26-27.

thou the Christ? Tell us ....Are thos then the Son of God?...Ye say that I am").[766] He argues that whereas Jesus accepted the designation Son of man, it was the Jews who called Jesus the Son of God after the example of the unclean spirit who called Jesus by the same designation (Mark 1:23; Luke 4:3-4).[767]

Further, he contends that it was the Jews rather than Jesus himself who used the designation Son of God finds support in Qur'an 9:30.[768] It is worth pointing out that once again, Mabera is disingenuous here because the his reference to the Qur'an actually says that the Jews say Ezra is the Son of God and the Christians say that Jesus is the Son of God. So it is the Christians who are guilty of calling Jesus Son of God and not the Jews. Mabera also argues that Jesus denies being the Son of God in the gospel of Barnabas and curses those who confess that belief.[769]

Fifthly, he argues that when Jesus addressed God as his father, it did not connote a literal relationship in which the former was the literal physical son of the latter since there are biblical texts in which God is described as 'father' to individuals and to groups of people (Deuteronomy 32:6, where Moses describes God as the father of the Israelites, Matthew 5:48, where those who serve God are told to be perfect because God who is their father in heaven is perfect).[770]

According to Mabera, when God is addressed as father as Jesus was found of addressing him in the gospels, it was always intended to be understood in a metaphorical rather than a literal sense because the Qur'an

[766]Mabera, *Son*, 26-27
[767]Mabera, *Son*, 26-27
[768]Mabera, *Son*, 27.
[769]Mabera, *Son*, 27.
[770]Mabera, *Son*, 28.

describes as one who neither beget nor has he himself been begotten (112: 1-4).[771]

Sixthly, he has an assemblage of biblical texts in which Jesus is described as 'son of Man'. He therefore argues that Jesus own self-understanding was that he not the 'son of God' but the 'son of man'.[772] He argues that Jesus described himself as 'son of man' eighty-three times in the Bible.[773] Mabera observes that the references to Jesus in the Bible both as the 'son of God' and the 'son of man' are the source of confusion because it does not make sense for one person to be called by both designations at the same time.[774] Moreover, he contends that because Jesus resembled the 'sons of men' meant that he was not the 'son of God', for if he was, he would have looked otherwise.[775]

Seventh, he compares the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version translation of John 3:16 where he argues that the word 'begotten' which was originally part of the text in the former translation is not found in the latter translation because it is one of the many defects of the King James Version.[776] He contends that to say that God has sons and daughters imply that we are associating God with acts that are so base and creaturely that they can only be predicated of human beings and animals.[777]

Eighth, Mabera refers to a book entitled 'What is the sonship of Jesus? According to him the author of this book sought to argue that Jesus is described

[771]Mabera, *Son*, 28-29.
[772]Mabera, *Son*, 29.
[773]Mabera, *Son*, 29.
[774]Mabera, *Son*, 29.
[775]Mabera, *Son*, 29.
[776]Mabera, *Son*, 30-31.
[777]Mabera, *Son*, 30-31.

as the 'son of God' because he was begotten of God by Mary.[778] Describing this view as blasphemous and illogical madness, he argues that the aim of the author of this book is implying that there was a 'husband and wife' relationship between God and Mary.[779] The teaching that Jesus is the son of God seems to Mabera as not talking about God as if he was a human being. Hence, Mabera is condemnatory of this belief and again, refers to Qur'an 112:1-4 to support his argument that God does not beget nor has he himself been begotten.[780]

3.3.1.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

Again, we cannot exhaust all of the key arguments raised by Mabera to show how his critique agrees with the pre-modern critique against the divinity of Jesus and other related areas. Firstly, like the pre-modern sources, he argues that the miracles performed by Jesus were done by 'leave of God'. As such, he contends that they were not sufficient proof that Jesus was divine. This argument is the same argument that is made in the exegetical tradition.

Secondly, as we also saw in the exegetical tradition which was examined in Chapter 2, Mabera argues that the miraculous conception of Jesus was also a demonstration of the power of God where he only says, 'Be' and it is done. Thirdly, he argued that Jesus' self-understanding was the 'Son of man' which he understands to be evidence not of his divinity but of his humanity.

3.3.2 Nurudeen Mohammed Asante

The work of Asante which critiques both the divinity of Jesus and some of the associated doctrines is entitled *The Guide*. It is analysed in both this chapter and in Chapter 4. It is eighty pages long. It is difficult to describe the broad outline of the refutation because he addresses fifty-six topics on

[778]Mabera, *Son*, 32.
[779]Mabera, *Son*, 32.
[780]Mabera, *Son*, 32.

Christian and Muslim theology that have relevance both for Muslim-Christian and intra-Muslim dialogue. It is therefore difficult to discern a clear argument in his work. Given the nature of his work, we shall focus on those topics that relate to the subjects that are being examined in this chapter namely, the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines.

Firstly, Asante argues against the divinity of Jesus by saying that Jesus is not the Creator but part of the creation of God.[781] He supports his argument both from the Bible (Matthew 4:8-10; Luke 10:21; Deuteronomy 30: 11-14; Psalm 33:6) and Qur'an 36: 83-84. All of these texts in either scripture refer to God as the Creator. The implication for this is that Jesus is not God the Creator but is part of the creation of God. In that sense, he could not have been divine.

Secondly, he argues that Jesus is not divine because he is not all-powerful. He argues, again from the Bible and the Qur'an that unlike Jesus, God is the only person who has power and also gives power to people.[782] He adduces biblical evidence for his argument in many passages including Psalm 62: 11-13 ("One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord .... Surely you will reward each person according to what they have done") and John 5:19 ("... the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father...the Father does the Son also does"). He also finds support for his argument in Qur'an in 5: 18 ("....Nay, you are but human beings of those He has created, He forgives ...And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and to Him is the return of all").[783]

[781]Asante, *Guide*, 2.
[782]Asante, *Guide*, 3.
[783]Asante, *Guide*, 3.

Thirdly, he argues that Jesus was not God because he was seen physically by people while he was on the earth and finds support for this in Exodus 33:20 ("But, 'he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no-one may see me and live") and 1 Timothy 1:17 ("Now, to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen").[784] According to Asante although the aforementioned texts show that God cannot be seen, Jesus was seen by people, evidence of which is seen in a number of biblical texts including John 1:29 ("The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'").[785]

Fourthly, he rejects the divinity of Jesus because of the fact that Jesus was a human being. As such, he argues that Jesus was susceptible to change which cannot be predicated of God.[786]. He finds support for his view in the Bible (Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Malachi 3:6; Deuteronomy 4: 12-19; Matthew 8:20; Mark 10:45; John 8:28-29; 8:40).[787] As a human being, Jesus also had siblings (Mark 6:3; Matthew 13: 55; Jude 1:1; Galatians 1:19).[788]

Fifthly, Asante argues that Jesus could not have been God because he ate food (Q. 5:76; Mk. 14:12-18; Luke 24:36-43). This contrasts with God who does not eat (Qur'an 6:14-15; 35:16; Psalm 50:12-13).[789] Sixthly, the writer argues that Jesus Christ was not God because he died (Qur'an 21:8-9; 21:35-36; 7:26; John 21: 14-19; Psalm 89:47-48; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Hebrews 9:27; 1

[784]Asante, *Guide*, 3.
[785]Asante, *Guide*, 3.
[786]Asante, *Guide*, 3.
[787]Asante, *Guide*, 3.
[788]Asante, *Guide*, 7.
[789]Asante, *Guide*, 6.

Corinthians 15:50). According to Asante, the death of Jesus is contrasted with the fact that God does not die (Qur'an 2:256; Jeremiah 10:10).[790]

Sixthly, the Bible teaches that whereas Jesus slept (Mt. 8:23; Luke 8:22-24), God does not sleep (Qur'an 2:256; 22:62; Psalm 121:1-4).[791] Eighth, the writer argues that Jesus was not God because he prayed to God. There is support in both the Bible (Mt. 26:36-39; John 12:27; Lk.22:39; Hebrews 5:7 and the Qur'an (16: 52-54) to illustrate this.[792] The writer's argument is that if Jesus were God, he did not need to pray. Therefore, the fact that he prayed meant that he recognised a higher being than himself.

Seventh, Asante notes that Jesus' reluctance to be called 'good' meant that he was not God. If he was, he would have readily accepted it when he was referred to as good teacher.[793] Again, the writer appeals to the Bible (Mk. 19: 16; Lk.18:18-19) to buttress his argument. Lastly, Asante observes that Jesus was not God because he was sent into the world by God as a prophet and a messenger of God as seen in the Bible (John 17:1-3; 12: 44-50) and Qur'an (4: 171-173; 61:7; 5:76).[794]

The work of Asante against the view that Jesus is divine is strong in being because of what seems to be the evidence in the Bible about Jesus' humanity. Such evidence includes Jesus' observance of his religious duties and other human acts including prayer, eating, sleeping etc. Based on this evidence, Asante argues that it is only a human being (not God) who can be associated with these acts. Asante has also argued that there is clear evidence in the Bible and the Qur'an as we have indicated above that Jesus was sent into the world

[790]Asante, *Guide*, 6.
[791]Asante, *Guide*, 6.
[792]Asante, *Guide*, 6.
[793]Asante, *Guide*, 6.
[794]Asante, *Guide*, 7.

as a prophet and a messenger of God (John. 17:1-3) and Qur'an (19: 31; 61:7; 5:76). Hence, Asante has argued that as a prophet and a messenger, Jesus was not divine. Asante also argued against the view that Jesus is divine by saying that he was neither all-powerful (as his power to perform miracles was given to him by God) nor was he the Creator.

3.3.2.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

The critique of Asante against the divinity of Jesus that we have analysed above agrees with the pre-modern critique that was examined in Chapter 2 above on every point except two. These two will be looked at later after we have briefly discussed four areas of agreement.

Firstly, like the pre-modern critique, Asante argues that Jesus was part of creation and for that very reason could not have been the God who created the universe including human beings. This argument was first made in the Qur'an in relation to Jesus, namely that Jesus the Messiah was only a human being. This argument has therefore found its way into both the exegetical tradition and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition.

Secondly, Asante is within the pre-modern Islamic tradition when he argues that Jesus could not be God because he was susceptible to change whereas God does not change. This argument recalls the argument made by Abu 'Isa al-Warraq in his analysis of the Incarnation that if the Uniting was an action by the Son, who as result of that has a human and a divine nature at the same time, it would suggest that God changed and developed from a foetus into a baby and was born by Mary.

Thirdly, when Asante questions the divinity of Jesus on the basis that he ate food and prayed, he is again within the pre-modern tradition because the

Qur'an itself uses the same argument. Fourthly, all of these arguments were the basis upon which like the Qur'an, the exegetical tradition, the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition and the prophetic tradition, were to lead to the most characteristic of all the depictions namely that Jesus was first and foremost, a prophet and a messenger of God.

Clearly, as his critique has shown, Asante shares a lot of important similarities with the pre-modern sources in his critique in terms of his condemnation of the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines. Like, the pre-modern sources, he cannot conceive of Jesus being anything more than a creature of God who was sent in this world with a divine message to call his hearers to the worship of the one true God.

3.3.3 Tahir Ahmad

The critique of Tahir Ahmad is in a hundred and fifty-three page book entitled *Christianity: A Journey from Facts to Fiction*. It is analyzed both here in this chapter and in Chapter 4. It examines a number of theological subjects that are germane to how Muslims conceptualize Jesus and his mission on earth namely, (1) the appellation 'son of God', (2) sin and atonement, (4) the Holy Spirit, (5) Trinity, (6) the crucifixion etc. His aim is to show that these beliefs are fraught both with theological and rational difficulties. We aim in the analysis of his work not to evaluate the validity of his arguments but to present them as they have been presented in his work.

We first note some preliminary comments he has made in his work. These will be helpful in throwing more light on his perception of Jesus as a theological figure of universal significance. He first observes that the theological significance of Jesus is not confined to Christianity but transcends

many of the major world religions, especially Judaism and Islam.[795] His second comment is that the basic facts about the life of Jesus including his mission and ideology are completely misunderstood.[796] Next, we focus our attention on his critique itself.

Firstly, he critiques the divinity by looking at the appellation 'son of God'. The starting point for Ahmad's critique of the divinity of Jesus is the epithet 'son of God' which he describes as a foundational tenet in historic Christianity.[797] He first notes that it was common in ancient times to believe that God had sons and daughters as was characteristic of both Greek mythology and Hindu mythology.[798] However, he observes that with the advancement both in science and technology, such a belief is no longer viable.[799]

Secondly, he notes that two difficulties will arise if Jesus is described as the literal son of God. The first is about who will provide the additional twenty-three chromosomes that were needed for the conception of Jesus to take place even if we grant that Mary supplied the first twenty-three chromosomes. He argues that it can only have been God who supplied the remaining twenty-three.[800] However, he notes that to suggest that God provided the additional twenty-three chromosomes is unacceptable.[801] Hence, he argues that to conceive of Jesus as the literal son of God is an affront to uniqueness of God.[802]

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[795]Tahir Ahmad, *Christianity: A Journey from Facts to Fiction* (Islamabad: Islam International Publications, 1994), 1.
[796]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 1.
[797]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 7.
[798]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 7.
[799]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 7.
[800]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 9.
[801]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 9.
[802]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 9.

Thirdly, he argues that apart from the implications that belief in Jesus as the literal 'Son of God' would have on the otherness of God it raises another major difficulty namely, the nature of the child. According to him, the child who would be the literal 'Son of God' and but born by a human being (Mary), would be half man and half god because the human mother would have contributed twenty-three chromosomes and God would have contributed the remainder.[803] Hitherto, Ahmad has argued that Jesus was not the literal 'Son of God' in which case God did not contribute twenty-three chromosomes towards the conception of Jesus.[804]

Fourthly, he contends that the birth of Jesus was the result of a hidden natural phenomenon without a man touching Mary.[805] According to him, Islam does not believe that miracles are unnatural occurrences.[806] Rather, he notes that miracles are natural phenomena that are concealed from human knowledge. [807] To buttress this, Ahmad notes that if somebody applied magnetism a few thousands of years ago when it had not yet been discovered, it would have been described as a miracle.[808] This researcher thinks that the reference above to Muslims as people who do not believe that miracles are unnatural occurrences was a reference to Ahmadiyya Muslims.

Hitherto, Ahmad has been concerned to show that it makes neither theological nor scientific sense to say that Jesus was the literal 'Son of God'. Hence, he has pointed out the resulting difficulties associated with that view not least the possibility that the person so born would be half-man and half-

[803]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 9.
[804]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 10.
[805]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 11.
[806]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 12.
[807]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 12.
[808]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 13.

God because of the scientific contribution of twenty-three chromosomes by either parent required for conception to take place.

At this point in his critique he focuses more on the reasons that would make the idea that Jesus is the literal 'Son of God' theologically implausible. The objections that going to be raised relate to the view that as the 'son of God' Jesus is both perfectly human and perfectly divine.[809] Two key reasons are highlighted in his argument.

Firstly, he objects that if Jesus as the 'son of God' is both fully human and fully divine at the same time, it implies that God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ) are two separate entities with different characteristics that are not transferable.[810] In other words, his argument is that if Jesus Christ became human and therefore possessed true humanity and divinity at the same time, he cannot remain the same as God the Father who has not become human.[811] This implies that Jesus Christ would be different from God the Father.[812]

Secondly, he objects that if Jesus became the 'son of God' as a consequence of having been born by Mary, it implies that there was a time when he was not the son of God. In other words this raises the question that the relationship that Jesus sustained with God the Father is not eternal – Jesus' sonship had a beginning at the point he was born by Mary.[813] This would mean that his relationship with God the Father as 'son' ran its course when Jesus returned to heaven.[814]

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[809]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 13.
[810]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 14.
[811]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 14.
[812]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 14.
[813]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 14.
[814]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 14.

On the basis of these two above objections, Ahmad categorically rejects the view that Jesus was fully human and fully divine at the same time. Rather, he argues that Jesus was the metaphorical 'Son of God' because his birth was a 'special creation brought about by God who activated some hidden laws of nature'.[815] Despite his recognition of the miracle behind the creation of Jesus, Ahmad argues that Jesus was a human being through and through.

Furthermore, he argues that the belief that Jesus is the literal 'Son of God' is the consequence of Christians looking at him (Jesus) through the prism of his character three hundred years after his death.[816] Although Ahmad is not categorical about what he means by the reference to three hundred years, he probably has in mind the major ecumenical Church Councils that were convened from the fourth century to the fifth century CE which discussed the relationship between Jesus and God.

The second part of his critique is about the Holy Spirit whom he characterizes both as the third person of the Trinity and who is completely and eternally fused with the 'Father' and the 'Son'.[817] He briefly comments on some difficulties about the Trinity before he proceeds to analyze the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in greater detail. The first difficulty with the proposition that God exists as a Trinity is whether or not the three persons within the Trinity have a single ego or three egos.[818] He notes, but does not provide details that if it is argued that the three persons within the Trinity have one ego instead of three, we could then not describe the three as persons. He argues further that it makes more sense to say that each of the three persons has a separate ego

[815]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 15.
[816]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 15.
[817]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 56.
[818]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 56.

because no matter how close the three are to one another, it is still meaningful to say that each enjoys a separate consciousness of being from the other two.[819]

Ahmad notes that although most Church traditions believe that each person within the Trinity has a separate personhood, it is still not a relationship that can be described as 'Three in One', but as 'three persons in one person'.[820] On the basis of his characterization of the Trinity as 'three persons in one person', he argues that there is justification in asking for example, why the Holy Spirit did not take part in the sacrifice that Jesus offered on the Cross.[821]

Similarly, he argues that one is justified in asking why the Holy Spirit did not suffer in hell alongside Jesus and the Father.[822] He observes that if what he has said about the participation of the Holy Spirit in the crucifixion and the suffering in hell alongside the Son and the Father did not happen, there can only be one conclusion namely, that the three persons are different individually with different emotions and faculties in relation to head and heart.[823]

Again, he observes that given how difficult it is to understand how three different beings can become a single entity, we can only conceptualize the Trinity as a merger in the body.[824] Although he does not provide details of what he means by this description of the Trinity as a meager in the body, he may only be trying to explain it (Trinity) as either a physical merger of the three persons of the Trinity or that the other two persons (Father and Holy Spirit) are merged into one entity with Jesus to form the Trinity. All of this is speculative and is only an attempt to explicate Ahmad's description of the

[819]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 56.
[820]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 56.
[821]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 57.
[822]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 57.
[823]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 57.
[824]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 57.

Trinity which seems unclear to this researcher at this point. Although he concedes that it is not possible for humans to fully comprehend the nature of God and how his attributes function, he observes that the concept of the Trinity creates an image of God that is hard for humans to understand.[825]

After a brief digression in his discussion of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, he returns to it after looking at the doctrine of the Trinity. His aim is to examine the role of the Holy Spirit in creation in order to find out about the involvement of the third person of the Trinity with creation. To begin with, he categorically denies that neither Jesus Christ nor the Holy Spirit played any role in creation.[826] This researcher suspects that his argument is made on the basis of the teaching of the Qur'an rather on the basis of the Bible since there evidence in the latter that both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ played active roles in creation (Genesis 1: 2; John 1: 1-3). He argues that there is no mention of either the Holy Spirit or Jesus Christ when God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning in Genesis 1:1.[827]

Furthermore, he argues on the premise that neither Jesus Christ nor the Holy Spirit participated in the creation of the world, he observes that none of the Jews who may have heard the verse above (Genesis 1:1) read many thousands of times in the pre-Christian period could have read either the Holy Spirit or Jesus Christ into the biblical text.[828] Although Ahmad accepts that 'word' is a reference to 'Jesus' in John 1:1-3 and is suggestive of the role played by Jesus Christ in creation, he is puzzled as to why a subject of such fundamental significance as the role of Jesus creation would be taken up by

[825]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 57.
[826]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 57.
[827]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58
[828]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58

only one of the gospel writers.[829] What is more, he contends that the writer (John) was not a disciple of Jesus.[830] He concedes that if the identification of Jesus with 'word' in John 1:1-3 is correct, the meaning of 'word' can only be the 'will of God' which is a concept that is common in many religious traditions.[831]

Thirdly, he argues that the associating of creation with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit remained something that was unknown to Jesus himself.[832] He notes that there is no single statement that can be traced to Jesus Christ in which he is described as the 'word'. This researcher is amazed at why he has returned to the debate about whether Jesus is referred to as 'word' in John 1:1-3 unless the reason is that this text makes a compelling case to the effect that Jesus Christ created the world alongside his Father, whom he himself describes as God the Father.[833] In order to defend his argument that it was God the Father alone who created the world, Ahmad observes that he has never read any Christian literature in which the two hands of God that created man from the dust belonged to Jesus and the Holy Ghost.[834] In any case, he asks whether the two (Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost) were merely passive observers who were in agreement with what God was doing or whether they did actually participate in the creation of the universe.[835]

Fourthly, he now focuses on the theology upon which the doctrine of the Trinity is built.[836] He aims to show that the view that God exists in three

[829]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58.
[830]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58.
[831]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58.
[832]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58.
[833]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58.
[834]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58.
[835]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 58.
[836]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 101.

persons contradicts human reasoning.[837] He notes that while the deification of Jesus is a myth, the ascription of divinity to the Holy Ghost as the third person of the Trinity is enigmatic.[838] He quizzes why it was not sufficient to have the two persons (Father and Son) but a third person (Holy Ghost) introduced into the doctrine.[839] He observes that the Trinitarian understanding of God may have started as a relationship consisting of Father and Son to which a third disparate entity was added later under the influence of pagan ideas that were commonplace in the Roman Empire.[840] He suggests that the Trinity can be conceptualized in four main scenarios.[841]

The first scenario is that the three persons possessed different phases or aspects of one single person. However, he quickly points out that Christians do not accept that this scenario of the Trinity explains the doctrine because no Christian believes that Jesus is an aspect or a phase of God.[842] Quite the contrary, he notes that Christians hold that Jesus is a distinct person within the Trinity. He further observes that it is not worth his while to discuss the Trinity since no Christian believes that the doctrine means three persons possessing different phases or aspects of a single person.[843]

According to him, the doctrine of the Trinity is jeopardized the moment one believes that this scenario fully accounts for the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[844] In that case, it would imply that it was God himself who, moved by his mercy, suffered and died on the Cross.[845] In

[837]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 102.
[838]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 101.
[839]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 101.
[840]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 102.
[841]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 102-103.
[842]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 103.
[843]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 103.
[844]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 103.
[845]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 103.

other words, it was the 'mercy of God' as an attribute of God that became human and died on the Cross. It would also mean that God was left without any mercy (because his attribute of mercy became the Son) for three days and three nights when Jesus was in the grave.[846]

The second scenario which he uses to illustrate the nature of the Trinity is that the three persons share eternity.[847] He observes that if this scenario fully explains the nature of the Trinity, it also raises the question of the internal relationships of the three persons within the Godhead at the same time.[848] For example, it would be interesting to ask whether these three persons had three independent egos or they shared a single ego.[849] In the former case, it would then be possible to say that one person within the Trinity can suffer without the other two being affected as such suffering would be the personal experience either of the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit.

Further, Ahmad illustrates the difficulty of conceiving of God as three persons sharing eternity with the example of a human child who is born with three heads.[850] He notes that while this child can be described as one person by virtue of his having only one trunk to support his body, two legs and two hands, the three heads present a real problem in relation to how this child makes decisions.[851] Unable to fully understand the Trinity via the two scenarios, he notes that it is ironical that such an important doctrine as the Trinity is not fully explained in the Bible.

[846]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 103.
[847]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 104.
[848]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 104.
[849]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 104.
[850]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 104-105.
[851]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 105.

The third scenario he uses to illustrate the Trinity is to understand the Trinity as three different persons with three different characters. However, he points out that the three persons in this scenario do not constitute a Trinity which by definition means that their characters, attributes, functions etc are identical.[852] He likens this explanation of the Trinity to identical triplets who while remaining three different persons, have their minds, hearts, feelings etc., in perfect harmony that the individual experiences of one is shared by the other two and vice versa.[853]

Ahmad recognizes the weakness of his 'triplets' metaphor above, to explain the nature of God when he notes that God cannot be conceived of as having a body. He still contends that the problems associated with the Trinity still remain unresolved even if one understands the identical triplets as three spiritual beings existing as individual persons and yet being one in all other respects.[854]

Next, he argues that in the area of worship, there are still unresolved difficulties with the Trinity. He points out that not even the metaphor of the identical triplets can resolve the question of the relationship of the three spiritual persons in relation to the act of worship.[855] The question that will arise in the case of worship is whether the three spiritual persons will worship one another or whether the three will all receive worship.[856]

Ahmad observes that while it is the Father alone who is the object of worship in the New Testament and Jesus himself both worshipped God the Father and admonished others to worship him (God the Father), neither him

[852]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 108.
[853]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 108.
[854]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 108.
[855]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 108.
[856]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 108-109.

nor the Holy Spirit is spoken of as receiving worship.[857] He observes that one is intrigued by the silence of the New Testament about the disciples worshipping Jesus or the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) receiving worship.

Again, he questions whether it is not the attributes of God that have been described as persons and argues that if that is the theological foundation upon which the Trinity is built, it does not make sense to restrict the attributes to three.[858] He concludes his argument by reiterating that if the persons in the Trinity worship each other it will imply that there is unequal status in the relationship among the three members.[859]

In making the above observation, Ahmad may just be reminding his readers about the argument that Jesus worshipped God the Father and yet neither him nor the Holy Ghost received worship which he made above. He points out that if the Trinity were conceived as three different persons analogous to the illustration of the identical triplets we noted earlier, it will be difficult to have a relationship described either as 'Three in One' or 'One in Three' as the idea will be meaningless.[860]

The final scenario is to conceive of the Trinity as three persons with identical and equal characters.[861] This is similar to the scenario of the triplets except that whereas the triplets were three with three distinct characteristics, here they are three persons with identical and equal characteristics. Here, for a second time, Ahmad employs the analogy of the identical triplets he has already used in his critique. However, he describes the triplets as being

[857]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 109.
[858]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 110.
[859]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 110.
[860]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 110.
[861]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 113.

completely identical that their similarities are not confined to their physical appearances but include their thinking and feeling processes.[862]

Interestingly, he concedes that when applied to the Trinity, it would mean that two persons (he uses constituents) are superfluous because the one person will still be complete in himself that the absence of the two will make no difference whatsoever.[863] Interestingly, for the very first time in his critique of the Trinity, he buttresses his position by paraphrasing a text in the Qur'an (5:18) which states that it would make no difference to the majesty, eternity and perfection of God if he (God) decides to obliterate the existence of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Ghost.[864]

Fifthly, after an attempt to conceptualize the Trinity by way of the four scenarios we have considered above, he notes that only two of the scenarios are viable albeit they have implications for the doctrine and may even compromise it altogether. In the first place, if it is taught that the three persons within the Trinity have different functions, the result is three distinct Gods who co-operate and live together in perfect harmony. This relationship will be expressed by 'Three Gods in Three' but never by 'Three Gods in One'.[865]

The Trinity may also be likened to a single person with different organs that function differently.[866] For example, a man has a liver, a heart and kidneys that function independently of each other. One cannot therefore say that those organs are distinct persons that are identifiable with the person. The relationship here can be described as a Unity but not a Trinity.[867]

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[862]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 113.
[863]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 113.
[864]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 113.
[865]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 113.
[866]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 113-114.
[867]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 113-114.

If 'Three in One' means what we have illustrated above namely that the Trinity is like a person with organs that function differently and independently of one another, it would not be problematic to see the logic of this. In the hypothetical case we noted above, the person will still remain a person even if his organs (lungs, heart, kidneys etc) were removed. The problem arises where each of the person's organs is said to function exactly like him in his totality and therefore, said to be identifiable with him.[868]

In a separate chapter, Ahmad categorically states that the dogma of the Trinity was absent in Christianity during the lifetime of Jesus himself.[869] He notes that the doctrine started to develop after the Crucifixion and went through a long process of evolution including the period of the debates by Christian theologians and philosophers from differing religious and cultural backgrounds.[870] He notes that the first followers of Jesus did not believe in the Trinity as he argues, it became formalized within the pagan and polytheistic environment of the Roman Empire.[871]

The critique of Ahmad has focused on the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity and the Incarnation, all of which he has argued have no theological support either in the Bible or in the Qur'an. He has argued that the early Christians did not believe in these doctrines because it became part of Christian doctrine largely as a result of the influence of the polytheistic environment within which early Christianity was nurtured. He also argued that neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit had any involvement in the creation of the world.

[868]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 113-114.
[869]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 116.
[870]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 116.
[871]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 116-117.

On the basis of the objections that Ahmad has raised above, he concludes that there is no theological basis for believing that the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Father constitute the Trinity. In that case, he argues that whereas the divinity of the Father can be sufficiently demonstrated on the basis of biblical teaching, the divinity of the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit cannot. His contention is that the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit are not divine. This argument aims to defend the view which he has maintained throughout his critique that God alone is divine and there are no other divine beings apart from him.

3.3.3.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

The argument of Ahmad against the appellation 'Son of God' recalls the arguments by 'Abu 'Isa al-Warraq that were examined in Chapter 2. Firstly, he argues that Jesus could still not be the same as God because whereas he was human and took on divinity, God has always been divine. In that sense, they will still remain two different persons, namely, God the Father and God the Son.

Secondly, he argued that Jesus was part of creation and for that reason he could not be the son of God at the same time. This argument recalls the argument of Al-Maturudi, namely, that Jesus had all the traits of a human being and therefore could not be God at the same time. The key theological flaw that Ahmad is seeking to point out, as Al-Maturudi pointed out before him is that Jesus could not have been a creature (part of the universe) and the Creator (the origin of the universe) at the same time. In other words, Jesus could only have been one of the two – he was not the Creator but a creature of God.

Thirdly, he argued that the Trinity does not make any sense rationally because it is hard to understand how three can be one at the same time. This argument again recalls the arguments about the one substance and three hypostases in the critiques of al-Warraq and ʻAbd al-Jabbar.

3.4 Comparison of Sunni and Ahmadiyya views

This section of the chapter aims to compare and contrast the Sunni and Ahmadiyya perspectives about (1) the divinity of Jesus, (2) the associated doctrines and (3) the claim that Jesus and Muhammad shared a unique kinship as a precursor and a successor. We should first observe before we mention any specific areas that on the whole there is a great deal of agreement between the Sunni and Ahmadiyya perspectives in relation to the areas that have been investigated in this chapter.

Firstly, both the Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists staunchly rejected the divinity of Jesus on the grounds that it compromises the cardinal tenet of Islam namely, the unity and transcendence of God. Using evidence from both the Bible and the Qur'an, all the polemicists advanced two key arguments to explain why they think, the doctrine is both theologically absurd and rationally unconvincing. The two reasons are (1) that it overlooks the otherness of God as distinct from his creation and (2) that the doctrine does not take the attributes of God into full account including his omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, changelessness, eternality, indivisibility etc,

In relation to their rejection of the divinity of Jesus, both the Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists argued that (1) he was a creature of God, (2) he was sent into the world by God as a prophet and a messenger, (3) he lacked the attributes of God such as his omnipotence, omniscience, eternality etc., (4) his

self-understanding as one sent by God and (5) his religious life of preaching, prayer, alms-giving. Interestingly, both sets of polemicists supported their arguments with evidence from both the Bible and the Qur'an.

Secondly, with the associated doctrines namely, (1) Trinity, (2) Incarnation and (3) the appropriateness of the appellation 'Son of God' as applied to Jesus. The polemicists had an equally vitriolic condemnation of the associated doctrines. In the case of the Trinity for example, they argued that it was hard to conceptualise God as a Trinity consisting of three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They were all agreed that the Trinity is neither taught in the Bible nor in the Qur'an. Rather, the polemicists who critiqued the Trinity argued that it was introduced into Christianity as result of the intrusion of pagan religious beliefs.

Similarly, with the Incarnation, they also argued that the Incarnation was introduced into Christian doctrine through the influence of pagan religious influences. The appellation, Son of God' is no different. They argued that it implies that God is like humans who can have children. The polemicists who wrote on it argued that it was appropriate to describe God as such if the phrase meant that Jesus was a righteous person because they argued, the epithet was use for religious and godly people in Israel.

The final point as far as this analysis is concerned is the claim that Jesus was the precursor to Muhammad and that the former predicted the coming of the latter. The polemicists who wrote about this had three key arguments namely, (1) history supports the view that Muhammad was the successor to Jesus, (2) the predictions about the Holy Spirit in the gospel of John were about Muhammad, (3) the predictions about the coming of the Holy Spirit in the

gospel of John were fulfilled by Muhammad and (4) Qur'an 61:6 is a prophecy of Jesus about the coming of Muhammad. The argument itself as made on the basis both of the Bible (John 15: 26; 16: and 14) and the Qur'an (61:6) in the writings of the polemicists is that Jesus predicted that Muhammad would come after his departure as his successor.

3.5 Conclusion

The three key theological issues that have been the focus of the investigation in this chapter are (1) the divinity of Jesus in contrast to his humanity, (2) the theological and rational adequacy of the associated doctrines to explicate the nature/ being of God and (3) the basis in the Bible and the Qur'an for the claim that Jesus was the forerunner of Muhammad.

Firstly, the polemicists rejected the view that Jesus was divine because it compromises the unity of God. By so doing, it elevates a human being to the status of divinity and thereby suggesting that there can be another God. In relation to Jesus himself, the polemicists argued that he was a servant (*'abd*) of God, a prophet and a messenger who was sent to Israel to preach monotheism and to call his hearers to worship the one and only God. Moreover, they also argued, Jesus lacked the attributes that characterise God including his omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience etc.

Secondly, it was argued by the authors whose works have been examined in the chapter that body the doctrine of Jesus and the associated doctrines are inadequate in providing us with details about the nature of God.All the authors argued that the one major handicap of these doctrines is that they suggest a materiality, plurality, changeability etc. in the nature of God. Regarding the appellation 'Son of God' the authors also argued that God

is not a human being to have a son if that the appellation meant that Jesus has a unique relationship with God that is not shared by other people. However, the authors also argued that it would be appropriate to use the appellation for Jesus if it meant that he was a godly and a righteous person.

In the next chapter we shall examine the works of the Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists in relation to the death of Jesus by crucifixion in light of Qur'an 4:157-158. The primary concern of the next chapter will be to find out whether Qur'an 4:157-158 is an assertion or a denial of the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion from the point of view of the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEMPORARY SUNNI AND AHMADIYYA VIEWS ABOUT THE DEATH OF JESUS IN GHANA

4.1 Introduction

This thesis examines contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of Jesus in Ghana in the light of four pre-modern Islamic sources. These sources are the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition. We saw in the previous chapter how all the contemporary polemicists argued that Jesus was a servant (*'abd*), a prophet (*nabi*) and a messenger (*rasul*) of God on the basis of the belief in the oneness and the transcendence of God (*tawhid*).

In Chapter 3, the contemporary polemicists argued that the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines are theologically incoherent, rationally unconvincing and therefore, inadequate to describe the nature of God. They argued that the most important theological flaw associated with the belief in the divinity of Jesus is that it compromises the unity of God (*tawhid*) and raises questions about the totally 'otherness' of God.

This chapter examines the death of Jesus by crucifixion from the perspective of the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemical treatises. This chapter will also briefly look at the second coming of Jesus to the earth for as we briefly noted in Chapter 1, Sunni Muslims believe that Jesus will return to the earth before the Day of Judgement.

Structurally, this chapter consists of five main sections. Section 1 describes the order in which the analysis in this chapter will be done. Section 2 examines five Sunni works. Section 3 examines five Ahmadiyya works.

Section 4 compares the Sunni and Ahmadiyya views of the death of Jesus by crucifixion. Section 5 is a summary of the key issues that are raised in this chapter.

The analysis in this chapter will be done alphabetically using the surnames of the polemicists. This will remove the difficulty of determining which polemical work should be analysed first given the fact that some of the treatises do not have any details about the year and the places where they were published. The polemical works that will be examined include the works of non-Ghanaian Muslims. This implies that there is some collaboration between Ghanaian Muslims and Muslim scholars within the larger world of Islam.

4.2 Sunni polemical works

The five Sunni works that will be examined in this section are the works of Abubakar Siddiq Abban, Ahmed Deedat, Alhassan Mubarick, Naser al-Moghamis. We should note that Deedat and Naser al-Moghamis are non-Ghanaian Muslims and Abban and Mubarick are Ghanaian Muslims. Deedat has two works and the other three have one work each.

4.2.1 Abubakar Siddiq Abban

The treatise in which Abban refutes the death of Jesus is a forty-six page booklet entitled *Be a Bible Professor: The Book of Bible Quotations and Notes*. The occasion for writing this booklet as told by Abban himself was his disappointment at the silence of seven Muslims on board the same bus on which he was travelling from Accra to Takoradi while a Christian evangelist insulted the Prophet Muhammad.[872]

[872]Abubakar Siddiq Abban, *Be a Bible Professor: The Book of Bible Quotations and Notes* (no place of publication, 1998), 46.

The only reason that was given by the Muslims on the bus for not defending the Prophet Muhammad against the attacks of the Christian evangelist was that they knew nothing about the Bible and therefore, could not have refuted what was said about Muhammad.[873] This booklet was written to equip Muslims with information to refute Christian anti-Muslim claims against Islam and Muhammad.

In view of the circumstances that occasioned the writing of this booklet, its purpose is to equip the individual Muslim with biblical knowledge on a variety of subjects that are pertinent to Muslim-Christian dialogue so that they would become acquainted with the Bible in terms of its teaching about Muhammad in order to be able to debate with Christians".[874] It is little wonder that Abban lists numerous biblical verses on a number of theological subjects that are germane to Muslim-Christian dialogue in Ghana including (1) the unity of God, (2) the prophecies about Muhammad in the Bible, (3) the number of Bibles in existence (perhaps, he means number of translations of the Bible), (4) whether Jesus was a Christian or a Muslim, (5) the religion of the prophets, (6) the triumph of Islam across the biblical world etc.

As its title suggests, the booklet is more a work of biblical quotations than one that discusses the subjects we have noted above. There is minimal discussion of the subjects that we have noted above compared to the numerous biblical quotations that the writer has provided on each of them. Nevertheless, it is still possible to follow his arguments on each subject for which he has provided biblical quotations. For both the purposes of both this chapter and the thesis as a whole, we shall consider only two subjects in his work, namely, (1)

[873]Abban, *Professor*, 46.
[874]Abban, *Professor*, 15.

whether the blood of Jesus is a curse or a blessing and (2) the controversial records of the crucifixion. These two issues will be the focus of our analysis.

Sadly, there is no single sentence in which Abban discusses the blood of Jesus in terms of whether it was a curse or a blessing.[875]Rather, he has an assemblage of biblical tests which does not mention the subject about the death of Jesus mentions but many things about blood in general in the Bible. We are therefore left with no option than to read each of the biblical texts carefully in order to follow his arguments. After reading some of the texts, it is clear that Abban is arguing that it was not necessary for Jesus to die in the first place. This implies that the blood of Jesus was not a blessing, even if it was granted that he did die.

Firstly, Abban argues that the actual mission of Jesus was to preach the good news of the kingdom because that was the purpose of his coming to the earth (Mark 1:35-38; Luke 4:42-43).[876] In this case, he is arguing that the mission of Jesus was not to die but to preach about the kingdom. Secondly, he contends that Jesus taught about eternal life before the time of the crucifixion (John 17:3-6).[877] Again, here the argument is that the preaching of the kingdom preceded the crucifixion chronologically and therefore indicates the importance of the latter.

Thirdly, he contends that Jesus was categorical in his teaching that it is his words rather than his blood that saves (John6:56-65).[878] The use that he makes of this verse in support of his argument that the blood of Jesus was not required for salvation raises both theological and hermeneutical difficulties

[875]Abban, *Professor*, 15.
[876]Abban, *Professor*, 15.
[877]Abban, *Professor*, 15.
[878]Abban, *Professor*, 15.

which this researcher is hesitant to address because it lies outside of both the purpose of the chapter and the thesis as a whole. While this researcher is conscious not to critique the interpretations of the Muslim polemicists whose works are central to this thesis, some brief comments are in order.

The first comment is that the text does not say categorically that the blood of Jesus does not save. The verse 63 of the passage in the New International Version reads: "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" It will be disingenuous to conclude, as Abban has done, that this verse means that it is the words of Jesus rather than his blood that saves. Moreover, the context of the passage does not support the interpretation that Abban has suggested, namely, that it teaches that it is the words of Jesus rather than the blood that gives eternal life.

The context begins in John 6:25-26 (Jesus is being sought after by the people for physical food, verse 27 (Jesus points out the importance of eternal life over physical food) and further clarified in verses 33 and 41 (Jesus offers himself to the people as the bread that came down from heaven) and concludes by saying that there was no necessity for the blood of Jesus The text he has provided is a single discussion of the subject because Abban has a tendency for listing biblical verses in support of his arguments.

Fourthly, he argues why it is only the blood of Jesus that is unique in being the means by which people are saved. To buttress this point, he refers to the death of Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27: 3-10), the murder of Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24: 21-22), John the Baptist (Matthew 14: 10-11) and Stephen (Acts 7:54) and argues why the blood they shed could not save but only the blood of

Jesus.[879] Further, he argues, on the basis of Deuteronomy 21:22 ("If a man guilty of a capital offence is put to death and his body is hung on a tree") and Galatians 3:13 ("Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it written 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'") that the Cross is a symbol of curses.[880]

The second part of the critique of Abban is entitled 'The Controversial Record of the Crucifixion'.[881] As he did with the first part, here too, he does not discuss the subject. He cites numerous biblical texts associated with the gospel account of the crucifixion in sections.[882] At the end the end of section, poses a question to do with the common subject that the texts address.[883] At any rate, it is clear that his intent is to highlight what he has described as the 'contradictions and lies' in the gospel account of the crucifixion.[884]

Firstly, he argues that in the account of the cutting of the ear of one of the people who came to arrest Jesus, it is John alone (John 18:10) who mentions the name of the disciple who did it as Peter, the other three gospel writers do not.[885] According to him, Matthew 9 (Matthew 26:51), Mark (Mark 14: 47) and Luke (Luke 22:50) all report that it was a disciple who did it but do not give the name of that disciple.[886]

Secondly, he argues that the gospel accounts are contradictory because whereas Luke and John record the healing, Matthew and Mark did not.[887]

[879]Abban, *Professor*, 17.
[880]Abban, *Professor*, 17.
[881]Abban, *Professor*, 34.
[882]Abban, *Professor*, 34.
[883]Abban, *Professor*, 34.
[884]Abban, *Professor*, 34.
[885]Abban, *Professor*, 34.
[886]Abban, *Professor*, 34.
[887]Abban, *Professor*, 34.

Although he provides neither details nor a clue about the healing he has referred to, it makes sense to think that he is referring to the healing of the man whose ear was cut as we are told that Jesus touched his ear and healed it (Luke 22: 51).[888]

Thirdly, Abban argues that there is a contradiction in the identity of the person who carried the Cross of Jesus.[889] He cites four biblical texts namely, Matthew 27: 32 (Simon the Cyrenian), Mark 15:20 (Simon the Cyrenian), Luke 23:26 (Simon the Cyrenian and John 19:16-18 (Jesus carried his own Cross).[890] His contention is that Christians believe the account of John, in which Jesus is the person who carries his own Cross.[891] This researcher is not convinced that Abban's accusation is justified in the sense that Christians have always mentioned in the narration of the carrying of the Cross that Simon of Cyrene helped to carry the Cross of Jesus (Luke 23: 26; Mark 15:21; Matthew 27:32). There is also evidence in the Bible that it was Jesus himself who carried his Cross to the place where he was crucified (John 19: 16-18).

Fourthly, he contends that the reports of the gospel writers about the crucifixion are not historically verifiable because according to him, 'all the disciples fled after Jesus was arrested'.[892] He argues that this is evident in the reports about the insults that were hurled at Jesus by the two criminals who were crucified on either side of him in the gospel accounts.[893] According to him, both Matthew (Matthew 27: 44) and Mark (Mark 15:32) record that the

[888]Abban, *Professor*, 34.
[889]Abban, *Professor*, 35.
[890]Abban, *Professor*, 35.
[891]Abban, *Professor*, 35.
[892]Abban, *Professor*, 35.
[893]Abban, *Professor*, 35.

two criminals heaped insults on Jesus but they are both contradicted by Luke (Luke 23:39) and John does not record any insults (John 19:16-18).[894]

Fifthly, he questions the reliability of the historicity of the crucifixion on the basis that the gospel accounts differ in their reports about what Jesus said on the Cross.[895] He contends that while both Matthew (Matthew 27:46) and Mark (Mark 15:34) report that Jesus cried out '*Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachtani*', Luke 23:46 ("Father, into thy hands") and John 19:30 ("It is finished") attribute different statements to Jesus.[896] He wonders how one could be a 'pure Christian' if the last words of Jesus have been so controversially reported.[897] Next, he focuses on the aftermath of the crucifixion and again highlights what he sees as the contradictions and lies in the gospel accounts. This material does not add anything to his critique. Hence, it is not examined here.

Finally, however, he ends his critique of the crucifixion with two questions. The first is whether there is any justification in blaming a Muslim who does not believe that the crucifixion did take place. The second is whether the Qur'an is not right in its denunciation of the death of Jesus, citing Qur'an 4: 157-158 as the source of this view. The definitive statement he makes at the end of his critique is to the effect that Jesus prayed to God to be saved from death by crucifixion.[898] According to him, Muslims believe that the prayer of Jesus was answered by God.[899]

Abban has refuted the doctrine of the atonement by blood through the death of Jesus in two main ways. The first is his argument that the main

[894]Abban, *Professor*, 35.
[895]Abban, *Professor*, 36.
[896]Abban, *Professor*, 36.
[897]Abban, *Professor*, 36.
[898]Abban, *Professor*, 38.
[899]Abban, *Professor*, 38.

purpose of the mission of Jesus was not to die but to preach about the kingdom of God. Besides, he argues that the preaching of the kingdom preceded the crucifixion. This researcher is not sure whether this view is an implicit acceptance of the crucifixion itself. His second and final argument is that the information about the crucifixion in the gospels is so contradictory that it has no historical value in offering proof that Jesus died by means of crucifixion.

4.2.1.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

The work of Abban that refutes the traditional view that Jesus died a literal death by crucifixion is going to be done in the light of the four key pre-modern sources that were examined in Chapter 2 in relation to the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

Firstly, Abban argues that salvation is achieved not on the basis of any atonement through the shedding of blood in which case, the death of Jesus even if it happened was unnecessary for the salvation of humankind. He reinforces this view by arguing that Jesus himself was preoccupied with the preaching of the kingdom. There is a precedent for this in the Qur'an.

To prove that the preaching of the kingdom was more important to Jesus, he refers to a biblical verse via which he argued that Jesus himself taught that his blood was not a necessary requirement for the salvation of humankind. However, we briefly pointed out that such an interpretation of John 6:56-60 was unwarranted for contextual reasons.

4.2.2 Ahmed Deedat

Two treatises against the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion are analyzed in this chapter. They are (1) *Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction?* (1984) and

(2) *Was Jesus Crucified?* (1992). The former work is an eighty-eight pages in which his argument is in two parts. In the first booklet he briefly refers to Qur'an 4:157, concluding that it means that Jesus did not die a literal death.[900] He however, does not make an attempt to exegete the text in order to convince his readers why he thinks that it does not assert, but denies that Jesus died by crucifixion. In the second part, which is much longer, his argument revolves around the biblical evidence.[901]

The latter work of Deedat is a thirty-one page long booklet. Like his first work, his argument in this second work is in two parts. In the first part, which is what separates this treatise from the earlier one, he argues that some early Christian groups and writings believed that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus.[902] In the second, he confines his argument to the biblical evidence.[903] We first analyse the earlier treatise and then the other.

However, we shall note some interesting preliminary comments that will be helpful in illuminating our understanding of his argument. The first is that Paul, rather than Jesus was the real founder of Christianity.[904] Sadly, he does not shed more light on this comment by way of explaining its relevance to his critique. The second is that if there is any disagreement between a Muslim and a Christian about ethics, doctrine, morality, etc., Paul should be held responsible.[905] He substantiates this comment by arguing that whereas the Master (Jesus) taught that salvation is achieved on the basis of the keeping of the commandments of God, Paul contradicts this by teaching that salvation is

[900]Ahmed Deedat, *Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction?* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Services, 1984), 3-4.
[901]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction,* 5-88.
[902]Ahmed Deedat, *Was Jesus Crucified?* (Illinois: Library of Islam, 1992), 3-4.
[903]Deedat, *Jesus,* 5-31.
[904]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction,* 1.
[905]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction,* 2.

attained solely through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus.[906] We now look at his critique in more detail.

Firstly, Deedat objects to the death of Jesus by crucifixion on the basis of the teaching of Qur'an 4:157 ("And they said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of God' but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but it was made to appear to them so, and those who differ therein are full of doubts with no (certain) knowledge, but they follow only conjecture, for of a surety they killed him not").[907] He describes this text as 'explicit, emphatic, dogmatic and uncompromising' in terms of what it says about the death of Jesus by crucifixion.[908]

Deedat observes that the crucifixion of Jesus would not have arisen if Christians had accepted the teaching of the Qur'an.[909] While one has to be cautious in order not to contest the views of Deedat, one cannot but wonder how the text under consideration (Q.4:157) could have stopped Christians from believing in the death of Jesus given the fact that this doctrine had long become part of Christian theology over five centuries before the revelation of the Qur'an. In arguing that the crucifixion would never have arisen, Deedat seems to have overlooked the historical gap that separates Christianity from Islam.

Secondly, Deedat argues that that gospel accounts of the arrest, trial and eventual crucifixion of Jesus are historically unreliable to constitute any proof that Jesus died by crucifixion.[910] He notes that none of the gospel accounts of

[906]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 2.
[907]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 3.
[908]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 4.
[909]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 4.
[910]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 7.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John has been attested in terms of its authorship.[911] According to him, none of these accounts bears the 'signature, mark or thumb-print of its author in the so-called originals'.[912]

Further, he contends that the historical unreliability of the biblical account of the crucifixion and death of Jesus is evident in the description that Christians themselves have given to the gospel accounts, namely, 'the gospel according to St. Matthew' 'the gospel according to St. Mark' 'the gospel according to St. Luke' etc.[913] He concludes that documents such as the gospel accounts that lack reliable historical attestation would be thrown out of any court of law.[914]

Also, he observes that all the disciples of Jesus fled and forsook him when he was arrested.[915] This is based on his reading of Mark 14:50 ("All his disciples forsook him (Jesus) and fled").[916] This implies that the disciples were not witnesses of the trial, the sentencing and the eventual crucifixion of Jesus.

Thirdly, Deedat suggests a re-reading of the account of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. He argues that the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was an attempt by the followers Jesus to establish a worldly political kingdom over which they would reign alongside him. He insinuates that the excited and enthusiastic crowd at the centre of everything that happened had an 'earthly kingdom' in mind more than the 'heavenly kingdom' that the gospel writers seem to be obsessed with.

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[911]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 7.
[912]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 7.
[913]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 7.
[914]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 7.
[915]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 7.
[916]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 7.

Based on a re-reading of the gospel accounts above the death of Jesus above, he notes that Jesus' motive for driving the money lenders and traders out of the Temple was more political than religious.[917] In the words of Deedat, 'who would withstand … impending glory ….Little wonder that Jesus was tempted physically to oust those that bought and sold within the temple …' (John 12:31).[918]

Fourthly, Deedat interprets what happened on Palm Sunday with respect to the excitement of the crowd, their reception of Jesus and his subsequent cleansing of the Temple as an abortive *coup de'tat*.[919] Nonetheless, according to Deedat all came to nothing in the end. Deedat argues that the arrest of Jesus and his subsequent crucifixion are the direct consequences of the events on Palm Sunday.[920] Thus, he observes that not only had Jesus' disciples failed to pay heed to the warning of the Pharisees to curb their over exuberance (Luke 19:39) but he himself had miscalculated.[921]

However, he notes that given what happened on Palm Sunday, the die was cast and Jesus had to pay the price both for his own miscalculation and the actions of his disciples.[922] Deedat does not tell more about the nature of the miscalculation of Jesus. We can only surmise that it is a reference to Jesus' abortive attempt to set up a 'worldly kingdom' on Palm Sunday as Deedat has already suggested in his critique.

Fifthly, Deedat explains the actions of the Jewish authorities and the willingness of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus for thirty pieces and the events of

[917]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 9-10.
[918]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 10.
[919]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 10.
[920]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 10.
[921]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 10.
[922]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 10.

Palm Sunday. According to him the Jewish authorities reasoned that given what happened on Palm Sunday, which nearly 'brought the nation to destruction', 'it was expedient for one person to die for the nation' (John 11:50).[923] With regards to Judas, Deedat suggests that he was disgruntled that the political kingdom that he thought Jesus would establish, signs of which were visible on Palm Sunday, was no longer a real possibility.[924]

According to him, in order to 'provoke' Jesus to set up a political kingdom after the attempt to set up one failed on Good Friday, Judas accepted to betray Jesus for a paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver. Deedat argues that Judas agreed to betray Jesus not merely because he wanted to make money but because he was motivated solely by his vision of a political kingdom.[925] Thus, the actions of Judas were meant both to let Jesus to reconsider his own vision of a political kingdom as well as compel him to act in order to bring that vision to fruition.

Sixthly, Deedat argues that Jesus began to prepare his disciples to resist his arrest when it became clear to him that plans were afoot to arrest him.[926] He describes the preparation in Islamic phraseology as 'preparation for Jihad'.[927] Further, he explains the nature of the Jihad as a 'holy war' as one in which Jews were going to fight against Jews. For this reason Luke 22: 35-36 ("When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?" And they said, "Nothing." Then said he unto them, "But now, he that hath no purse, let him take it, and likewise his bag; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his

[923]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 10.
[924]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 11.
[925]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 11.
[926]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 12.
[927]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 12.

garment and buy one!" is to be understood as part of Jesus' strategy to fight the Jews when they came to arrest him.[928]

Furthermore, Deedat points out that given the changed circumstances we noted above, Jesus also changed his strategy.[929] According to Deedat, the changed circumstances Jesus made no reference whatsoever to some of the well-known pacifist statements that are a key feature of his teaching such as 'turning the other cheek'(Matthew 5:39), 'forgiving seventy times seven' (Matthew 18:22) and 'being wise as serpents and harmless as doves'(Matthew 10:16).[930] He notes that the disciples had already armed themselves because they had foresight and showed Jesus two swords which were deemed to be enough by Jesus.[931]

However, one wonders whether two swords that were shown to Jesus were enough if he and his disciples were going to successfully fight the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers who were soon to come and arrest Jesus. It is this difficulty that Deedat attempts to answer next. Deedat argues that the two swords were deemed to be enough by Jesus because he reckoned that his imminent arrest was not going to be effected by well-trained Roman soldiers but by his fellow Jews who were only temple servants without any experience in warfare.[932] Deedat's argument that two swords were enough for Jesus and his disciples to defend themselves because he knew that it was the temple servants who were going to arrest him seems to this researcher to be interesting.

[928]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 12.
[929]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 12.
[930]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 12.
[931]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 12.
[932]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 13.
[932]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 13.

Deedat notes that against the might of Peter, the two brothers James and John and the other eight, all of who were Galileans who had a reputation for being zealots, terrorists and participated in many insurrections against the Romans, the two swords were enough.[933] Moreover, the fact that the disciples were vying with one another to die and to go to prison on account of Jesus meant that they were adequately prepared physically to face their compatriots if they dared attempt to arrest their Master.[934]

Seventh, he argues against the death of Jesus on the basis that God answered the prayer that Jesus offered to him in Matthew 26:37-39 ("And he went a little further, and fell on his face (exactly as the Muslim does in *salat*), and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt").[935] He contends that the view that Jesus had come into the world to die cannot be sustained in the light of the prayer of Jesus.[936] In his usual comical manner, Deedat argues that Jesus' call for arms in the Upper Room, his deployment of forces in the garden of Gethsemane and his prayer to God for help implies that he did not know anything about a 'contract for his crucifixion'.[937] It seems to this researcher that Deedat is reading a military strategy into every action of Jesus since the events of Palm Sunday we saw above.

The withdrawal of Jesus and his disciples into the garden of Gethsemane for example, was not because they wanted to pray as they could

[933]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 13.
[934]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 13.
[935]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 15.
[936]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 16.
[937]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 16.

have prayed either in the Upper Room or in the temple of Solomon.[938] According to Deedat, their going there was part of Jesus' overall military strategy for self-defence against the Jewish leaders if they made any attempt to arrest him.[939] Similarly, he reads military tactics into the way in which the disciples were divided in the garden of Gethsemane.[940]

Deedat points out that the eight who were posted at the entrance of the garden were all armed to the hilt.[941] This is in spite of the fact that the disciples were not armed apart from Peter and John who had swords. Besides, Deedat has already said that that the eleven disciples had only two swords. The other three (Peter, James and John) joined Jesus himself and went a stone's throw from the eight to pray (Matthew 26: 37-38). He observes that these three whom he describes as 'zealous zealots' were experienced in the skills of warfare.[942]

Eighth, he returns to what he has said before namely that the march into Jerusalem had proved a failure to establish political kingdom, the disciples had failed to defend him in the garden.[943] He observes that the trial and its aftermath were the consequences of the failure of Jesus and his disciples both to establish the political kingdom on Palm Sunday that we have already had occasion to look at above and to defend themselves against the soldiers in the garden.[944] Deedat observes that the outcome of the trial of Jesus was predetermined because before Caiphas, the High Priest had already recommended the crucifixion of Jesus before he was tried (John 11:50).[945]

[938]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 14.
[939]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 14.
[940]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 14.
[941]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 14.
[942]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 14.
[943]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 21.
[944]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 21.
[945]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 24.

At this point in his critique, Deedat devotes time to extraneous details including Pilate being forced under Jewish pressure to condemn Jesus to die despite the fact that he found him (Jesus) to be innocent.[946] Such information, important though it may be for our understanding of the full account of how Jesus was condemned to die, falls outside of the purview of this chapter and the thesis as a whole.

Ninth, Deedat focuses on methods of crucifixion as a key part of his argument.[947] He contrasts crucifixion with other methods such as hanging, impaling, stoning and drowning.[948] According to him, crucifixion was preferred to the methods we have already noted because it was in his own words 'it produced a slow lingering death.[949] This seems to this researcher to be the first building block of his argument that Jesus had not died when he was taken down from the cross. In other words, his argument is that Jesus had not been on the cross long enough to have died.

Tenth, Deedat argues that the 'extreme haste' of the Jews to have Jesus done away with which necessitated their trying him six times within twelve hours turned out to be a blessing in disguise.[950] This seems to be the second building block for his theory that Jesus was taken down from the cross in a 'swoon' state of health which the Jews were not aware of because they were in such a haste that they did not have time to certify whether Jesus had already died or not.

[946]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 25-30.
[947]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 30.
[948]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 30.
[949]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 30.
[950]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 31.

Eleventh, Deedat argues on the basis of Luke 22:44 ("And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground").[951] He anchors his argument that Jesus did not die by crucifixion in two biblical texts namely, James 5:16 ("The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much") and Hebrews 5:7 ("Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared").[952] In shedding light on these two texts, he argues that God heard the prayer offered by Jesus to be saved from death by crucifixion because he (God) is the All-hearing God.[953]

As always, he buttresses his argument that Jesus did not die by crucifixion because God heard his prayer by citing the biblical examples of Abraham who prayed to God for a son and Ishmael was born and Zechariah who also prayed for a son in his old age and John the Baptist was born.[954] On the basis of these two examples, Deedat argues that as God heard the prayers of Abraham and Zechariah, he also heard the prayer of Jesus for help.[955] On this view, Deedat argues that the purpose for sending an angel to Jesus based on Luke 22:43 ("And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him"), was to strengthen him in his faith.[956]

Twelfth, Deedat argues that the fact that the legs of Jesus were not broken meant that he was still alive. The basis of his argument is that it is the legs of a person who is alive that are protected because they will be beneficial

[951]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 34.
[952]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 34.
[953]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 34.
[954]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 35.
[955]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 35.
[956]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 35.

to that person.[957] Hence, the legs of two criminals who were crucified with Jesus were broken because they were dead already and therefore had no use for their legs. On the contrary, he argues, the legs of Jesus were not broken because he was still alive and his legs would be useful to him.[958]

According to Deedat, it was no fulfilment of prophecy as John 19:33 ("They saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs") has said which is the reason that the legs of Jesus were not broken.[959] He observes that the phrase 'they saw' implies that they only surmised that Jesus had already died because there was no stethoscope to confirm his death neither was his body touched nor his pulse felt.[960] This is the third building block in his argument.

A good example of the scepticism of Deedat is seen in his citing of eleven cases of people dying and coming back to life under the heading 'resurrection or resuscitation'.[961] The rationale for his assemblage of such cases is to challenge his readers to re-assess the gospel accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection as to whether Jesus did actually die and resurrect or whether his case was one of resuscitation.

Thirteenth, Deedat argues that the flow of blood and water according to John 19:34 ("....forthwith came there out blood and water") is evidence that Jesus was still alive when his side was pierced by one of the soldiers with a spear.[962] He argues that 'immobility, fatigue and the un-natural stance on the cross must have slowed down the blood circulation' in Jesus' body.[963] Also,

[957]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 35.
[958]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 35.
[959]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 35.
[960]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 35.
[961]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 37.
[962]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 39.
[963]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 39.

Deedat understands the thunder, eclipse and the earthquake that characterised the crucifixion as miraculous phenomena that God used to disperse the mob that had gathered to witness the crucifixion so that the body of Jesus would be taken down and given to his disciples.[964]

Again, Deedat insinuates on the basis of Mark 15:44 ("Pilate marvelled if he (Jesus) were already dead, and calling to him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead") that Jesus had not died.[965] He therefore argues that the reason why Pilate marvelled (he prefers to use 'Pilate's amazement') was because he knew from experience that a man could not die by crucifixion within three hours (he reckons that Jesus was on the cross for three hours) unless his legs were broken.[966] It is worth noting that we have already identified three building blocks in his critique. The argument that Jesus had not been on the cross long enough to have died is the fourth building block of his critique.

Also, Deedat contends that Pilate knew that Jesus was not dead as he had been told by the centurion but neither had any interest nor special reason to verify this given the fact that he had not found him guilty.[967] Besides, Deedat argues that since Pilate's wife had already warned him not to be complicit in the death of that just man (Jesus) and he (Pilate) had only capitulated to Jewish blackmail and pressure in sentencing him to death by crucifixion, there was no compelling reason not to take him down from the cross.[968] Hence, permission

[964]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 40.
[965]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 40.
[966]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 41.
[967]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 41.
[968]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 41.

was granted by Pilate for the body of Jesus to be taken down and given to Joseph of Arimathea.[969]

Deedat insinuates that there was collusion between Pilate and some disciples of Jesus.[970] According to him, the collusion is predicated on five main reasons, namely, (1) the tomb was within easy reach, although he does not indicate to whom or to what, (2) the help that was offered by the 'secret' friends of Jesus, (3) the fact that the two who were crucified with Jesus were still alive, (4) the legs of the other two were broken and those of Jesus were not and (5) the ease with which the friends of Jesus obtained permission from Pilate for the body of Jesus.[971] His catalogue of reasons as evidence of a conspiracy is the fifth building block in his critique of the death of Jesus.

Deedat then argues that when the Jews became aware of the conspiracy and that they had been cheated they went to Pilate and asked to put a guard of soldiers at the tomb in order to make it secure.[972] He bases his conspiracy theory on Matthew 27:62-64 ("Now the next day...the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said....Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest...the last error shall be worse than the first").[973]

Further, he argues on the basis of the text we cited above that the first error that the Jews committed was that they brought down Jesus from the cross without breaking his legs on the assumption that he was dead.[974] Therefore, he argues, they did not want to commit a second error namely, to allow the

[969]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 41.
[970]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 41.
[971]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 42.
[972]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 42.
[973]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 42.
[974]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 43.

disciples of Jesus to give help to him.[975] In order to prevent this from happening, they wanted to seal the grave and thus prevent Jesus from receiving help from his 'secret' disciples.[976]

We should briefly note that Deedat's argument above and especially his understanding of the first error of the Jews and why they wanted to be at the tomb of Jesus both seem far-fetched. In the first place, the nature of the first error (the word 'deception' is preferred by this researcher) of the Jews can be inferred from the chapter namely that the claim by Jesus that he was the Messiah and also the Son of God.

Reading and interpreting the verses within context would then make the second error of the Jews worse than the first namely, the report that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead. Besides, nowhere in the text is any hint given that the Jews wanted to prevent the disciples of Jesus from caring for him. Rather, the text says that the Jews wanted to secure the grave so that the disciples of Jesus will not steal his body. The text settles it once and for all that the Jews believed that Jesus had died – they only wanted to secure the grave.

Largely due to the fact that Deedat had begun his critique on the premise that it was a live Jesus who was buried in the tomb, he now raises doubts about the resurrection on many counts. In the first place, he argues that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb not to anoint the body of Jesus (Mark 16:9; John 20:1) but to look for a live Jesus because the anointing of dead bodies by the Jews is not done on the third day.[977] Deedat premises this on the view that Mary Magdalene was one of the people who prepared the body of Jesus for

[975]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 43.
[976]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 43.
[977]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 44.

burial besides Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and must have seen signs of life in him.[978]

The critique of Deedat raises serious questions. Thus, we cannot help but ask: how does he explain why it was she alone who saw the signs of life in Jesus when others participated in preparing Jesus for burial? Why not the others too? Again, we are justified in asking: If she did see signs of life in the lifeless body of Jesus, why did she go there alone given the fact that she was not going to be able to roll the stone that covered the grave away all by herself alone? We are also justified in asking the question: where were the soldiers who had been posted at the tomb? Also, who rolled the stone away when we are told that Mary Magdalene was the first to arrive there?

Deedat describes the resurrection as resuscitation without due consideration of the gospel accounts by arguing that the phrase 'not yet ascended' in John 20:17 ("For I have not yet ascended unto my Father") is a Jewish idiomic expression which means that Jesus had not died.[979] Strangely, however, Deedat does not cite the entire John 20:17b which reads "...Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God"). We can only surmise that these words were not quoted because they make the text not lend itself to be interpreted as an idiom which means that Jesus had not died.

The last argument is against what has traditionally been described as the post-resurrection (Deedat prefers to describe this as the post-resuscitation appearances) against the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion is the gospel

[978]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 44.
[979]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 48.

accounts of his appearance to his disciples in Luke 24: 36-37 ("While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you'. They were startled and frightened thinking they saw a ghost).[980]

The basis of the above argument is that the disciples who had fled (this is based on Mark 14:50 which we cited above) when Jesus was arrested only believed through hearsay that he was crucified, he died and was buried. Hence, they expected, if anything at all to see a ghost not the physical Jesus.[981] Deedat contends that the 'secret' disciples of Jesus we have already met in his critique knew that Jesus had not died because they did not flee when he was arrested.[982]

Finally, Deedat concludes his critique with the argument that Jesus did not die by crucifixion on the basis of Matthew 12:38-40 ("Then some of the Pharisees....A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miracle ....For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth").[983] After explaining the background to the Jonah 1:12, Deedat argues that Jesus sought to say that like Jonah, he was going to remain alive in the grave until the third day. In other words, Jesus was saying that after the ordeal of the cross, he like the ordeal of Jonah when he was thrown into the sea and was swallowed by a huge fish, he would come out of the grave alive on the third day.[984]

It is instructive that what is conspicuously absent in the critique of Deedat is that there is no reference to where Jesus went after he was resuscitated. After all, he has told us already that the legs of Jesus were not

[980]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 54.
[981]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 54.
[982]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 55.
[983]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 64-65.
[984]Deedat, *Cruci-fiction*, 68-69.

broken because he would need them after he recovered. We are therefore justified in asking the question: where did Jesus go after he was resuscitated?

The above question is important because the gospel writers do not tell us anything about Jesus after the resurrection which implies with his ascension into heaven there was nothing for Jesus to do. Quite the contrary Deedat has argued that Jesus survived death by crucifixion by being brought down from the cross when he had not died. The onus then lies on Deedat to furnish us with information about where Jesus went after he was resuscitated and which he did thereafter.

It is the view of this researcher that the critique Deedat is fraught with assumptions, re-interpretations and conclusions about what the gospels say the crucifixion and the death of Jesus in ways that are not supported by the biblical accounts themselves. For example, he charges the writers of the gospel accounts with dishonesty and literary fraud in the sense that they were writing about an event that they knew was not historically reliable because it had not happened and yet they wrote it.

It is noteworthy that Deedat does not leave the Jewish and Roman authorities and the poor innocent men and women who received the body of Jesus but accuses them of a well-planned and well-executed conspiracy. As far as he is concerned, the gospel account of the death of Jesus was a collusion of people who agreed to foist a religious lie on the whole of humanity. As we noted earlier, his critique raises more questions than it answers.

Next, we consider his second work on the crucifixion entitled *Was Jesus Crucified?* It is thirty-one pages long. Although there is a great deal of

similarity between this work and the one we have just considered above, the present work has some features that are unique to it. Hence, we analyse it separately in order to identify what its unique features are. The first is that it uses extra-biblical materials in arguing against the literal death of Jesus. The second unique feature of this works is its use of the gospel of Barnabas in its critique of the literal death of Jesus.

The arguments in this booklet are basically the same as those we met in his first booklet we examined above except that he introduces two new strands of argument namely that (1) there were groups in early Christianity that rejected the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion and (2) the gospel of Barnabas rejects the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion. These two arguments will be the focus of our analysis.

Firstly, we begin with the argument that there were some early Christian groups that rejected the literal death of Jesus.[985] Sadly, the information provided by Deedat on these groups is so brief that his critique does not lend itself to a detailed analysis. We shall therefore add a bit more to this information with respect to what is historically known about these groups. He first mentions the Basilidians as one of the early Christian groups that did not believe that Jesus died a literal death by crucifixion. According to him, they believed that it was a substitute who died on the cross.[986]

Similarly, he notes that the Docetists (he prefers Docetae) believed that the crucifixion of Jesus was not real.[987] He also notes that the Marcionite

[985]Deedat, *Jesus*, 3.
[986]Deedat, *Jesus*, 3.
[987]Deedat, *Jesus*, 3.

gospel preferring to teach that he (Jesus) appeared in human form.[988] As we have already noted, he does not tell us anymore about these groups apart from their rejection of the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion.

It is interesting that Deedat himself does not believe in the death of a substitute as our analyses of his two booklets have shown. Yet, he cites the Basilidians and the Docetists to bolster his argument against the literal death of Jesus. We now briefly shed more light on the Basilidians, the Docetists and the Marcionite gospel to show that their rejection of the death of Jesus was on the basis of other reasons other than that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus on the cross.

We begin with the Basilidians. They were a gnostic group in early Christianity. As was characteristic of all such groups, they repudiated matter as evil. Therefore, to confess that Jesus had a body meant that he was sinful since all matter is evil. Deedat is therefore right in citing the Basilidians as a sect that believed that it was a substitute who died in Jesus' place on the cross. However, what he does not tell his readers is that this group subscribed to a docetic Christology. In other words, the Basilidians believed that Jesusdid not have a real physical body which implies that without a real human body, Jesus could not have been arrested, tortured physically before finally crucified on the cross.

Like the Basilidians, the Docetists held a view about Jesus that rejected that he had a human body since as we have already noted above matter (body) was associated with evil. It seems to this researcher that the view of the Basilidians is the antithesis of the Islamic view of the crucifixion. Neither the

[988]Deedat, *Jesus*, 3.

Qur'an nor the prophetic tradition (*hadith*) holds a docetic view of Jesus as the details about his birth in Qur'an 19:26-35 show. This is to be contrasted with the docetic view which posited that Jesus had no physical body and could not have been crucified.

It is ironical that Deedat himself has not once in his critique suggested that Jesus had no physical body. Evidently, the belief of the Docetists that the crucifixion of Jesus was apparent was based on their rejection of a 'fleshly human Jesus'.Secondly, Deedat rejects the death of Jesus on the basis that the gospel of Barnabas supports the theory of substitution.

However, he does not tell us more about the gospel of Barnabas to show why he thinks that its account of the death of Jesus is more historically trustworthy than the gospel accounts which he has critiqued in his two booklets that we have examined here.

4.2.2.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

Chapter 2 examined the death of Jesus by means of crucifixion in detail from the perspective of the four key pre-modern sources in Islam, namely, the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition up to the Hanbali Syrian scholar, Ibn Taymiyya. We noted in Chapter 1 that these sources are the theological benchmark upon which to evaluate the views of the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists about the death of Jesus because they contain the earliest historical record about Jesus in the Islamic tradition.

There are two key areas in which Deedat's critique of the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion in his two booklets is at variance with the teaching in

the four pre-modern sources. This is in spite of the fact that he claims to be avowedly Sunni. We have already noted that his works are examined under the Sunni polemicists not because they reflect Sunni teaching but because he was widely known worldwide as a Sunni Muslim.

Firstly, his arguments suggest that Jesus was crucified. The pre-modern sources that were examined in Chapter 2 are not clear on this issue. We saw in Chapter 2 that ʻAbd al-Jabbar argues that it was the wrong person who died on the Cross because someone other than Jesus was arrested. In the same chapter Ibn Taymiyya also argues that the crucifixion was a Jewish fabrication. The Qur'an is not helpful here either because it does not contain the details that are in the critique of Deedat. Secondly, Deedat is even more specific when he explains in detail how Jesus was taken down from the Cross.

Secondly, he explains in great detail what happened after Jesus was brought down from the Cross. This account is at variance both with the Qur'an and the exegetical tradition, not to mention again the views of ʻAbd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya. However, this is how far Deedat goes with his critique of the literal death of Jesus by means of crucifixion. He neither tells us what happened to Jesus following his resuscitation nor does he tell us what Jesus did afterwards. This researcher suspects that he did not want to be guilty of espousing a full-blown Ahmadiyya view of the death of Jesus because as we have noted above, he himself claims to be avowedly Sunni in his theology. He therefore chooses to leave his readers in limbo.

4.2.3 Alhassan Mubarick

The critique of the death of Jesus is in a book entitled *Is Jesus God?* It is a sixty-page long booklet that critiques key Christian doctrines including the

divinity of Jesus, his relationship to God as a son, the Trinity etc.[989] Hence, his critique against the death of Jesus occupies only six pages.[990] Within these eight pages, he first argues against the death of Jesus on the basis of Qur'an 4:157-8 although he does not tell us in detail what way the text supports his view.[991] In other words, he does not attempt to exegete the text but concludes that the text rejects the literal death by crucifixion.[992]

The second part of his critique focuses on the biblical evidence.[993] This is followed by a brief critique of the claim that Jesus is the saviour of all humankind in which he argues that there were other saviours before the advent of Jesus.[994] In an introductory comment before the detailed critique of the death of Jesus by crucifixion proper, Mubarick observes that the crucifixion is a controversial subject that has caused so much disagreement in Muslim-Christian dialogue. According to him the reason for the disagreement is that Christians believe that Jesus died by crucifixion and Muslims reject that proposition. In his own words, he aims in his short critique 'to look at what the Bible and the Qur'an say about this critical topic'.[995]

Firstly, without providing evidence that Qur'an 4:157-158 denies the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion, he notes that this passage (4:157-158) has a straightforward answer to the disagreement between Muslims and Christians.[996] He does not do any further exegetical work on the passage under

[989]Alhassan Mubarick, *Is Jesus God?* (no place and date of publication), ii.
[990]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 31-38.
[991]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 31.
[992]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 31.
[993]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 32-36.
[994]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 37-38.
[995]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 31.
[996]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 31.

consideration in terms of its interpretation but proceeds to consider the biblical evidence for what he describes as the 'alleged crucifixion'.[997]

Secondly, he turns to the biblical text where he devotes time to examining some passages. He begins with Acts 2:22-24 ("Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it").[998]

Mubarick contends on the basis of this passage that the Bible confirms that Jesus escaped dying a literal death by crucifixion.[999] However, he does not tell us what happened in terms of how Jesus escaped death. There is neither a suggestion of the circumstances surrounding the crucifixion nor whether it was another person who died in the place of Jesus. Mubarick is content to argue that Jesus did not die by crucifixion. We should briefly point out on contextual grounds that Acts 2: 22-24 is not about the death of Jesus – the verses are about his resurrection. We should briefly point out that each of the two phrases namely (1) 'Jesus being raised up' and (2) 'the impossibility of death holding him (Jesus)' make more sense only when read in relation to the resurrection rather than to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Thirdly, he cites three biblical texts to buttress his argument that Jesus did not die. The first is Matthew 26:39 ("And he (Jesus) went a little farther and fell on his face and prayed, "My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass

[997]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 31.
[998]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 32.
[999]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 32.

from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt").[1000] The second is Hebrews 5:7 ("In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was heard for his godly fear") and the third is Luke 22:36 ("But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one").[1001] He argues on the basis of the first two biblical texts above (Matthew 26:39 and Hebrews 5:7) that Jesus prayed to his Father to be delivered from death by crucifixion because he did not want to die. In the third, he argues, we find that Jesus is reluctant to die thus necessitating a 'strategy to defense (sic) himself by repelling the Jews'.[1002]

Fourthly, Mubarick argues on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 ("for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance (from hear hearsay) with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised (resurrected) on the third day in accordance with the scriptures") that this passage proves that Jesus did not die.[1003] According to Mubarick, this passage implies that Paul has fabricated the account of the death of Jesus. He argues that the phrase 'in accordance with the scriptures' actually mean 'from hearsay'.[1004]

Fifthly, Mubarick argues on the basis of Luke 24:37-43 ("But they were startled and frightened and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he (Jesus) said to them, "why are you troubled and why do questioning rise in your hearts, see my hands and my feet that it is I myself, handle me, and see, for a (any) spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have. And while they still disbelieved

[1000]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 32.
[1001]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 32.
[1002]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 32.
[1003]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 33.
[1004]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 33.

for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat? They gave him a piece of boiled fish and he took it and ate it before them") that Jesus did not die.[1005] He contends that the passage offers strong proof that Jesus still had a physical body that could be touched by his disciples and he had the ability to eat boiled fish too.[1006]

Finally, Mubarick questions the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion on the basis of the miraculous deliverance of Jonah in Matthew 12:38-40 ("Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "teacher, we wish to see a sign from you," But Jesus answers them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish (whale) so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth").[1007]

Describing the miraculous event as 'the miracle of miracles'[1008], Mubarick rejects the historicity of the death of Jesus by means of crucifixion by asking two questions. The first is: Was it a dead Jonah or a live Jonah who was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights? The second is: Was it a dead Jesus or a live Jesus who was in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights?

Mubarick has rejected the death of Jesus by crucifixion as the correct interpretation of Qur'an 4: 157-158 on the basis of six biblical arguments, all of which have been interpreted as a denial of the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion. However, what he has consistently failed to do as we briefly noted in the case of Acts 2: 23-24 is to interpret the biblical passages contextually.

[1005]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 33-34.
[1006]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 34.
[1007]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 34.
[1008]Mubarick, *Jesus*, 35.

Clearly, his argument that Jesus did not die by crucifixion can be sustained only on the basis of the traditional Muslim understanding that Qur'an 4:157-158 than on the biblical texts that he has cited.

It is instructive to point out that Mubarick has not demonstrated on the basis of his exegesis of the texts he has cited that the Bible supports his view. For example, nowhere in his critique has he convincingly demonstrated that verses that purport to show that Jesus died by crucifixion mean otherwise. Overall, he has not grappled with the text of the Bible in relation to the death of Jesus by crucifixion.

Besides, his argument has a great deal more affinity to the Ahmadiyya view than the Sunni view in the sense that it allows for some post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. In particular, his bracketing of the two phrases 'Jonah in the belly of the fish' with 'Jesus in the heart of the earth' suggests that his view of the death of Jesus has been influenced by Ahmadiyya teaching. This will become evident when we examine the Ahmadiyya polemical works on the death of Jesus below.

4.2.3.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

Here, we are concerned with evaluating the critique of Mubarick in the light of the pre-modern Islamic sources that were examined in Chapter 2 with respect to the death of Jesus. The evaluation is done on the basis that the pre-modern sources contain the earliest record of Christology in the Islamic tradition.

Firstly, we begin with the Qur'an. In comparison to the Qur'an, the critique of Mubarick seems to support the view that Jesus did not die by means

of crucifixion on the basis of 4:157-158. We should add the caveat that other scholars have read this text as a confirmation that Jesus died a literal death by means of crucifixion.

Secondly, he critiques the death of Jesus with an argument that is patently Ahmadiyya although he himself is avowedly Sunni. He argues that the are parallels between the death of Jesus and the story of the biblical Jonah. Finally, he argues that Jesus showed himself alive to the disciples, ate food with them to show that he had not died and resurrected. His argument is not congruent with the pre-modern sources which seem to reject the idea that Jesus was crucified let alone accept that he was saved from there.

4.2.4 Naser al-Moghamis

The booklet in which Al-Moghamis refutes the claim that Jesus died a literal death by crucifixion is entitled *Christianity and Islam According to the Bible and the Qur'an*. It is hundred and six pages long and has besides, the Introduction, six chapters, each of which looks at a subject from the perspective of the Bible and the Qur'an.

Chapter 1 of his work is about God, Chapter 2 is about the prophets, Chapter 3 is about Jesus, Chapter 4 is about the Day of Judgement, Chapter 5 is about women and Chapter 6 is about different subjects including faith and deeds, original sin, crucifixion, forgiveness, etc.[1009] The book has a ten-fold purpose, namely, (1) to show that the original gospel that was revealed to Jesus is lost, (2) to show that the existing gospels contain the original gospel mixed with errors and contradictions, (3) show the lies and misrepresentations in the

[1009]Naser al-Moghamis, *Christianity and Islam according to the Bible and the Qur'an* (Lahore: Darusaalam Global Leaders in Islamic Books, 2007), 3-4.

Bible, (4) show the false charges in the Bible against the prophets including Lot, Jacob, Moses etc. and (5) show the false charges in the Bible against Jesus.[1010]

The second set of five aims of the book are to show (6) the wrong beliefs that have been added to the story of Jesus in the Bible, (7) that the doctrines of the Trinity, original sin, atonement by means of blood, the divine sonship of Jesus etc., (8) the Qur'an, the last revelation from God has never be changed, (9) that the coming of Muhammad was prophesied in the Bible and (10) that the Qur'an teaches that Islam is the true religion and thereby, remove all the lies about Islam.[1011]

In his preface, Moghamis notes that a religion should be judged neither by the opinions of its biased enemies nor by the behaviour and attitude of its nominal followers as such judgements could be misleading.[1012] According to him, a religion should be judged both by what it teaches and the impact of the teachings on its real followers. For this reason, he points out that his aim in his book is to compare the teachings of Christianity and Islam from the point of view of their scriptures namely, the Bible and the Qur'an.[1013]

Likewise in his Introduction, Al-Moghamis makes a number of important observations both about Islam and Christianity that are intended to be beneficial to Christian readers of his work. Among these observations is his definition of the Qur'an as the literal word of Allah (God) that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the agency of the angel Gabriel.[1014] Further,

[1010]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 10.
[1011]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 11.
[1012]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 5.
[1013]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 5.
[1014]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 6.

he describes the Qur'an as the eternal miracle of Islam in which God challenges humankind to produce something to match the revelation therein.[1015]

Besides the observations we made above, Al-Moghamis points out that all the prophets from Adam to Muhammad were sent with one message, namely "command human beings to worship Allah alone".[1016] On the basis of the one message of monotheism that was brought by all the prophets just mentioned above, Al-Moghamis observes without elaborating that Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) never claimed divinity but taught the oneness of Allah (God) and that he himself was only a messenger of Allah (God).[1017]

Next, the writer notes that after the Ascension of Prophet Jesus to heaven (he does not tell us whether this should be understood from a Christian or Islam perspective), most of the Christians were Unitarians who did not believe in the doctrines of the Trinity, the divine sonship of Prophet Jesus, original sin and the Atonement until many years later.[1018] He also points out that after centuries of persecution against the Unitarian Christians the Pauline Church which he identifies with modern-day Christianity came into being.[1019]

According to him, the original gospel of Jesus got lost following the emergence of the Pauline Church. Paul, whom he describes as the self-appointed thirteenth apostle replaced the lost gospel of Jesus with his own new gospel. He notes that it is in Paul's gospel the doctrines of original sin, blood Atonement and the divine sonship of Prophet Jesus that were not part of the

[1015]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 6.
[1016]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 7.
[1017]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 7-8.
[1018]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 8-9.
[1019]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 9.

original gospel are taught. [1020] He notes that all of this is in spite of the fact that Paul never saw Jesus.[1021] Last, after some brief comments about contradictions in the Bible which have resulted in many people leaving Christianity, Al-Moghamis gives ten main reasons to explain the purpose for writing of his book. We restrict ourselves only to four of the ten reasons.

The reasons are first, to confirm that Prophet Jesus was a great messenger who was given the gospel and performed many miracles by Allah's leave; second, to confirm that the original gospel that was given to Jesus was lost and that the existing gospels contain few of the original mixed with errors and contradiction; third, to disprove the false charges about Jesus in the Bible; fourth, to prove that the doctrines of Trinity, original sin, blood atonement and the divine sonship of Jesus were not part of the original gospel and fifth, that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the awaited Prophet prophesied in the Bible.[1022]

Next, we look at Al-Moghamis' critique of the crucifixion and death of Jesus in more detail. It would seem that he is concerned to demonstrate that there was no theological basis for Jesus to die by crucifixion. Hence, he first addresses the question of whether salvation is obtained by faith alone and original sin. It seems logical to do this because when he later denies that Jesus did not die by crucifixion, he will have already laid the foundation upon which such a view is predicated. We now consider his views about salvation by faith as opposed to salvation by deeds and original sin.

[1020]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 9.
[1021]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 9.
[1022]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 9.
[1022]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 10-11.

Firstly, he addresses faith and deeds in relation to salvation.[1023] In other words, Al-Moghamis questions the theological basis of the Christian teaching that it is by faith (in Jesus Christ) rather by good deeds that a person is saved. To show what he sees to be a contradiction in the teaching of the Bible about faith and deeds in relation to salvation, he juxtaposes Romans 10:9 ("That if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved") with James 2:17 ("Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead") and James 2:24 ("...a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone").[1024]

Further, he questions the view that people are saved by faith by appealing to two qur'anic text in support of his argument that salvation is given on the basis of good deeds. The texts are Qur'an 4: 123-124 (" ...And whoever does righteous good deeds, male or female, and is a believer, such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice will be done to them" and Qur'an 24: 39 ("As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water, until he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing; but he finds Allah with him. Who will pay him his due (Hell). And Allah is swift in taking account").[1025]

In his comments on Romans 10:9 Al-Moghamis argues that the teaching that salvation is obtained on the basis of faith contradicts the teaching of Jesus. According to him Jesus taught that salvation comes through the keeping of the commandments of God as exemplified in his answer to a question about eternal life in Matthew 19:17: ".... Obey the commandments").

[1023]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 64.
[1024]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 64.
[1025]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 64-65.

He observes that there was no mention of belief in the crucifixion and the resurrection in Jesus' answer.[1026] Al-Moghamis therefore concludes that both Muslims and true Christians who follow in the footsteps of Jesus believe that a person is justified not only by faith, but also by deeds.[1027]

Secondly, he argues against original sin by pointing out as he done before, what he sees to be a contradiction in the Bible on the subject. According to him, there is a contradiction in the biblical teaching that the individual who sins is the person who will bear the responsibility for their sin in the words "None of the offences he has committed will be remembered against him because the righteous things he has done, he will live. Do I take pleasure in the death of the wicked? (Ezekiel 18: 20-23) and the words of Paul " For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:15).[1028]

However, he notes that the teaching of the Qur'an in respect of the sin of Adam and Eve is the polar opposite of the two biblical verses that we considered above. Whereas in the Bible the sin of Adam and Eve had consequences for the rest of humankind, Al-Moghamis notes that they were forgiven by Allah when they repented and asked for forgiveness.[1029] Besides he questions why their sin would have affected the rest of humankind even if they had not repented and received forgiveness from God.[1030] Furthermore, he argues that there is a clear teaching in the Qur'an that no burdened person (with

[1026]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 65.
[1027]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 65.
[1028]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 66-67.
[1029]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 67.
[1030]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 67.

sins) shall bear the burden (sins) of another, so that every person can only be rewarded or punished for what he has done (Qur'an 53: 36-39).[1031]

On the basis of his argument that there are no sufficient grounds to support the view that Jesus needed to die for the sin of the world, he concludes that the 'dogma of the original sin' was one of the many inventions of the Paul. He points out that not only does it contradict the teaching of both the Bible and the Qur'an and the teachings of the prophets of God it is also contrary to all of Allah's law and human laws.[1032]

Al-Moghamis illustrates this by reiterating that the Bible teaches that the son shall not share the guilt of his father, the Qur'an teaches that no burdened soul shall bear the burden of another, human laws do punish the son for the crime of the father and neither shall the son be held responsible for what his father has done.[1033] He asks why all of these (a reference to the illustrations we noted above) should be abandoned in favour of the teaching of Paul that Jesus died by crucifixion because of the sins of humankind when Paul himself admits that his teaching on the issue is foolishness.[1034]

Thirdly, the writer addresses the crucifixion by first citing Qur'an 4: 157-158 in full thus "And because of their saying (in boast), "We killed the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary," the Messenger of Allah, but they killed him not, nor crucified him but the likeness of him was put on another man (and they killed that man). And those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely, they killed him not. But Allah raised him up into Himself. And Allah is Ever All- Powerful, All –

[1031]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 67.
[1032]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 67.
[1033]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 68.
[1034]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 68.

Wise. And there is not one of the People of the Scripture but will not believe in him (Jesus), as only a Messenger of Allah and a human being) before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them".[1035]

In a few broad strokes devoid of any references to the Islamic exegetical tradition in support of his view on the crucifixion, the writer notes that the Qur'an confirms (a reference to the text we have cited above) that Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was not crucified. Rather, Jesus was saved (one is unsure whether this refers to the crucifixion itself or to Jesus' death) by God who raised him up to heaven.[1036] However, he notes that even if Jesus was crucified that would not guarantee the salvation of humankind.[1037] Besides, he observes without providing any details that a careful study of many biblical texts shows that Jesus was not crucified.[1038]

Lastly, Al-Moghamis justifies why Islam rejects the dogma of the crucifixion by giving five reasons.[1039] The reasons are (1) the crucifixion depicts Allah as unmerciful because he only forgives after blood has been shed, (2) there is no sufficient reason why Jesus would have died for the sins committed by other people, (3), the crucifixion implies that all those who lived before Jesus including the prophets were not saved because they did not believe that the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) died for their sins, (4) the historicity of the crucifixion is doubtful and (5) Jesus showed himself to his disciples as one who had not been crucified (Luke 24: 37-43).[1040]

[1035]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 70.
[1036]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 70.
[1037]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 70.
[1038]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 70.
[1039]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 70.
[1040]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 70-72.

According to Al-Moghamis the presence of contradictions in the accounts of the crucifixion raises questions about the historicity of the event. Al- Moghamis therefore notes that the reason for the contradictions is that the writers of the gospels did not witness the event themselves.[1041] The writer argues that texts like Luke 24:37-43 which we have referred to above are proof that Jesus was neither crucified nor resurrected because he proved to his disciples that he was not a spirit.[1042]

4.2.4.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

Al-Moghamis shows in his work that he is within the pre-modern Islamic tradition in terms of the arguments he raises against the death of Jesus by crucifixion. Firstly, he argues that the blood of Jesus is not necessary for the salvation of humankind. In that case, he argues that even if Jesus died literally, his blood will still not be able to save humankind.

Secondly, he argues that the crucifixion would imply that God is unmerciful. Thirdly, he argues as the pre-modern polemicists did that there was no reason for one person to die for all men. Fourthly, like two of the pre-modern scholar (‘Abd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya), he raises questions about the historically reliability about the details of the crucifixion and finally concludes that Jesus showed himself to his disciples that he was alive.

4.3 Ahmadiyya polemical works

Five works will be examined in this section. They are the works of Nurudeen Mohammed Asante, Hussaini Yusuf Mabera, Ghulam Ahmad, Tahir

[1041]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity*, 70-72.
[1042]Al-Moghamis, *Christianity and Islam*, 72.

Ahmad and an anonymous publication described in this thesis as the 'Anonymous Tract', with no details of its writer. Each of these polemicists has one work that will be examined in this section.

Asante is the only Ghanaian Muslim, the other three polemicists are non-Ghanaian Muslims. It is instructive to mention that the works of Asante and Tahir Ahmad have also been analyzed in Chapter 3 in relation to the divinity of Jesus.

4.3.1 Nurudeen Mohammed Asante

The booklet in which Asante critiques the literal death of Jesus and argues that he survived death by crucifixion is eighty pages long entitled *The Guide*.[1043] It discusses theological issues that are of importance to both intra-Muslim and Muslim-Christian dialogue. In all, it contains fifty-six topics. The topics that relate to Jesus in the booklet include the author's interpretation of the biblical verse 'The way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6) and the question about whether it is the blood of Jesus or his word that saves.[1044]

Other topics that relate to Jesus are the rejection of the death of Jesus by crucifixion, the promise of God to save Jesus, the nature of Jesus' body after surviving death by crucifixion, Jesus' journey to India, the second coming of Jesus etc.[1045] For the purposes of this thesis, we shall focus on the arguments that the writer raises about the death of Jesus with reference to the question of whether or not he died on the cross.

Firstly, Asante begins his critique of Christian ideas of atonement and salvation by categorically stating that Jesus did not die on the Cross.[1046] He

[1043]Asante, *Guide*, 80.
[1044]Asante, *Guide*, 40.
[1045]Asante, *Guide*, 44-54.
[1046]Asante, *Guide*, 44.

seems to base this on what he sees to be an avalanche of biblical evidence that the purpose for the coming of Jesus was to preach the kingdom of heaven.[1047] He appeals to scriptural evidence (John 3:16; Matthew 9:10-13; Luke 4:42-43) for view in texts in the New Testament that seem to describe Jesus' mission to the world as principally concerned with the preaching of the kingdom and salvation.

Secondly, he refers to key texts in the New Testament in order to show that the Jews were determined to kill Jesus for a variety of reasons including their willingness to recognize him as the Christ to come (John 7:25-30; 9: 5-37), Jesus working on the Sabbath (John 5:5-18; 7:19-24; Matthew 12: 10-15). According to Asante, Jesus no longer walked publicly because the Jews wanted to kill him (John 7: 1-5).

Thirdly, the writer points out that while the Jews were determined to kill Jesus God had promised that he would save him.[1048] He points out that Jesus had prayed that God would save him (Matthew 28:36-39; Luke 22: 39-48; John 12: 27-28). He substantiates this by referring to texts both in the Bible (Psalm 21:11; 118: 1-18 and Qur'an 3:55). He then points out that there was a prophecy that God would save Jesus (Psalm 34:14-20; Qur'an 3: 56).

Fourthly, Asante argues that the reason why Jesus gave the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12: 38-40) was because he was certain that God would save him and protect him from dying on the cross.[1049] He hypothesizes that Jesus' cry on the cross (Matthew 27: 46) was in anticipation of the fulfillment of the promises God had made to him to save him from dying on the cross.[1050]

[1047]Asante, *Guide*, 44.
[1048]Asante, *Guide*, 45.
[1049]Asante, *Guide*, 46.
[1050]Asante, *Guide*, 46.

Further, Asante sees the fulfillment of the promise to save Jesus in a combination of texts from the Old and New Testaments (Hebrews 5:7; Psalm 116: 1-19; 66: 16-20). He reads Psalm 34: 14-21; John 19: 31-33) as further proof of the salvation that God had made that he would save Jesus from dying on the Cross. Whereas the former text is seen as the prophecy that not even a bone of his will be broken, the latter is seen as its fulfillment.

Fifthly, the writer argues that there would have been no need for the use of medicine on Jesus. Although he does not tell us what the medicine is that he is referring to here, he may have the vinegar that was taken to Jesus on a hyssop in mind. Besides, he wonders why it was Joseph of Arimathea disciple (described in the gospel accounts as a secret disciple) and not one of the soldiers to whom the body was given for burial.[1051]

Sixthly, Asante raises eyebrows about why the women would return to the grave with 'another mixture' of medicine (Luke 23: 56; 24: 1) on the first day of the week (our Sunday) to anoint the body of Jesus. He then questions the wisdom in administering medicine to a man who had had been buried a couple of days ago. While he does not tell us what lies behind his skepticism, he seems to be suggesting that the women took myrrh and aloe to the grave because they knew that Jesus had not died.[1052]

Further, he asks rhetorically why the women would go to the grave very early in the morning without being afraid that they would meet the soldiers who, according to the gospel accounts, were guarding the grave (Matthew

[1051]Asante, *Guide*, 46.
[1052]Asante, *Guide*, 47.

27:57-66). What is more, whom did the women expect to meet there who would move the huge stone that was placed over the grave?[1053]

Seventh, Asante argues that the crucifixion was planned. Although he does not provide any further basis for this hypothesis, he seems to suggest that the Jewish and Roman authorities, the disciples of Jesus (including Joseph of Arimathea and the women) were all complicit in the immoral plan to stage the crucifixion of Jesus and to depict him as crucified. He categorically points out that the soldiers had received a bribe. However, he does not mention who gave the bribe to the soldiers in order to let them keep the secret that Jesus was not dead.[1054]

Eighth, the writer substantiates the view that he has defended throughout his critique, namely, that Jesus survived death on the Cross, by citing Qur'an 4:156-158 as an additional piece of evidence. He does not examine these verses in detail given the disagreement surrounding them as to what they really mean in relation to Jesus' crucifixion and his eventual death on the Cross. Rather, Asante contents himself with a brief analysis of three Arabic phrases *maa salabu hu*, *shubbiha la-hum* and *salaba huu*. He translates former phrase as 'they did not cause his death on the Cross' and the latter as 'Jesus was made to appear to them (Jews) like one who was crucified.[1055] The third Arabic phrase is translated as "one who has been killed on the Cross".[1056] He notes that the verse (Q. 4:156-158) does not deny the crucifixion of Jesus on the Cross it denies his death on it.[1057]

[1053]Asante, *Guide*, 47.
[1054]Asante, *Guide*, 47.
[1055]Asante, *Guide*, 48.
[1056]Asante, *Guide*, 48.
[1057]Asante, *Guide*, 48.

Ninth, the writer categorically states that Jesus did not die on the Cross, but like all mortal beings. He died a natural death after he miraculously survived death by crucifixion on the Cross.[1058] The burden of proof lies with him both to show that Jesus did die and the place where he died after surviving death by crucifixion. The remainder of his work is devoted to showing how this happened. It is to this that we turn our attention next.

Again, Asante appeals both to evidence from the Bible and the Qur'an in support of his view that Jesus died a natural death. According to him, the biblical evidence is that Jesus was always hiding from the Jews for fear of being arrested again, he always appeared to the disciples in different forms of clothes (Mark 16: 11-12; John 20: 13-16). Also he argues that Jesus 'handed the disciples to Peter' and thereafter went away and died a natural death.[1059]

Tenth, to add more bite to his argument that Jesus did die a natural death after he survived death on the Cross, he cites two texts in the Qur'an. The first is Qur'an 21: 8-9 ("We sent none as Messengers before thee (Mohammed) but men nor did we give them bodies that ate no food, neither were they to live forever"). The second is Qur'an 21: 35-36 ("We granted not everlasting life to any human being before thee (Mohammed), if then thou shouldst die, shall they live forever. Every soul shall taste of death").[1060]

In addition to the texts we cited in the preceding paragraph that depict Jesus as a mortal being and that he died at a point in his life, the write refers to Qur'an 19: 34-35 ("And peace was on me the day I was born, and peace there will be on me the day, I shall die, and the day I shall be raised again

[1058]Asante, *Guide*, 48.
[1059]Asante, *Guide*, 48.
[1060]Asante, *Guide*, 48.

(Judgement Day), such was Jesus, the son of Mary. This is a statement of truth about which they doubt").[1061]

Up to this point in our analysis we have focused on Asante's argument against the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion. Now, we look closely at his argument about where Jesus died after he survived death through crucifixion. He explicitly states that following what he describes as the 'attempted crucifixion', Jesus went and preached to the 'lost sheep of Israel' (Jeremiah 23: 5-6; Luke 4: 42-44). Asante identifies the 'lost sheep of Israel' with some Israelites in India among whom Jesus exercised a preaching ministry until he died there (Esther 8:8-9).[1062]

The reference by Jesus to 'other sheep' (John 10:16) in the preceding paragraph is taken by Asante as a reference to Jewish tribes living in India during the time life time of Jesus. He therefore argues on the basis of this interpretation of the identity of the 'lost sheep' that it was to these tribes who lived outside Palestine that Jesus went after he had been buried alive after an 'attempted crucifixion'.[1063] The reason given by the writer that necessitated a trip to India is that Jesus and his disciples had not preached the gospel to the 'lost sheep of Israel'.[1064]

Asante understands the 'lost sheep of Israel' to be the Jews who by the time of Jesus were living in India as a result of their exile in the past. Hence, he looks for scriptural support both to show that there were Jews in India (Esther 8:8-9) and that the Jews were taken away as captives in the past (2 Kings 18:

[1061]Asante, *Guide*, 48.
[1062]Asante, *Guide*, 49.
[1063]Asante, *Guide*, 50.
[1064]Asante, *Guide*, 49- 50.

26-32; 24: 14-20).[1065] In addition to this, Asante argues that Jesus' mention of the 'lost sheep of Israel', 'other sheep' and the 'lost sheep' in the gospel accounts (John 10:16; Matthew 18:11-14) was a reference to the Israelites who were living in India during his time.

Asante argues that in preparation for his trip to India to continue his mission where he eventually died (John 21: 14-19), Jesus gave Peter the responsibility of caring for his disciples.[1066] Although the writer offers neither proof nor further explanation, he identifies the phrase 'on a devoted land of green valleys and springs of running water' in Qur'an 23:51 ("And we made the son of Mary and his mother a sign and gave them shelter on a devoted land of green valleys and springs of running water") with India.[1067]

Eleventh, still intent on showing that Jesus travelled to India, the writer now attempts an explanation of the traditional view that Jesus ascended to heaven after he survived death by crucifixion on the cross.[1068] According to him, no human being can ascend to the skies (he must have used this to mean 'heaven') physically.[1069] He supports this argument by citing examples about Muhammad (Qur'an 17: 91-94; 6: 36), Idriss (Qur'an 51:51) and texts in which God said that he would exalt some prophets above others (Qur'an 58:12; 2:254).

The references we have cited above are by no means clear as to their relevance to the ascension of Jesus. However, what is clear is that Asante is arguing that the phrases 'I am going to my Lord', I am ascending to God', 'to be exalted' in both the Bible and Qur'an do not connote a physical ascension to

[1065]Asante, *Guide*, 49-50.
[1066]Asante, *Guide*, 50.
[1067]Asante, *Guide*, 50.
[1068]Asante, *Guide*, 50.
[1069]Asante, *Guide*, 50.

heaven.[1070] He further argues by offering biblical proof in support of his view that human beings cannot physically go to heaven (Ecclesiastes 12:7;1 Corinthians 15:50-51). Similarly, he argues that human beings will appear as spirit beings after the resurrection.[1071]

Twelfth, Asante attempts an explanation of the phrase 'the right hand of God' because of the widely held view among Christians that Jesus ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God after the resurrection.[1072] In addition to this, he notes that there is a contradiction in the gospel accounts about when Jesus went to heaven and sat at the right hand of God.[1073] According to him, whereas some accounts say that it happened the first day (Mark 16:12-19; Luke 24: 36-50) after the resurrection, others say that it happened forty days later (Acts 1: 2-3).[1074] In his explanation of the meaning of the 'right hand of God', he first draws attention to a very important attribute of God, namely that he is 'spirit.'[1075]

Further, he notes that because God is essentially 'spirit' he does not resemble a human being so that it cannot be said about him that he is facing the East, West, North or South.[1076] As he has done throughout his work, he refers to both the Bible and the Qur'an for clues about the meaning of the phrase. From the Bible, he cites Psalm 110:1 which has David described as sitting on the right hand of God, Deuteronomy 5:15 which has God described as having delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt by a 'mighty hand' and Exodus 8: 17-19 where the magicians after they saw the miracles performed by Moses

[1070]Asante, *Guide*, 50.
[1071]Asante, *Guide*, 50.
[1072]Asante, *Guide*, 51.
[1073]Asante, *Guide*, 51.
[1074]Asante, *Guide*, 51.
[1075]Asante, *Guide*, 51.
[1076]Asante, *Guide*, 51.

and Aaron are described as saying that the miracles were a sign of the 'finger of God'.[1077]

From the Qur'an, he cites Qur'an 56:1-15; 28 which gives a pictorial depiction of the Day of Judgment. He notes that verses 8-13 mention three separations of human beings who will be judged, namely those on the right, the left and the foremost.[1078] According to him, those on the right are 'lucky' people, those on the left are 'unlucky' people and the foremost are people who are 'near to Almighty Allah, whose reward will be the Garden of Bliss.[1079]

Having analyzed a number of texts from both the Qur'an and the Bible in search of clues for the meaning of the phrase 'right hand of God', Asante can now draw a conclusion. He understands the phrase to mean two when used about Jesus, namely, that 'Jesus was lucky to be saved by the mighty hand of Allah from the Jews' similar to the miraculous ways in which Moses and the Israelites were saved.[1080]

Finally, the writer addresses the second coming of Jesus Christ. He does not indicate his reasons for addressing the issue which is not a central tenet in Ahmadiyya theology. However, he devotes time and space to discussing the meaning of the term 'Messiah' as used both for Jesus and other people. Although he does not state it categorically, his understanding of 'Messiah' seems to be a person who is anointed by God for a specific assignment. Thus, he argues that Jesus, Saul, David, Cyrus etc., would each be described as the 'Messiah' of their time.[1081] Reading John 9:5 ("As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world") in the light of his understanding

[1077]Asante, *Guide*, 52.
[1078]Asante, *Guide*, 51.
[1079]Asante, *Guide*, 51.
[1080]Asante, *Guide*, 52.
[1081]Asante, *Guide*, 52.

of the term 'Messiah', he notes that each of these people was Christ, Messiah or the anointed at their time.[1082]

We should point out that Asante has been laying the basis upon which to explain what he understands the second coming of Jesus to mean. For instance, he has argued that the term 'Messiah' could be used for people who were separated from one another by varying periods of time such as Saul, David, Cyrus, Jesus etc. Also, he has pointed out that John the Baptist came in the 'spirit of Elijah' (Luke 1: 13-17) an event which was confirmed by Jesus himself (Mark 11: 13-14; 17: 10-13). He can now categorically state that Jesus 'himself shall never come again'[1083] Thus, Asante gives a new interpretation to the traditional and widely held belief that the 'second coming' of Jesus means his physical bodily return to the earth a second time.

Asante now concludes that the second coming of Jesus Christ was fulfilled in the advent of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India.[1084] He therefore argues that Christians and Muslims are waiting in vain for the bodily, physical return of Jesus Christ to this earth and likens the Christians of today to the Jews who misunderstood the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah and were looking for their literal fulfillment.[1085] He argues that the Jews were expecting a 'Messiah' who had military to liberate them from the yoke of Roman rule.[1086] They would reject the peaceful 'Messiah' when he finally arrived in preference for one who waged war.[1087]

[1082] Asante, *Guide*, 52.
[1083] Asante, *Guide*, 53.
[1084] Asante, *Guide*, 58.
[1085] Asante, *Guide*, 58.
[1086] Asante, *Guide*, 57.
[1087] Asante, *Guide*, 57.

According to Asante, like all human beings Jesus was a creature and was therefore, mortal. As such, he had an appointed time given to him on earth (Qur'an 7: 35; 50: 30).[1088] In view of the foregoing, Jesus died a natural death after he completed his prophetic mission to the 'lost sheep' of Israel who lived in India. On this view, the references to his second coming in the Bible were not about his physical bodily descent to the earth again. Rather, the references mean that another person would come to the earth in the "spirit of the Messiah/Jesus."

4.3.1.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

We should observe at the outset that the entire critique of Asante rests on the claim that Jesus survived death by crucifixion after swooning on the Cross and taken down alive from there. This implies, as we shall demonstrate below, that his claims are at variance with all the four key pre-modern sources in terms of what they say on the subject. We should call attention to the observation we made in Chapter 1 that these sources constitute the theological touchstone for understanding the person and mission of Jesus in the Islamic tradition.

To be sure, the arguments and views of Asante on the crucifixion and death of Jesus cannot be reconciled with the outcome of our analysis in Chapter 2 above. This will become clearer when we look at the key arguments and conclusions in his critique. There are four significant areas in which his arguments contradict the testimony of the four pre-modern sources that were examined in Chapter 2 on the death of Jesus by crucifixion.

[1088]Asante, *Guide*, 57- 58.

Firstly, the claim by Asante that Jesus survived death by crucifixion by swooning on the Cross and was brought down from there and taken for dead raises two key questions about the pre-modern sources. In the first place, with the single exception of the Qur'an where there is no certainty as to whether 4:157-158 supports the literal or apparent death of Jesus, his view contradicts the view of the other three pre-modern sources.

We saw in the exegetical tradition for example that most of the early commentators and exegetes support the view that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus on the Cross. We also saw that the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian tradition of which the treatises of ʿAbd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya examined in Chapter 4 are representative rejected the historicity of the crucifixion in order to account for the theory that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus. While ʿAbd al-Jabbar argued that it was a wrong person who was arrested, tried and crucified, Ibn Taymiyya argued that the crucifixion was a fabricated story by the Jews. Given this testimony, Asante contradicts, at least, three of the pre-modern sources by accepting the historicity of the crucifixion.

Secondly, Asante's argument that Jesus survived death by crucifixion and travelled to India where for some time, he carried out a prophetic ministry to the ten 'lost tribes of Israel' living there is alien to Islamic history. This view is neither supported by the Qur'an nor by the other three pre-modern sources that have been central in our analysis up to this point. Of course, none of these sources provides any details about where Jesus went to after he was supernaturally saved from dying by crucifixion through the miracle that is supposed to lie behind Qur'an 4: 157-158. Therefore, his argument that Jesus

survived death by crucifixion is unacceptable from a purely Sunni theological point of view but to say that he travelled to India and continued his prophetic ministry for some time before he finally died deviates from the views of the pre-modern sources that we examined in Chapter 2.

Thirdly, Asante's argument that Jesus died a physical death raises questions about Islamic eschatological expectations about Jesus. It is worth noting that apart from the Qur'an where we cannot be sure whether Qur'an (with the help of Islamic tradition) should be read as supporting the view that Jesus will return to the earth, the other sources are unequivocal about a future eschatological role of Jesus based on Qur'an 4:159 and Q. 43:61 both of which are cited by Robinson in his treatment of the return of Jesus from the standpoint of the exegetical tradition in Islam.[1089]

However, in the critique of Asante above there is a categorical denial of a second coming of Jesus to this earth on the basis that like all human beings, Jesus had an appointed time to live on this earth.[1090] This implies that he died after surviving death by crucifixion. Asante finds support for this view in Qur'an 7: 35; 50:30.It seems to this researcher that the view that Jesus died a natural after he had survived death by crucifixion is the antithesis of Islamic orthodoxy especially from perspective of the treatises of the Sunni polemicists we have examined above.

Finally, his argument that Qur'an 4:157-158 does not reject the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus but only rejects his death by crucifixion challenges the now legendary interpretation that the text means that a substitute

[1089]Robinson, *Christ in Islam*, 78.
[1090]Asante, *Guide*, 57-68.

died on the Cross.[1091] It is worth pointing out that this interpretation of the text has no parallel in the exegetical tradition because while some groups have questioned the view that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus, they have done so for reasons other than that Jesus swooned and was taken down from the Cross alive but unnoticed by the political and religious authorities.

It is for the above reasons that this researcher would like to argue that Asante's views of the crucifixion and death of Jesus mark a departure from what is has been widely received in the history of the exegetical tradition in Islam. Next, we analyze the work of Hussaini Yusuf Mabera, another Ahmadiyya Muslim in relation to the death of Jesus.

4.3.2 Hussaini Yusuf Mabera

The critique of Mabera against the literal death of Jesus is in a fifty-three page booklet entitled *Jesus Did not Die on the Cross*.[1092] Its central argument is that Jesus did not die literally by means of crucifixion on the Cross. His argument is in five main parts, each part represents a chapter in his treatise. Chapter 1 is about the Jewish involvement in the crucifixion.[1093]

In Chapter 2 of his critique he focuses on the New Testament biblical evidence to show that Jesus did not die by crucifixion.[1094] Chapter 3 focuses on the Old Testament biblical evidence against the literal death of Jesus. Chapter 4 examines the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:40) as evidence that Jesus did not die

[1091]Asante, *Guide*, 48.
[1092]Hussain, Yusuf Mabera, *Jesus Did Not Die on the Cross: Top Hundred Facts in the Bible* (Centre for Islamic Propagation and Comparative Religious Education: Sokoto, 2012), 5.
[1093]Mabera, *Cross*, 5-6.
[1094]Mabera, *Cross*, 5-6.

by crucifixion.[1095] Chapter 4 is about the preparation of the body of Jesus and its eventual burial in the tomb.[1096]

In his detailed critique, Mabera discusses issues that for the purposes of this thesis are extraneous. For example, he discusses the Jewish conspiracy against Jesus, his prophetic role as a messenger to the people of Israel and the reasons why the Jews wanted to kill Jesus.[1097] However, the part of his critique that is relevant to the analysis is how Jesus escaped from being killed by the Jews.[1098] It is here that we shall begin our analysis of his critique against the death of Jesus.

Firstly, Mabera observes that Jesus prayed to God when he heard that there was a plot by the Jesus to kill him.[1099] He cites Mark 14:32-46 ("And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane and he saith to his disciples, sit here, while I pray ....Abba, father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will but thou wilt...").[1100] Mabera raises a number of important issues including why Jesus would pray to be saved from dying when he had agreed to come to the world and die and whether God answered the prayer of Jesus or not.[1101]

Secondly, Mabera argues that God answered the prayer to deliver Jesus from death by crucifixion. He notes that God gave assurance to Jesus that he would save him by first sending an angel to strengthen him.[1102] To buttress the point he has made to the effect that an angel was sent to strengthen Jesus,

[1095]Mabera, *Cross*, 5-6.
[1096]Mabera, *Cross*, 5-6.
[1097]Mabera, *Cross*, 9-11.
[1098]Mabera, *Cross*, 17.
[1099]Mabera, *Cross*, 17.
[1100]Mabera, *Cross*, 17-18.
[1101]Mabera, *Cross*, 17-18.
[1102]Mabera, *Cross*, 19.

Mabera cites Psalm 91:11 ("For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways") and Psalm 34:7 ("The Angel of the Lord encamped round about them that fear him, and delivereth them").[1103]

Thirdly, Mabera appears to accept that Jesus was crucified on the cross.[1104] However, he immediately points out that he did not die on the cross but only as he describes 'passed through the gate of death'.[1105] Mabera notes that the legs of Jesus were not broken because in order to preserve them God miraculously made Jesus to appear as if he was already dead in fulfilment of what the psalmist had said in Psalm 34:19-30 ("Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivered him out of them all, He keeps all his bones; and not one of them is broken").[1106]

Fourthly, Mabera argues on the basis of John 19:31-34 ("The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation....Then came the soldiers, and break the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him (Jesus)....But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his (Jesus) side, and forthwith came there out blood and water") that Jesus was still alive on the cross.[1107] Substantiating this further, he argues that when someone dies the blood coagulates and ceases to circulate because the heart stops pumping blood around the body.[1108]

Fifthly, Mabera interprets John 19:28-30 ("After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished....saith, I thirst...and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it to his mouth....he said, it is finished and he bowed his

[1103]Mabera, *Cross*, 19.
[1104]Mabera, *Cross*, 30.
[1105]Mabera, *Cross*, 30.
[1106]Mabera, *Cross*, 30.
[1107]Mabera, *Cross*, 31.
[1108]Mabera, *Cross*, 30-31.

head and gave up the ghost") in an interesting way.[1109] Although he takes the literal reading of the text seriously, he argues that the phrase 'he gave up the ghost' after Jesus had drank the vinegar is not suggestive of physical death.[1110] He notes that the above phrase is the biblical description of Jesus' state of unconsciousness in which he had lost both his feelings and thinking as the natural consequence of the vinegar.[1111]

Moreover, he also describes the vinegar that was offered to Jesus as a chemical.[1112] He likens the vinegar that was given to Jesus to the practice of administering a drug to make a patient in modern medical practise that would have the effect of causing the patient to lose the sensing of feeling and touch in order to reduce suffering.[1113]

Mabera notes that the vinegar that was given to Jesus served the same purpose as chloroform would when it is given to a patient in modern medical practice.[1114] Further, he argues that the very fact that blood and water came of when Jesus was pierced with a spear is itself sufficient evidence that Jesus was alive. It is noteworthy to say that we have met this argument in the critique already. What seems to be new that we have not met in the critique is his re-interpretation of the phrase 'it is finished'.

Mabera argues that the above phrase does not mean that Jesus meant that he was about to die but that the evil design against him had come to an end.[1115] Mabera notes that if Jesus meant that he was about to die, he would

[1109]Mabera, *Cross*, 32.
[1110]Mabera, *Cross*, 32.
[1111]Mabera, *Cross*, 32.
[1112]Mabera, *Cross*, 32.
[1113]Mabera, *Cross*, 33.
[1114]Mabera, *Cross*, 34.
[1115]Mabera, *Cross*, 34.

have said 'I am finished' rather than 'it is finished'.[1116] According to him, the fact that he did not say that he was about to die meant that the phrase meant something else other than death.

4.3.2.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

Mabera posits a view that is not supported by any of the pre-modern sources that were analysed in Chapter 2 on the subject. Mabera has argued that Jesus was crucified but did not die on the Cross. We saw in the analysis in Chapter 2 that many Muslims read and interpret Qur'an 4: 157-158 as a denial of the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion. Likewise, we saw in the same analysis that the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*), the prophetic tradition (*hadith*) and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition all seem to support the traditional Muslim view that Jesus did not die by crucifixion on a cross.

4.3.3 Ghulam Ahmad

The refutation of the literal death of Jesus is in a hundred and twenty-two page book entitled *Jesus in India*.[1117] The purpose of his refutation is to argue against the traditional Christian belief that Jesus died a literal death by crucifixion. To do this, he offers evidence from a variety of sources in four main chapters.

Chapter 1 examines the evidence for the death of Jesus from the gospels. Chapter 2 examines the evidence from the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), Chapter 3 examines the evidence from medical literature and lastly, Chapter 4 is about the evidence from historical records.[1118] In addition to

[1116]Mabera, *Cross*, 34.
[1117]Ghulam Ahmad, *Jesus in India* (Islam International Publications Limited: Tilford, 2003).
[1118]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.

the four major chapters into which his refutation is divided, he provides additional notes at the end of his work to buttress each of the arguments he has made in the main text of his refutation of the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion.

It is instructive to briefly note that this book is a key text of Ahmadiyya theology about the crucifixion and death of Jesus because for the first time, a sect within the Islamic tradition takes a view on the subject that seems to this researcher, to be the very antithesis of what is considered orthodox or mainstream theology on the subject. In what follows, we shall analyze the arguments that Ahmad uses to prove that Jesus did not die a literal death by crucifixion.

Firstly, Ahmad begins with the evidence in the gospels that subject his view that Jesus did not die on the Cross.[1119] He argues on the basis of the story of the prophet Jonah as told by Jesus in Matthew 12:40 ("For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth") that Jesus did not die on the Cross.[1120] He draws parallels from the story of Jonah and uses them to explain the account of the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus in the gospels.[1121]

Furthermore, Ghulam Ahmad contends that it is obvious from the story that Jonah was not dead while he was in the belly of the whale but argues that he (Jonah) went into a 'swoon' or a 'coma.'[1122] He argues that the holy books of God without specifying what they are (he may have the Bible and the

[1118]Ahmad, *Jesus*, ix.
[1119]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.
[1120]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.
[1121]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.
[1122]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.

Qur'an in mind), testify that Jonah remained in the belly of the whale alive, came out alive and was accepted by those to whom he had been sent.[1123]

In order to accentuate the need for the parallels that he has drawn between the experience of Jonah and the crucifixion of Jesus, he questions rhetorically what the resemblance would be between the story of Jonah and Jesus if the latter had indeed died.[1124] He then observes that as a prophet, Jesus had prophesied via the story of Jonah that he that he would not die on the Cross but like the latter, he would only be in a state of swoon.[1125] He notes that knowledge of what would happen to Jesus after the crucifixion came to him as a revelation from God.[1126] Ahmad also contends that like Jonah, Jesus knew that he would come out of the bowels of the earth, join his people and be honored in the same way that the former was honored.[1127]

Furthermore, he points out that in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus that he would be saved as Jonah was, he 'came out of the bowels' of the earth, went and preached to the ten lost tribes of the Israelites living in Kashmir and Tibet whose deportation in 721 B.C. antedated the coming of Jesus. According to Ahmad, these ten lost tribes eventually came to India and settled there.[1128] The eastward journey of Jesus after he survived death by crucifixion was to enable him to preach to them because since their departure from their ancestral home, they had renounced their Jewish faith and most of them had embraced Buddhism.[1129]

[1123]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.
[1124]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.
[1125]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.
[1126]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 17.
[1127]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 18.
[1128]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 18.
[1129]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 18.

Ahmad adduces more biblical evidence in his support of his view that Jesus did not die a literal death of Jesus by crucifixion by arguing that anybody who died by crucifixion was considered accursed. While this remains purely speculative, his reference to the association between crucifixion and being cursed may be a reference to Galatians 3:13 ("Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'") which he does not specify as to its source. He therefore argues for the view that Jesus survived death by crucifixion by saying that it would be inappropriate to associate Jesus who is a 'chosen one of God' to have died on the Cross as he would be seen to be accursed of God.[1130]

Secondly, Ahmad argues against the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion by appealing to the Qur'an 4: 156-157 ("And because of their (Jews) disbelief and uttering against Maryam (Mary) a grave false charge (that she has committed illegal sexual intercourse); And because of their saying (in boast), 'We killed the Messiah 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), the Messenger of Allah.' – but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but it appeared so to them (the resemblance of 'Isa (Jesus) was put over another man (and they killed that man), and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no (certain) knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely, they killed him not (i.e. 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)").[1131]

According to him, this text means that the Jews did not murder him nor did they kill him on the Cross, they only had the misconception that Jesus had died without sufficient evidence to show that Jesus had actually died on the

[1130]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 19.
[1131]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 57.

Cross.[1132] He concedes that the verses teach that Jesus was put on the Cross and that the intention of his enemies was to kill him but cautions that it was wrong for Jews and Christians to assume that he did really die on the Cross because he was crucified.[1133]

Thirdly, Ahmad argues that God allowed certain things to happen through which he intervened and save Jesus from dying on the Cross.[1134] The divine intervention that resulted in the saving of Jesus included the falling of darkness over the land at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, the earthquake, the dream of Pilate's wife etc. These are described as the manifestation of "divine power and majesty that was orchestrated by God to bring about the saving of Jesus from death on the Cross."[1135]

According to Ahmad, these signs which the people had not seen before happened and caused turmoil and panic among the people that they no longer bothered to find whether Jesus had indeed died or not.[1136] He also observes that the Jews have not definitively explained how Jesus could have died so quickly after his crucifixion. The phrase 'the Jews did not kill Jesus; but it was God who made them believe that they had killed him' in Qur'an 4: 156-157 is a reference to the signs that happened just at the time that the crucifixion took place.

Fourthly, having examined the Bible and Qur'an for evidence that Jesus did not die by crucifixion, Ahmad now turns his attention to the evidence from medical literature.[1137] The evidence is about some medicinal preparation that

[1132]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 57.
[1133]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 57.
[1134]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 57.
[1135]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 58.
[1136]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 58.
[1137]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 65.

Ahmad has argued was used to treat Jesus' wounds before his burial. Ahmad calls it the 'ointment of Jesus.' This evidence is recorded in medical books compiled by Christians, Jews, Muslims, Magians etc,[1138]

Fifthly, Ahmad refers to evidence from historical records to show that Jesus ever travelled to India.[1139] He further states that Jesus was called the Messiah because he travelled so much. The record further states that he travelled without sandals, carrying a staff in his hand and lived on vegetables and drank only fresh water.[1140] There are also Buddhist records to support that Jesus must have travelled to the Punjab and Kashmir.[1141]

In addition to the aforementioned five arguments to buttress his view that Jesus was saved from death by crucifixion, he notes that there is also evidence in other historical sources that shows that it was necessary for Jesus to travel to the Punjab.[1142]So far, the purpose of the critique in this book has been to provide evidence outside the Qur'an to show that Jesus survived death by crucifixion and travelled to India.[1143] To what extent his views accord with the views of the pre-modern sources that we examined earlier in Chapter 2 is what will concern us next.

4.3.3.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

Like the other two Ahmadiyya treatises that we have already analyzed in relation to the death of Jesus, the critique of Ahmad contradicts the testimony of the pre-modern Islamic sources in a number of ways. Firstly, it categorically recognizes that it was Jesus who was crucified on the Cross. This

[1138]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 65.
[1139]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 77.
[1140]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 77.
[1141]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 83.
[1142]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 106.
[1143]Ahmad, *Jesus*, 106.

view contrasts sharply with the mainstream Sunni position we considered earlier in this chapter which suggests that it was a substitute who was crucified on the Cross.

Secondly, it argues that Jesus survived death by crucifixion and travelled to India where he preached to the ten lost tribes there and died a natural death thereafter. He thus argues that the meaning of Qur'an 4: 157-158 in relation to the crucifixion and the death of Jesus is that as he has argued, God orchestrated the circumstance leading and after the crucifixion in such a way that he did not die literally on the Cross.

It is worth pointing out that this view together with all of the arguments that support it contradicts the pre-modern sources, all of which teach that Jesus will come to back to the earth and die because he did not taste physical death while he was on this earth. However, we should recall that Ibn Taymiyya is unique in being the only person who argues in his critique of the crucifixion and the death of Jesus that the account itself was a fabrication by the Jews.

4.3.4 Tahir Ahmad

The booklet in which Tahir refutes the claim that Jesus died a literal death by crucifixion is entitled *Christianity: A journey from facts to fiction*. It is hundred and forty-eight pages long and examines a number of Christian doctrines including the sonship of Jesus, sin and atonement, the role of the Holy Spirit, crucifixion, revival or resurrection in respect of the death of Jesus, Trinity, evolution of Christianity and Christianity today and some appendixes.[1144]

[1144]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 7-148.

The argument against the death of Jesus is in four parts. In the first part, he lays the foundation for his view by arguing that even if God required atonement for sin, Jesus would not qualify to do because he had inherited sin as a result of being a progeny of Adam and Eve from whom all humankind inherited sin.[1145]

In the second, he rejects the literal death of Jesus by arguing that like Jonah who survived death in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40, Jesus had survived death by crucifixion.[1146] In the third, he argues that Jesus revived rather resurrected on the third day.[1147]

In the final part of his critique, Ahmad, having argued against the literal death of Jesus, now argues that it was Paul who introduced many other doctrines including the doctrine of salvation through the death of Jesus into Christianity.[1148] Tahir Ahmad begins with the theological twin subjects of sin and atonement as the second most important article in Christianity. [1149] However, he notes that while sin and atonement may be described as fundamental teachings in orthodox Christianity, not all Christians subscribe to the entirety of the teaching about sin and atonement.

We shall first consider some of the building blocks of his analysis and his detailed critique against the crucifixion. He divides this into two parts. In the first part of his critique he deals with the beliefs that are constitutive of the Christian understanding of Atonement. In the second part, he deals with the way in which Jesus has provided atonement for humankind.

[1145]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 40.
[1146]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 63-68.
[1147]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 92-98.
[1148]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 116-124.
[1149]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 19.

Firstly, he notes that in Christianity God is described as just. Hence, he exercises natural justice and does not forgive without exacting retribution as this will be against the justice of God.[1150] He therefore points out that the justice of God is the basis of the Christian belief of atonement.[1151] Secondly, he observes that Christianity teaches that humankind is sinful because Adam and Eve sinned. Christianity therefore teaches that all human beings since Adam and Eve, continue to sin because they are born congenial sinners.[1152]

Thirdly, Ahmad points out that Christians believe that a sinner cannot atone for the sins of another sinner which implies that atonement can be provided only by a sinless person.[1153] He observes that the belief that atonement can only be provided by a sinless person is the basis upon which Christians believe no prophet no matter how righteous could have provided atonement for the sin of humankind as they themselves were tainted with the sin of Adam.[1154]

There are three things that are central to Ahmad's critique of the crucifixion, namely, (1) the sign of Jonah, (2) the promise of Jesus to the house of Israel and (3) the events surrounding the crucifixion itself. Below, we analyze each of these separately in order to bring out the implications each of them have on our understanding of the death of Jesus as presented by Ahmad.

Two key observations about his understanding of the crucifixion are worth noting. The first is that the crucifixion of Jesus was an attempt made on the life of Jesus in which crucifixion was the means that was employed by the

[1150]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 19.
[1151]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 19.
[1152]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 19.
[1153]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 19.
[1154]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 19.

authorities.[1155] The second is that the attempt to crucify him failed in inflicting death.[1156] Now, we look at his critique we referred to in the preceding paragraph in more detail below.

Firstly, he argues that the attempted murder of Jesus by crucifixion failed in the sense that after intense suffering that lasted for only a few hours, Jesus was taken down from the cross in a state of deep coma and presumed to be dead.[1157] The argument that is being made here is that everything worked to perfection because God was behind whatever was happening both with the authorities, the soldiers and the secret disciples of Jesus to whom his body was later given to for burial after it was taken down from the Cross.

Secondly, he argues that following his resuscitation (he abhors the word 'resurrection') Jesus left Judea and travelled to a land of freedom both because he enjoyed no legal immunity and protection under Roman law as he had been condemned to die and because he had a religious duty to perform.[1158] Ahmad continues to argue that the religious duty that awaited Jesus after he survived the attempted murder on him was to preach to the 'lost sheep of Israel' scattered in many distant nations because of the Babylonian and Roman invasions.[1159]

Further, he observes that there was no justification for the view that the burden of proof of the physical death of Jesus lies with Ahmadiyya Muslims.[1160] Rather, the onus of proof lies with those who deny the death of Jesus. We cannot be sure the group of people that he has in mind here except to

[1155]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 63.
[1156]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 63.
[1157]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 63.
[1158]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 63-64.
[1159]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 63-64.
[1160]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 64.

speculate that he may be referring to Sunni Muslims who deny that Jesus died when he first came into the world.

According to him, Ahmadiyya Muslims merely follow the laws of nature when they say that Jesus died. It is those who believe that Jesus did not die who need to offer proof why that is so. He likens those who believe that Jesus died to those who are following the laws of nature and those who believe otherwise to those who are making claims against the laws of nature. The laws of nature in this case include the certainty that all human beings die and therefore, as a human being, Jesus also died. Moreover, he argues that the Christians themselves believe that Jesus died. He observes that the disagreement between Christians and Ahmadiyya is about when Jesus died – whether it was on the cross or afterwards. This is what will concern us in the second part of the analysis.

In support of the view that Jesus did not die on the cross, Ahmad observes that Ahmadiyya Muslims can prove from the Bible that God did not abandon him (Jesus) to die on the cross.[1161] He suggests that proof that he did not die on the cross is seen in facts about the period before the crucifixion, the facts about the crucifixion and the facts after the crucifixion itself.[1162]

According to him, the compelling case for believing that Jesus did not die on the cross is the 'sign of Jonah' as taught by Jesus himself (Matthew 12: 38-41).[1163] He notes that the two questions that are worth asking about Jonah are: What was the sign of Jonah? Did Jonah die in the belly of the fish and later revived from death?[1164]

[1161]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 65.
[1162]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 65.
[1163]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 65.
[1164]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 65.

Drawing a parallel between the experiences of Jonah and Jesus, Ahmad notes that just as the former did not die in the belly of the fish but was miraculously saved and revived so the latter did not die while he was in the grave for three days and three nights.[1165] In view of this, Ahmad points out that the import of Jesus' reference to Jonah was to show that what happened to Jonah (his being in the belly of the fish without dying) would happen to Jesus (he will be in the grave alive for three days and three nights and will be revived).[1166]

The key argument of Ahmad about Jonah and Jesus is that God orchestrated the laws of nature so that the latter and the former were alive after spending three days and nights in belly of the whale and in the tomb respectively amidst the precarious conditions that could have resulted in the death of other people.[1167] He therefore argues that Jonah and Jesus were not brought back from death to life – their experiences were a revival from near death under extremely life-threatening conditions.[1168]

Finally, he argues that the reference of Jesus in his teaching to the house of Israel in John 10:16 that he had other sheep ("I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them") also implies that Jesus could not have died without fulfilling that prophetic commission.[1169] According to Ahmad, this implies that Jesus was sent not only to the house of Israel but also to the other sheep in John 10:16.[1170]

[1165]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 65.
[1166]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 66.
[1167]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 66.
[1168]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 66.
[1169]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 66.
[1170]Ahmad, *Fiction,* 66.

On the above view, Ahmad argues that there can only be two possible explanations. The first is that Jesus forgot that he had made a promise to the house of Israel to bring the "other sheep" and add to the "sheep" that he already had. Ahmad identifies the sheep that he already has with the nation of Israel. In the second place Jesus must have remembered this promise and asked for more time from God the Father to live a little longer on earth in order to fulfill this duty.[1171]

Ahmad points out that as a true prophet of God, Jesus chose to carry out his prophetic role of preaching to the 'lost sheep of Israel'.[1172] The 'lost sheep' are identified with the ten tribes of Israel who had migrated to remote and distant lands in the East.[1173] This implies that Jesus survived death by crucifixion so that he could fulfill his mission to these lost tribes.[1174]

In the light of the analysis of the critique of Ahmad in respect of the death of Jesus by crucifixion his arguments sit well within the Ahmadiyya views of the last days of the earthly life of Jesus. Like Mabera, Asante and Ahmad Ghulam whose treatises we examined earlier in this chapter, Ahmad also argues for the historicity of the crucifixion. Like them, he argues that while Jesus was crucified on the Cross, he did not die – he was miraculously saved by God from dying.

4.3.4.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

There are two key things in the critique of Ahmad that have no support anywhere in the pre-modern critique of the death of Jesus in Chapter 2. Firstly, he is unambiguous in his critique that Jesus was actually crucified. In other

[1171]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 67.
[1172]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 67.
[1173]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 67-68.
[1174]Ahmad, *Fiction*, 68.

words, he makes a strong argument for the historicity of the crucifixion in his critique.

Secondly, he has argued that Jesus travelled to the regions around India where he exercised a prophetic ministry among the lost sheep of Israel and died a natural death there after many years. Given the fact that Ahmad argues that Jesus died a natural death in the regions around India, he rejects an eschatological role by Jesus as all the pre-modern sources that were examined in Chapter 2 suggested.

4.3.5 The 'Anonymous' Tract

This tract does not bear the name of its author and its pages are not numbered. It is entitled *Jesus Son of Mary: Islamic Beliefs*.[1175] It is one of the publications of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Ghana. It looks at a number of theological issues about Jesus including his virgin birth, his role as a messenger to the Israelites, his status as a prophet of God, his miracles, his survival from crucifixion, his migration to India etc.

It is the survival of Jesus from crucifixion and his subsequent migration to India that is of interest to us in this analysis. Below we discuss the argument in the *Anonymous Tract* about how (1) Jesus was saved from dying by crucifixion and (2) his trip to the regions around India where he exercised a prophetic ministry and died a natural death there at a ripe old age.

Firstly, in this document the reason why the Jews plotted to crucify Jesus was because they wanted to describe him as 'accursed' in accordance with Deuteronomy 21:23.[1176]In other words, they wanted to show that rather than being the Messiah, Jesus was an accursed person because according to

[1175]No details of the author's name, *Jesus Son of Mary: Islamic Beliefs* (no place and year of publication).
[1176]*Islamic Beliefs*.

Deuteronomy 21:23 anyone who died by being hanged on a tree was cursed by God.

Secondly, this document points out that if the Jews had succeeded in crucifying Jesus on the cross, that would have confirmed what they had been thinking about Jesus all along was that he was a false Messiah.[1177] However, an important statement is immediately made in respect of the crucifixion of Jesus to the effect that Islam contradicts the assertion that he died an accursed death on the cross.

Thirdly, the author of this document notes that Ahmadiyya Muslims belief that God thwarted the plans of the disbelievers. Interestingly, the tract makes it clear that although Jesus was nailed to the cross, he did not die but was taken from there in a state of unconsciousness. The writer of the tract observes that there is evidence of this in Qur'an 4:158.

According to the author, there is also extensive evidence of Jesus' escape from the Cross in the gospels. Besides, the writer also points out that Islam rejects the view that Jesus preached salvation through the atonement of sins by his death on the Cross. Moreover, as the writer has noted, the belief that someone has to die in order for the sins of another to be forgiven is not taught in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 24: 16; Ezekiel 18: 2, 20).

Fourthly, the writer points out that Jesus was cared for by his 'devoted' followers after the ordeal of the cross and was placed in the tomb where he fully recovered. Evidence that Jesus recovered from the torture of the cross when he was placed in the tomb and came out from there in his earthly body of flesh and bones is also found in the gospel accounts (Luke 24:39).[1178]

[1177] *Islamic Beliefs.*
[1178] *Islamic Beliefs.*

Fifthly, the writer suggests that an analysis of the post-crucifixion period in the gospels shows that Jesus led what is described in the tract as a "low-profile" life and hurriedly travelled away from the area in which the event took place (Qur'an 23:51; Matthew 28: 10; Mark 16:7). Having finished with the events of the crucifixion and the burial of Jesus, the writer now focuses on his migration to India.[1179]

Sixthly, the writer grounds his argument that Jesus migrated to India by suggesting that the physical ascension of Jesus to heaven is a later interpolation in the gospel accounts. He interprets 'heaven' as a spiritual bliss which the righteous will enjoy after death. Although he does not provide any further details for such a novel interpretation of 'heaven', it seems that his argument is that the word does not refer to a place.[1180]

Seventh, the writer argues that it was necessary for Jesus to travel to India in order to complete his prophetic mission given the fact that only two out of the twelve tribes of Israel were back in Palestine. He points out that ten of the tribes living in some eastern countries (especially Afghanistan and Kashmir) during the time of Jesus. These ten tribes had lived in exile several hundreds of years before the advent of Jesus.

Furthermore, the writer of this document notes that Jesus' migration to India was therefore necessary in order to complete his prophetic mission to the whole of Israel (he had only preached to two tribes) before his crucifixion. The writer further notes that the evidence that the people of Afghanistan and Kashmir and the neighbouring countries are of Israelite stock is overwhelming.

[1179] *Islamic Beliefs.*
[1180] *Islamic Beliefs.*

The writer points out that the physical features, language, folklore, customs of Afghanistan, Kashmir and their neighbours as well as the names of villages amounts to incontrovertible proof that they are descended from the ten tribes of Israel that were exiled many hundreds of years before the time of Jesus.

Finally, the writer offers proof to show that Jesus eastward trip to India in order to complete his prophetic mission is historically verifiable. The first piece of evidence is the testimony of the ancient Indian literature and the historical records of Kashmir that attest to the presence of Jesus in that region.

The anonymous writer observes that according to these records Jesus arrived in Kashmir from the Holy Land (Israel) during the reign of Raja Gopadatta (49-109 C.E.). In Kashmir, Jesus proclaimed his own prophethood to the Israelites who lived there and may many disciples when his audience recognized his holiness and piety. He was known as Yusu (which is the same as Jesus) of the children of Israel in Kashmir.[1181]

The anonymous writer concludes his critique by noting that Ahmadi Muslims believe that he died a natural death at the approximate age of one hundred and twenty (120 years) in Kashmir, India according to *hadith*.[1182] The writer of this anonymous document, like the work of other polemicists we have already considered in this section argues that the tomb of Jesus which has been venerated for centuries and is located in the Khanyar quarter in the city of Srinagar, Kashmir, is known as the 'tomb of Prophet Yuz Asaf'.[1183]

[1181]*Islamic Beliefs.*
[1182]The Hadith is *Kanzul Ammal.* This information is taken from the Anonymous Document
[1183]*Islamic Beliefs.*

However, the anonymous writer observes that the local people refer to the tomb as 'Rauzabal' which means "the honoured one."[1184] Although we do not know who this person is, the information that is provided agrees with the arguments that we have seen in the polemical works of the Ahmadiyya polemicists whose works have been examined above. It is clear that the writer of this anonymous writer holds the view that Jesus was crucified but did not die on the Cross.

4.3.5.1 An assessment in the light of Chapter 2

Like the other Ahmadiyya materials we have analyzed so far, this document is different in its entire theology from the pre-modern sources that were examined in Chapter 2 above. This is seen in three key areas. Firstly, it accepts and give provides details of how Jesus survived death by crucifixion. It does this by accepting the historicity of the cru8cifixion.

Secondly, contrary to the testimony of the pre-modern sources, the Qur'an itself alone being the only exception since Qur'an 4:157-158 is interpreted in many different ways by many different people (some saying that it asserts the death of Jesus while others reject that view), the document says that Jesus was cared for by his "devoted disciples" after the ordeal of the crucifixion.

Thirdly, he argues persuasively that Jesus travelled to Kashmir after he came out of the tomb, where he completed his prophetic ministry to the ten Jewish tribes there. According to the writer of this document, Jesus died there at the age of a hundred and twenty years. It is instructive to note that it is very hard to reconcile this to the view of the death of Jesus as taught by majority of

[1184] *Islamic Beliefs.*

Sunni that he was supernaturally taken away by God and would return to the earth before the Last Day.

4.4 Comparison of Sunni and Ahmadiyya views

The focus of the analysis in this chapter has been Qur'an 4: 157-158 and what both the Sunni and Ahmadiyya treatises say it means in relation to the literal death of Jesus by means of crucifixion. The purpose of the analysis of both the Sunni and the Ahmadiyya treatises about the crucifixion and the death of Jesus was to find out how they interpret Qur'an 4:157-158 in terms of whether it is a denial or an assertion of the literal death of Jesus.

We shall first summarise the Sunni and Ahmadiyya views before we do any comparison of the two views. We shall begin with the Sunni theological position. The Sunni position is that the correct interpretation of Qur'an 4:157-158 in relation to the death of Jesus is that the physical likeness of Jesus was cast on an unknown substitute (there is no unanimity on the name of the substitute) who was crucified.

Two of the Sunni polemicists (Mubarick and Deedat), whose treatises have been examined in this chapter and who are avowedly Sunni, have advocated a theory of the death of Jesus that has a lot in common with the Ahmadiyya view. Both of them have referred to the miracle of the biblical prophet, Jonah in their treatises. They have also argued that like Jonah, Jesus was alike in the grave until Sunday morning. This can only mean that they believe that Jesus was crucified, but survived death by crucifixion. However, they fall short of advocating a full-blown Ahmadiyya view by not telling us where he went and what he did after he survived death by crucifixion on the Cross.

Next, we look at the Ahmadiyya position. All the Ahmadiyya polemicists without exception have argued that it was Jesus who was arrested, tortured, tried and crucified on the cross. They accept the account from the arrest of Jesus, up to the crucifixion as both factual and historically verifiable. However, they all argued that God was guiding everything that happened from the arrest of Jesus, through the trial right up to the crucifixion and the burial to the end that Jesus will not die but survive death by crucifixion in order to carry out his final prophetic ministry to the 'ten lost tribes of Israel' living in the regions around India at the time.

Unlike the Sunni polemicists, all the Ahmadiyya polemicists have argued that Jesus survived death by crucifixion not by being miraculously taken into heaven but by being taken down alive from the Cross while he was in a coma or had swooned and buried in the tomb. Although opposed to the view that God supernaturally intervened by casting the likeness of Jesus on an unnamed substitute, the Ahmadiyya polemicists argued that God orchestrated everything from the arrest of Jesus right up to his burial and its aftermath.

It is instructive that according to all the Ahmadiyya polemicists, Jesus regained consciousness, came out of the tomb and travelled to the regions around India where he finished the final part of his prophetic ministry after being taken down from the Cross alive and buried in the tomb. Afterwards, they all argue that Jesus died a natural death at a ripe age in the regions around India and was buried there.

We can now do a comparative analysis. There are five areas of fundamental theological importance over which the Sunni and the Ahmadiyya disagree namely (1) the historicity of the crucifixion, (2) the identity of the

person who died, (3) the nature of the involvement of God, (4) the extra-biblical prophetic ministry exercised by Jesus and (5) Jesus role in Islamic eschatology. We shall now look at each of these in much more detail.

Firstly, one area of disagreement between the Sunni and Ahmadiyya views is the historicity of the crucifixion. Whereas, the Ahmadiyya view is that it was Jesus who was arrested and crucified, the Sunni believe otherwise. Having posited the view that it was a substitute who died in the place of Jesus, the Sunni are sceptical about the historicity of the crucifixion.

Secondly, the Sunni and the Ahmadiyya polemicists disagree over the identity of the person who died on the Cross. While all the Sunni writers postulate a substitute other than Jesus who was crucified based on the proposition that someone other than Jesus was arrested, the Ahmadiyya writers are emphatic that it was Jesus who was arrested, tried and crucified on the cross. In other words, the substitution hypothesis which we saw in our analysis of the works of the early Muslim polemicists (Ibn Taymiyya, ʻAbd al-Jabbar in Chapter 2) is the basis for the Sunni objection to the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion.

Thirdly, the Sunni and the Ahmadiyya disagree over the nature of the involvement of God. According to the Sunni view, the involvement of God came completely unnoticed by any human being including the political and religious leaders and the soldiers. The supernatural intervention ensured that the wrong person was arrested, flogged, put before both Roman political and Jewish religious leaders on trial and finally crucified. The divine intervention meant that none of the authorities, including the soldiers knew that it was someone other than Jesus who was arrested and crucified.

Unlike the Sunni view, the Ahmadiyya view is that the intervention meant that God superintended every stage – the arrest, the trial, the crucifixion, the taking down of Jesus body, the burial etc. The view of the Ahmadiyya is that it was the hand of God that orchestrated everything in order to ensure that Jesus survived death by crucifixion. While they recognised that God orchestrated every aspect of the process, they recognise that the greatest and clearest instance of divine intervention was when Jesus' body was taken down while he was in a coma and given to his disciples.

Fourthly, the other area of disagreement is the extra-biblical prophetic ministry that according to the Ahmadiyya view, Jesus exercised in the region of India. The Sunni have no details about the aftermath of the supernatural intervention which saved Jesus from death by crucifixion. It is therefore believed that Jesus is waiting somewhere in the presence of God pending the time when he will return to this earth before the Last Day.

Finally, the Sunni and the Ahmadiyya disagree over any future role for Jesus in the Islamic eschatological scheme. The Sunni believe that Jesus will return a second time to the earth and die before the Last Day. This is in part because the Sunni believe that he did not die but must, like all human beings, die at a point.

In contrast to the Sunni view we looked at in the preceding paragraph, the Ahmadiyya polemicists believe that because Jesus died a natural death in the regions around India, he can only be resurrected on the Last Day. Largely as a result of this, the Ahmadiyya believe that the many references to the second coming of Jesus have been fulfilled in the coming of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Ghulam Ahmad.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the Sunni and Ahmadiyya treatises about the crucifixion and death of Jesus from the standpoint of Qur'an 4:157-158. In all, the analysis of the meaning of these verses in relation to what they teach about the crucifixion and death of Jesus has yielded two key conclusions.

The first, which is the traditional Sunni theological position, is that the correct interpretation of the aforementioned text with regards to the death of Jesus is that he survived death by crucifixion. It is further explained that he survived death through the unmediated intervention of God which resulted in the casting of the physical likeness of Jesus on a substitute who finally died in his place. According to this view, Jesus was taken away to be with God and will return to the earth a second time before the Last Day.

The second view which is an Ahmadiyya theological position is that Jesus was crucified but did not die on the cross neither was he taken into heaven to be with God. This view is the polar opposite of the Sunni view. It posits that it was Jesus who was flogged, tried and eventually crucified. However, according to this view, God intervened and orchestrated everything and ensured that the body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross while he was in a coma or had swooned. It is further explained that none of the authorities, neither the Roman political leaders (Pilate and his officers) nor the Jewish religious leaders (Caiaphas) knew that Jesus was still alive albeit in an unconscious state.

According to this view, Jesus came out of the tomb and travelled to the regions around India where he completed his final prophetic ministry and died

there afterwards. The Ahmadiyya do not believe that Jesus has any special eschatological role to play except that like all the dead, he will also be resurrected on the Last Day. In the next chapter, we shall summarize the key arguments and the findings of the analyses in the previous four chapters and also make some recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, it is worth reminding ourselves that the purpose of this thesis is to examine contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views about Jesus in Ghana in the light of four pre-modern Islamic sources. These sources are the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition (*hadith*), the exegetical tradition (*tafsir*) and the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition.

5.2 Summary of chapters

Chapter 1 focused on the stylistic conventions of the thesis and key background issues. In Chapter 2, all the pre-modern Islamic sources that were examined argued that the divinity of Jesus was theologically unsustainable not only because it compromises the belief in the unity of God but that it also overlooks the fact that Jesus was simply human and a prophet and a messenger of God. Also, the associated doctrines were rejected in the analysis in Chapter in respect of the divinity of Jesus on the grounds that they suggest materiality, plurality and change in the being of God. All the pre-modern sources without exception argued in favour of the claim that Jesus predicted the coming of Muhammad as his successor.

In Chapter 3 all the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists, like the pre-modern counterparts whose works were examined in Chapter 2 argued against the divinity of Jesus because of what they perceived to be the doctrine's contradiction of the oneness of God. Similarly, the associated doctrines were also rejected on the grounds that they are inconsistent with the unity of God and that they also imply that there is a materiality, plurality and change in the being of God. Some of the treatises that treated the subject of the

relationship between Jesus and Muhammad argued that there is evidence both in the Bible and the Qur'an in support of the claim that the former (Jesus) predicted the coming of the latter (Muhammad) as his successor.

There were three main views in Chapter 4 where Qur'an 4:157-158 was examined in relation to the death of Jesus by crucifixion. The first view was put forward by the contemporary Sunni polemicists, according to which Jesus survived death by crucifixion through a supernatural intervention in which his physical likeness was cast on a substitute who died in the place of Jesus. The Sunni polemicists further argued that Jesus himself was taken to be with God and will return to the earth before the Last Day.

The second view, which characterises the critiques of Mubarick and Deedat is that while Jesus was crucified on the Cross he did not die as a result of the crucifixion. The two neither tell us what happened to Jesus afterwards nor where he went to thereafter. The third argument was put forward by all the Ahmadiyya polemicists. They argued that Jesus was crucified but survived death and came out of the tomb on the third day and travelled to the regions around India. They all argued that Jesus completed his final prophetic ministry to the "ten lost tribes of Israel" in the regions around India who lived there at the time and died a natural death thereafter.

5.3 The divinity of Jesus

The four key theological issues that were central to the analyses in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 were (1) the divinity of Jesus, (2) the meaning of the appellation "Son of God" and whether or not it can be applied to Jesus, (3) the theological basis for the associated doctrines and (4) the claim that Jesus was the precursor to Muhammad. All the sources in the two chapters were

incomplete agreement regarding their critique of these beliefs. The conclusions in both the pre-modern and contemporary Islamic sources can be summed up in four key arguments.

Firstly, it was argued that the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus was theologically unsustainable because (1) it compromises the unity of God, (2) it overlooked the evidence in both the Bible and the Qur'an that Jesus was a prophet and a messenger of God, (3) it misunderstood the source of both the miraculous conception of Jesus and the miracles that he performed and credited them to himself rather than saw them as a demonstration of the omnipotence of God and an authentication of the prophetic calling of Jesus, (4) it contradicts the self-understanding of Jesus who always saw himself as a human being who was answerable to God and constantly sought to do the will of God and (5) it wrongly associates divinity with a creature or a servant (*'abd*) like Jesus who owed his existence to God.

Secondly, the argument was also made that it was theologically inappropriate to describe Jesus as the "the Son of God". The reason is that it would imply that God is capable of procreating after the same manner as humans. It was therefore argued by some of the pre-modern and contemporary polemicists that the epithet was used for godly and righteous people in Jewish society and should not be used of Jesus in any unique way that would imply that he was divine. The polemicists who treated it in their critiques therefore contended that that if the appellation is used for Jesus because of his miraculous conception, it could as well be used of everyone since like Jesus, all people were created by the divine fiat "Be" which is the creative word that God used to command all created things including human beings into existence.

Thirdly, both the pre-modern and the contemporary sources applied the same scathing attack they used in their critique of the divinity of Jesus to the associated doctrines. They argued that like the divinity of Jesus the associated doctrines imply not only a plurality in the being of God but a materiality and change as well. By materiality is meant that like the Son (Jesus), God is a physical being since as "Father" he is one of three hypostases in the Trinity. It was therefore argued that this would contradict the teaching in both the Bible and the Qur'an that God is spirit.

Also, both the contemporary and pre-modern Muslim polemicists argued as we saw in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 that the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation imply that God is susceptible to change. In other words, they argued in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 for example that by believing that Mary bore Jesus in her womb throughout the period of conception would imply that God who has neither beginning nor end developed from the foetal stage until he was old enough to be born of Mary as a baby. This would also imply that God was dependent on Mary throughout the duration of the pregnancy when he was confined to the womb of Mary.

Furthermore, the associated doctrines were rejected as theologically unsustainable in because they imply that there is a plurality in the being of God. This would negate the belief that God exists as one undivided being without any equals or partners. Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the Trinitarian formula in Matthew 28:19-20 seems to this researcher to be illustrative of the Muslim critique of the associated doctrines. According to Ibn Taymiyya, one major weakness of the Trinity is that the expressions (Father, Son and Holy

Spirit) are neither appropriate in describing God as both living and speaking nor do the three hypostases fully account for the attributes of God.[1185]

Besides, he argues that the three hypostases do not exhaust the totality of the attributes of God which include existing, knowing, living, acting, speaking, etc.[1186] Ibn Taymiyya gives reasons to show why the Trinitarian formula is not adequate enough to describe the nature of God. Firstly, the unintelligibility of the expression would not help people who are not Christians to readily understand that it is a formula that is intended to describe the nature of God in the way that Christians have traditionally understood it.[1187]

In addition to the above arguments against traditional Trinitarian teaching, Ibn Taymiyya also argues that the expression itself and the meaning that Christians have given to it cannot be traced to the teaching of any of the prophets.[1188] In view both of the unintelligibility of the expression to non-Christians coupled with the lack of demonstrable proof that it was ever taught by a prophet, he concludes that it was invented and has neither any scriptural nor rational basis.[1189]

The fourth theological issue that was explored in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively was the Muslim claim that there is a kinship between Jesus and Muhammad, often described as that of a forerunner and a successor. We should observe that it was not exhaustively examined in the pre-modern sources in Chapter 2 as it was in Chapter 3.

According to the contemporary polemicists who looked at the above claim in greater detail such as Mohammed Braimah Youseph whose work was

[1185] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 255.
[1186] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 255.
[1187] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 256.
[1188] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 256.
[1189] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab*, 256.

examined in Chapter 3, the claim rests on three arguments, namely, (1) Muhammad fulfilled the prediction of the prophet who was to come in Deuteronomy 18:15-18, (2) Jesus himself predicted that Muhammad would come as his successor after his departure in the gospel of John (14:15-17, 25-26; 15:26; 16:7-15) and (3) the biblical prediction of the coming of Muhammad (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; John 14:15-17,25-26 etc) is corroborated by a prophecy by Jesus himself that Muhammad would come as his successor in Qur'an 61:6.

5.4 The death of Jesus

There are four major views about the death of Jesus in relation to the correct interpretation of Qur'an 4:157-158. The subject was discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4. The former focused on the pre-modern sources and the death of Jesus by crucifixion and the latter focused on the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya views.

Unlike the critique of the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines which were analysed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively in which both the pre-modern and contemporary sources are agreed, there are some fundamental areas of disagreement in respect of the death of Jesus. There are in all, four interpretations of Qur'an 4:157-158 in relation to the death of Jesus.

Firstly, 'Abd al-Jabbar whose treatise, *Critique of Christian Origins*, was analysed in Chapter 2 on the crucifixion and the death of Jesus argued that it was the wrong person who was arrested and crucified.[1190] The reason he gives for this is that there were too many people in Jerusalem on the day that Jesus was betrayed by Judas resulting in the arrest of the wrong person.

[1190] 'Abd al-Jabbar, *Origins*, 72-73.

We saw in Chapter 2 that ‘Abd al-Jabbar argued that the person who was arrested cried out to the Roman and Jewish authorities and pleaded with them to set him free. However, he notes that the political and religious leaders did not heed the plea of the man but tried him and sentenced him to die by crucifixion. This is the basis on which ‘Abd al-Jabbar concluded in his critique that Jesus did not die literally by means of crucifixion on a cross.

Secondly, Ibn Taymiyya whose critique was also examined in Chapter 2 argued that the crucifixion and the death of Jesus were the fabrication of the Jews because there were no Christian witnesses. He therefore says that Christians are guilty of believing this fabrication as a historical event that actually took place. Thus, like ‘Abd al-Jabbar, Ibn Taymiyya also succeeds in arguing that on the basis of Qur’an 4: 157-158 that the death of Jesus was not literal. In effect he is arguing that the Christian belief in the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion is a Jewish fabrication – the crucifixion did not happen at all.

Thirdly, all the Sunni polemicists except Deedat and Mubarick have argued without giving details about what really happened, that it was someone other than Jesus who died by crucifixion on the Cross. We saw that none of the Sunni polemicists was prepared to attempt an analysis of Qur’an 4: 157-158.

The arguments that are used by Deedat and Mubarick, both of who are avowedly Sunni seem to this researcher to be completely at variance with Sunni views of the death of Jesus. It is worth pointing out that both of these contemporary polemicists have made the story of Jonah the *locus classicus* of their critiques. By doing this, they both draw a parallel between Jonah being alive until the third day in the belly of the whale when it vomited him and Jesus

being alive in the grave until the third day when he came out from the grave. It seems to this researcher that they are implicitly accepting that Jesus was crucified but did not die on the Cross.

Fourthly, in contrast to the Sunni view we described above, the Ahmadiyya polemicists argued that although Jesus was crucified he did not die on the Cross. They argued that unknown to the religious and political authorities who tried Jesus and sentenced him to be crucified he was taken down from the cross in an unconscious state that was comparable to a coma or a swoon. As we pointed out in Chapter 4, the Ahmadiyya polemicists are arguing for a view in respect of the death of Jesus that is the polar opposite of the Sunni view (Chapter 4) that Jesus was not crucified.

According to all the Ahmadiyya treatises we examined in Chapter 4, Jesus was buried in a tomb and regained consciousness on the third day, came out of the grave with the help of some disciples and travelled eastwards to the region around Kashmir. In Kashmir, Jesus completed a prophetic ministry among the ten 'lost tribes of Israel' and finally died there.

5.5 Sources and method of the polemicists

The pre-modern polemicists draw upon five key sources, namely, (1) the Qur'an, (2) the Bible, (3) Christian apologetic and polemical works, (4) other Muslim anti-Christian sources and (5) philosophical sources available to the authors. Similarly, we saw in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 that the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya polemicists also draw upon four key sources, namely, (1) the Qur'an, (2) the Bible, (3) other Muslim anti-Christian works and (4) Christian apologetic and polemical works.

In terms of the method, both the pre-modern and contemporary polemicists use the Bible, the Qur'an and logic to show what they see to be the self-contradiction, theological inconsistencies and the rational illogicality inherent in the Christian views especially the divinity of Jesus and the associated doctrines. This way, they aim to prove that these doctrines are incoherent and absurd.

However, there is one area in which the critique in the pre-modern sources, especially the pre-modern polemical and exegetical traditions, is completely different from the contemporary critique. The pre-modern polemicists are unique in the methodology they employ in their critique of traditional Christology. This is evident both in the way in which they argue for their own claims in Chapter 2 as well as the way in which they demonstrate the theological and the rational flaws they see in the traditional views of the person of Jesus.

There are two things that are characteristic of the critique of the four pre-modern treatises that were examined in Chapter 2. These are (1) the theological sophistication of their argumentation and (2) the familiarity of the pre-modern Muslim scholars with Christian views of Jesus.

We should briefly explain why both the pre-modern and contemporary Muslim critiques are the same in terms of the objections that they raise against traditional Christology but different in the method of argumentation that the polemicists on both sides employ. Our aim is to account for the robust theological argumentation in the pre-modern polemical scholarly texts and the basic theological argumentation in the contemporary Sunni and Ahmadiyya

polemical treatises. A comparison of the two critiques would show that three explanations may account for the methodological differences.

Firstly, the basic theological information in the contemporary sources may be due to their contexts. In the brief historical background to the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical tradition in Chapter 1, we pointed out that the Muslim scholars wrote within a religious milieu in which Christian scholars were producing sophisticated theological treatises. This must have compelled Muslim scholars at the time to respond appropriately with equally sophisticated anti-Christian theological treatises.

In contrast, the contexts within which Muslim polemicists are writing their treatises in Ghana may not be the same as we have described in the preceding paragraph. In other words, Christian polemicists in Ghana are not be producing the quality of Christian anti-Muslim material that would make it necessary for Muslim polemicists to respond with theologically sophisticated treatises of comparable quality.

This researcher is familiar with many of the key Christian anti-Muslim polemical works in Ghana. He also has in his possession some Christian anti-Muslim polemical works which have not been used in this thesis. None of those treatises could be said to be of comparable theological quality as those Christian anti-Muslim polemical treatises that were in circulation within the religious milieu in which the pre-modern Muslim anti-Christian polemical treatises examined in Chapter 2 were written. It is worth noting that the Christian anti-Muslim treatises that this researcher is familiar with make only very basic theological arguments that are not likely to compel Muslim scholars

to respond with treatises that are as sophisticated as those that were analysed in Chapter 2.

Secondly, the absence of any theological sophistication in the contemporary polemical works may also be due to the lack of familiarity with the doctrines that they are critiquing and the theological nuances of those doctrines on the part of the polemicists. Abu ‘Isa al-Warraq’s critique against the Trinity and the Incarnation in Chapter 2 amply illustrates this. A close study of Al-Warraq’s critique for example, reveals a scholar who was at home with Christian theology to the extent that he could interrogate the concept of the Uniting associated with the doctrine of the Incarnation and the interrelationships between the three hypostases and their implications for the belief in one God.

This researcher is not sure that any of the Sunni or Ahmadiyya polemicists whose works have been examined in both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 show such thorough understanding of the doctrines they are so confidently critiquing. It may even be the case that some of the polemicists have not addressed these doctrines (such as the Trinity and the Incarnation) because of their lack of understanding of the inherent theological and rational intricacies and nuances of these doctrines as we noted in connection with the critique of Abu ‘Isa al-Warraq above.

Thirdly, it is possible that the contemporary polemicists fully understand the doctrines they are critiquing and are therefore capable of producing sophisticated theological treatises that are comparable to the works of the pre-modern scholars like Abu ‘Isa al-Warraq and ‘Abd al-Jabbar. Yet, they chose not do so because of the readers for whom these treatises were

written. It may have been the case that the contemporary polemicists thought that their works would not been fully understood by their readers if they used the methodology and the logic of argumentation that was used by their pre-modern counterparts.

It is worth recalling that it was pointed out in Chapter 1 that these treatises serve a two-fold purpose; a pastoral purpose of helping Muslims to learn more about Islamic doctrine and beliefs and an apologetic purpose of equipping Muslims to engage with Christians in theological discussions and debates. It would be helpful to digress briefly in order to explain how the readers of the contemporary treatises could help us to understand why the treatises are written only with such basic theological arguments as we have already noted.

In his evaluation of the impact of Christianity and Islam on the people among whom the two religious traditions were working in the area of education prior to 1950, Samwini observes that the Islamic impact was confined to literacy in Arabic.[1191] In comparison to the Islamic impact, by 1950 the Christian mission schools accounted for two-thirds of schools in Ghana at every level except at the University level.[1192] The preference for literacy in Arabic and other related disciplines among Muslims in the Gold Coast over Western-type education pioneered by the Christian missionaries up to 1950 has been a disadvantage to Muslims. According to Samwini, as late as 1995, Muslims constituted only a fraction of "the upper and middle class groups in Ghanaian society".[1193]

[1191]Samwini, *Muslim Resurgence*, 59.
[1192] Samwini, *Muslim Resurgence*, 62.
[1193] Samwini, *Muslim Resurgence*, 107.

If the above information is anything to go by, it implies that the level of education among Muslims in Ghana is low compared to that of Christians. This would therefore have implications for the quality of Muslim anti-Christian polemical literature that is either produced by Ghanaian Muslim scholars or imported into the country from the larger world of Islam.

It would therefore be wise because of the reasons we have given above for the contemporary polemicists not to produce sophisticated theological treatises in Ghana even if they were capable of producing quality scholarly theological literature. It would seem to this researcher that such literature would have been of no use to the Muslim readers because they may not have made any sense of them. This would explain both the simple presentation of only the theological objections and the absence of a scholarly and sophisticated argumentation in the works of the contemporary polemicists examined in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

However, as to whether there could be some theologically sophisticated literature that is used elsewhere in Ghana that this researcher was not able to collect, this researcher does not know. However, given the fact that such materials can be accessed from the libraries of Muslim scholars, *da'wah* sessions, national offices of Muslim groups in Ghana and Muslim bookshops, all of which were visited by this researcher, it can be cautiously said that such materials were not been in Ghana before April 2016 when this researcher last visited.

5.6 Suggestions for future research

Given the observations we made in Chapter 1 regarding the paucity of research work on Christology, there is a lot that could be done by way of

research in this area. There are viable areas for research at doctorate level in a number of areas. Firstly, it would be interesting to research Christian views of Muhammad from the perspective of Christian-Muslim dialogue in Ghana. Secondly, another viable topic to research is Muslim perceptions of Jesus in Ghana from the standpoint of the Bible. Thirdly, research that would evaluate the exegetical merits of the view that the predictions about the Holy Spirit in the gospel of John were fulfilled by the coming of Muhammad would be another viable area of research.

Fourthly, a comparative analysis of Christians and Christianity in the Qur'an and Muslim views about Christians and Christianity in Ghana will be another interesting research. Fifthly, another interesting research topic will be to examine the person of Jesus from the Qur'an and the gospel of Barnabas.

5.7 Concluding remarks and recommendations

The first comment that this researcher would like to make is that there is a lack of unanimity among the Islamic sources that have been examined in this thesis regarding the death of Jesus by crucifixion. It is interesting that there is such disagreement in the tradition on a subject of such fundamental theological importance. It does not seem to this researcher that there is a single universal interpretation of Qur'an 4: 157-158 in relation to what it says about the crucifixion and death of Jesus. Hence, the verses have been translated both as asserting and denying the literal death of Jesus by crucifixion at the same time.

An illustration of the different views on the subject in Islam is seen in the works of the two medieval scholars (ʻAbd al-Jabbar and Ibn Taymiyya) which were examined in Chapter 2. While the former explains the death of the

substitute in terms of someone else other than Jesus who was arrested, flogged, tried and eventually crucified, the latter argues that the crucifixion was a Jewish fabrication. In other words, it was the Jews who fabricated the lie that Jesus was crucified.

Similarly, Deedat and Mubarick, who are avowedly Sunni in theology, explain the substitution theory differently from the other Sunni polemicists whose treatises are examined in Chapter 4. It seems to this researcher that both of them accept that Jesus was physically crucified on the Cross but argued that he survived death. There is no doubt that their arguments are similar to Ahmadiyya views than Sunni views because they build their argument on some interesting parallels between the death of Jesus and the miracle of the biblical Jonah who was vomited out of the belly of the whale after three days (Matthew 12: 39-40).

The second comment relates to the issue we have just been discussing, namely, the death of Jesus. It is that the death of Jesus, especially from the Ahmadiyya theological standpoint raises questions about whether Jesus has any role to play in Islamic eschatology as is held by some Muslims on the basis of Qur'an 4:159 and 43:61. As all the Ahmadiyya polemicists argued in Chapter 4, the death of Jesus in these texts is not to be understood in futuristic terms because Jesus died after surviving death by crucifixion. Therefore, they all argued that Jesus is not returning to the earth to die a second time.

Thirdly, it is important to say something about Muslim exegesis of the text of the Bible when they use the biblical text to argue against the traditional Christian beliefs with which this thesis has been concerned including the divinity of Jesus and his death by crucifixion. We saw in Chapter 2, Chapter 3

and Chapter 4 that both the pre-modern scholars and their contemporary counterparts consistently applied a Muslim hermeneutic to the biblical texts that they were seeking to exegete. Ibn Taymiyya' interpretation of Matthew 28: 19 and Dwomoh's exegesis of John 1:1 in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively, are illustrative of this interesting hermeneutic.

Fourthly, another comment is about the morality of the view that it was God who changed the identities of Jesus and the substitute who died in his place on the Cross. Two issues of morality are raised here. The first is that to suggest that it was a substitute upon whom God cast the physical likeness of Jesus is to accuse God of wrongdoing. In other words, God is guilty of being unjust in causing a substitute to die in the place of Jesus even if God loved Jesus so much. The second moral conundrum that this raises is that by making somebody who had the likeness of Jesus to die, God was guilty of deceiving those who witnessed the event.

Fifthly, the thesis has not examined Shia views of Jesus as we briefly pointed out in Chapter 1. Admittedly, the inclusion of Shia views would have enriched this thesis by affording readers the opportunity to compare Sunni, Ahmadiyya and Shia Muslims views of Jesus in Ghana.

We make three recommendations. Firstly, we would recommend that it is important for Christians to be more patient with Muslims when they explain Christian doctrine to them. The reason is that Muslims encounter Christians in dialogue fully convinced that they have a theology that fully explains the nature of God and are therefore justified to critique Christian doctrine. Christians therefore, need to be more patient in explaining to Muslims that the doctrine of the Trinity is not the same as Tri-theism.

Secondly, this researcher would recommend to Muslims to evaluate Christian doctrine on the basis of biblical teaching rather than on Islamic doctrine as we saw in Chapter 2 Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. It seems to this researcher that to argue for example, that God cannot be conceived of as existing in three persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit implies that the Muslim scholars and polemicists in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 did not take the biblical evidence for the doctrine into account.

Finally, we recommend that Muslims and Christians study both the Bible and the Qur'an together. This will give either side the opportunity to learn about the other and appreciate why others are different from them in terms of what they believe. This will foster mutual understanding and respect among Muslims and Christians not only as members of communities across the world but more importantly, as members of one common humanity.

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