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and demonstrate the presence of our theological and spiritual heritage in every age of the Church's history.

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New Testament Christology and the Jesus of Islam

Robert W. Yarbrough

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In the history of post-Enlightenment NT study we may speak in broad terms of two trajectories of research. One approach, which we might (in many cases anachronistically) call evangelical, attempts to capitalize on new insights from and innovations in the progress of human knowledge in the various recognized academic disciplines and to utilize these in coming to a contemporary understanding of the Bible. Yet it does this while retaining fundamental allegiance to historic orthodox Christianity, in particular its doctrine of Christ, or Christology. Modern learning is harnessed in the service of the cause of Christ—Christ understood, from this point of view, in terms which would meet basic agreement from an executive panel comprising, say, the Apostle Paul, Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, and Barth.¹ Christ understood in historic orthodox terms, as attested to in canonical Scripture, sets limits to the claims of modern learning in important respects. At the same time, modern learning is not categorically repudiated as a promising source and necessary context for a better understanding of NT Christology.

The second approach is no less concerned with orthodoxy, but its orthodoxy rests on a much different conception of Christ (which, one might say, means that what it calls orthodoxy has since Nicea usually [p. 114](#) been called heresy). I have in mind here the

¹ Barth's orthodoxy (and that of neo-orthodoxy generally) is doubted by some evangelicals; see e.g. the recent programmatic comments by M. G. Kline, review of J. I. Durham's *Exodus*, *JETS* 32 (1989) 380–382. Certainly Barth's epistemological assumptions and resulting hermeneutic raise disturbing questions. And the chapter on Barth and Bultmann in Peter Carnley's *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) demonstrates that both go to 'a false extreme by disqualifying the contribution of historians in understanding and interpreting what the original Easter witnesses claimed to have experienced' (Gerald O'Collins, 'Resurrection Belief: A Note on a Recent Book', *Gregorianum* 70/2 [1989] 341–344 [341]). in the past two hundred years, however, it is hard to think of a more incisive, original, and prolific theologian who has attempted so exhaustively to articulate a Christology comporting, *mutatis mutandis*, with earlier christological formulations. For present purposes I will, therefore, leave it to the executive committee named above to pass their own judgment on their modern colleague.

Christ of Reimarus,² of Harnack, of Bultmann, and of many others in the last two centuries, a Christ who is not to be described in terms of the virgin-born, resurrected, and ascended unique Son of the one true and living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, known in his earthly days as Jesus of Nazareth. This approach, which we might call critical orthodoxy,³ is likewise concerned with modern learning—so much so, however, that at times it makes some contemporary ideological construct, or combination of constructs, the norm for the range of meaning which ‘Christ’ or any other component of Christian thought and history may have. Reimarus’ ‘orthodoxy’ consisted largely in fidelity to Enlightenment rationalism, which was in turn indebted to English deism.⁴ Harnack’s labours were in the service of anti-supernaturalist Ritschlian dogmatics and the cultural Protestantism of pre-World War I continental liberalism. The highly eclectic Bultmann worshipped at numerous altars, among them Marburg Neo-Kantianism, nineteenth-century historical positivism and liberal German Lutheranism, neo-orthodoxy as far as its theological stress was concerned, and Heideggerian existentialism. But all of these figures have in common their repudiation of historic Christian orthodoxy and especially its Christology.

This two-fold taxonomy of approaches to NT Christology is helpful in reflecting on NT Christology and the Jesus of Islam. For it gives both background and point to this paper’s thesis, which is that at this particular juncture in their history evangelical New Testament scholars need to engage in research of christologically significant NT texts and contexts, not only against the backdrop of the early ecumenical councils and Reformation debates, and not exclusively in the context of NT Christology as conceived in critical orthodoxy, tempting though this option may be; but also in the face of the serious challenge of [p. 115](#) major world religions like Islam to the claims of Jesus Christ and his gospel.

Let us examine key considerations undergirding this thesis in four steps: 1) the discipline of evangelical NT Christology, 2) the classic context of christological reflection, 3) the modern context of christological research, and 4) the christological context of the realized future.

THE DISCIPLINE OF EVANGELICAL NT CHRISTOLOGY

In the interest of methodological self-awareness, it should be stated at the outset that for our purposes the term ‘NT Christology’ signifies a discrete subdiscipline within formal NT studies concerned primarily with the origins, content, and import of the NT’s christologically significant texts. This subdiscipline’s methods and achievements over the last forty years have been surveyed most recently by John Reumann in an SBL/Scholars Press monograph.⁵ This is, then, a realm of research narrower than the quite broad band

² *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*, trans. by G. W. Buchanan (Leiden: Brill, 1970). This essay came from Reimarus’ pen sometime between 1730 and his death in 1768.

³ This should not be confused with that which John H. Haldane has recently termed ‘theological orthodoxy with a critical social outlook such as, for example, is to be found in the writings of [G. K.] Chesterton’; see ‘Critical Orthodoxy’, *Louvain Studies* 14 (1989) 108–124 (124). I refer rather to the post-Enlightenment, primarily Protestant (until recently) theological tendency which confers on classical Christian nomenclature new meanings as required by contemporary post-Kantian philosophy.

⁴ Cf. Buchanan, ‘Introduction’ to Reimarus’ *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*, 5f.

⁵ *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. by E. J. Epp and G. W. MacRae (Philadelphia/Atlanta: Fortress/Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 501–564.

of inquiry which has given thousands of 'lives of Jesus' over the last two centuries; in envisioning the discipline one should think rather of works along the lines of Wrede's *Messianic Secret*,⁶ or Bousset's *Kurios Christos*,⁷ or Bultmann's *Jesus and the Word*,⁸ or Bornkamm's *Jesus of Nazareth*,⁹ or any one of scores of other monographs and articles which treat parts or all of Jesus' life and/or teaching from within the discipline of NT studies, as distinct from such disciplines as systematic or practical theology. When we speak of NT Christology, then, and as we move toward commenting on its role *vis-à-vis* Islam's Jesus, we are not thinking first of all of the Christology which the NT contains, but of the modern discipline which has taken on itself the responsibility of exegeting and to some extent applying the relevant NT texts and related data within the broad context of modern academic study of the Bible.¹⁰

Within this context, we can speak of evangelical NT Christology. p. 116 Here I do not have in mind, for example, the type of work done in Douglas Webster's excellent study *A Passion for Christ*,¹¹ which builds on many insights from NT Christology as just defined, and does so with a pronounced evangelical edge; but whose idiom and focus are ultimately more on systematic and practical theology for the seminary classroom. I am thinking rather of critical scrutiny of the relevant NT data proceeding along lines amenable to the first school of thought mentioned in my introduction, the approach to NT studies which attempts to capitalize on new insights from and innovations in the progress of human knowledge in the various disciplines and to apply these to contemporary understanding of the Bible, while retaining fundamental allegiance to historic orthodox Christianity, in particular its doctrine of Christ. I think here of Schlatter's *Die Geschichte des Christus*,¹² or Cullmann's *The Christology of the New Testament*,¹³ or Dodd's *The Founder of Christianity*,¹⁴ or Hengel's *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*.¹⁵ Each of these studies,¹⁶ along with many more that

⁶ Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1971; German original 1901.

⁷ Nashville: Abingdon, 1971; German original 1913.

⁸ Edinburgh: Clark, 1980; German original 1929.

⁹ London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960.

¹⁰ This context is analyzed sympathetically by Robert Morgan (with John Barton), *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Univ. Press, 1988).

¹¹ Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.

¹² Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1922, rpt. 1977.

¹³ Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959.

¹⁴ New York/London: Macmillan, 1970.

¹⁵ Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.

¹⁶ I realize that I have mentioned some works that would in the view of many fit more into the 'life of Jesus' than the 'NT Christology' line of research. Evangelically-inclined NT scholars tend not to erect an impermeable wall of separation between the two poles of emphasis since they see fundamental continuity between the so-called Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

could be cited, speak from within the setting of critical NT studies, but do so without losing a distinctly Christian flavour and content in their observations and results.

What I wish to point out, in the interest of advancing my thesis, is simply that there is a discrete realm of academic inquiry called NT Christology, that it works within generally agreed parameters, and that evangelical scholars (as defined above) contribute to this discipline in constructive ways. This is heartening, if we happen to be evangelical Christians, for we see that the documentary sources giving substance to our beliefs stand the test of critical scrutiny and retain, if not increase, their theological power in the process. But what heartens us can in this case also harm us, as our next section will show.

THE CLASSIC CONTEXT OF CHRISTOLOGICAL REFLECTION

I think it is safe to assume that most evangelicals who think about [P. 117](#) Christology as such at all tend, to some extent justifiably, to carry out that reflection in dialogue primarily with the proceedings and outcomes of the four earliest ecumenical councils as well as the later Reformation debates. It will be my contention here that there is an obvious relative legitimacy, but also a subtle and profound danger, in limiting one's focus to these seminal discussions and their biblical bases.

That the debates culminating in credal formulations at Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451) comprise the conceptual grid within which much evangelical christological reflection is carried out, seems unnecessary to document. Standard texts like Bernard Ramm's, with its description and defence of the early christological creeds, bear out the point.¹⁷ One of the strengths of Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Jesus, God and Man*¹⁸ is its consistent and tenacious awareness of what went on in those groundbreaking debates, and how the sometimes convoluted proceedings continually throw light on contemporary queries about Christ. Intelligent discussion of christological matters did not begin in modern times, and it would be foolhardy not to glean the wisdom, to learn from the successes and failures, of some of antiquity's most brilliant theologians as they formulated comprehensive and, they thought, definitive statements delineating Christ's person and aspects of his work.

Many Protestants will be as apt to find the Reformation an equally fertile context for contemporary christological thinking. Here important aspects of Christ's true significance, especially for soteriology, were rediscovered and promulgated. The ecclesiastical tremors creating theological waves that still rock us took place at that time. It is reasonable, justified, and even requisite to root modern christological deliberation in the findings and confessions of the fountainhead of much post-medieval theological thought. The evangelical who wilfully dispensed with the Reformers' wisdom could at best waste months and years reinventing the wheel and at worst arrive at convictions which in no way advance our understanding but rather retard or twist it.

There is, however, a subtle and profound danger in limiting one's focus to these seminal discussions and the biblical support for them seen in their light. This danger takes two forms. First, it can cause us to overlook the very different formulations regarding Jesus which [p. 118](#) proliferate today and which permeate our culture, especially in the academic circles where tomorrow's leaders, even theological leaders, are presently being trained. We need to be aware not only of Chalcedon but also of Claremont, not only of Nicea but also of Marburg—and increasingly even of Mecca—if we are to articulate a

¹⁷ *An Evangelical Christology: Ecumenic and Historic* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985).

¹⁸ London, SCM, 1968.

Christology that transcends the categories of past cultural milieux, milieux which have forever given way to the settings in which we are called to formulate Christ's meaning for our day, just as orthodox visionaries of history did for theirs. And they did this, not without weighing the wisdom of their theological ancestors, but also without falling prey to the false assumption that fidelity to the traditions of the elders would suffice for proclamation of the gospel to their contemporaries. But more on this below.

Second, there is the danger, not of becoming frozen in the past, but of neglecting to lay foundations which will serve the immediate future. Fixation with whether Athanasius or Calvin would be pleased with our formulations, or even whether our views are verbally congruent with theirs, can overlook the responsibility that evangelical Christology bears, namely, to articulate an orthodox understanding of Christ's person and work in a conceptual framework which relates not only to past, but just as importantly to present and immediately future ideological and social realities. To move quickly to the specific example which concerns this paper: consider Islam. One out of every five persons on the face of the earth is Muslim, including one of every three individuals among the so-called unreached peoples.¹⁹ At a recent missions conference in Los Angeles Muslim leaders called for the winning of 50–75 million Americans to their faith, a goal they think attainable because of what they term 'the bankruptcy of the social order' in this country. It is generally agreed by missiologists that cities are key if Christian missionaries and their supporting churches are to have any hope of fulfilling the evangelistic mandate given them by their Lord; of the twenty-five megacities of the 1990s that will boast populations of eight million or more, six are virtually exclusively Muslim (Jakarta, Teheran, Baghdad, Cairo, Istanbul, Karachi). Four other of these world-class cities number their Muslim populations in the millions.

Turning our gaze back to the United States, Muslim spokesmen assert that they have the financial means and the determination to see [p. 119](#) their goals realized even if it takes centuries; in the words of a proverb from North Africa where Islam is so prevalent: 'We are in a hurry; let us walk slowly'. As William J. McConnell has remarked, Islam 'certainly emerges as a force to be reckoned with'.²⁰ We are in for a long and probably difficult struggle with our Muslim cousins²¹ in this country.

My point is that evangelical Christology needs to be concerned with more than fidelity to past formulations: it also needs to be adequate to current challenges to its veracity and relevance. Islam—and it is but one major world religion among several whose numbers are rapidly growing—has evangelistic designs and means (e.g. petroleum reserves and revenues) which are already affecting our students, our parishioners, and our own children, and which will result in increased Muslim presence and evangelistic pressure in the years just ahead. Do we reflect this highly significant state of affairs in our christological research and proclamation? Are we preparing those we teach and minister

¹⁹ Here and elsewhere in this paragraph I am indebted to Robert C. Douglas, 'The Challenge of the Muslim World', *World Evangelization* (November–December 1988) 15–17.

²⁰ 'The Quranic Depiction of Jesus', paper read at the Fortieth Annual ETS meeting, Wheaton College (IL), November 1988.

²¹ Islamic sociologist Haskan Askari notes, 'No other two faiths on this planet share 50 much of the other ... Jesus is the common centre between Christians and Muslims' ('The Dialogical Relationship between Christianity and Islam', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 9/3 [1972] 477–488 [481, 482]). (Is Askari forgetting Judaism?)

to—and ourselves—for what lies ahead of us in our society, and for what we are to some extent already facing? I am not aware that we are to a sufficient degree. Surely we should, for reasons which I would like to make clearer shortly. But first I wish to touch on another context in which evangelicals may be tempted to exhaust their christological energies: one just as worthy of our attention and steel as Chalcedon or the Reformation, but every bit as deleterious to meeting challenges such as that of Islam if one fails to move beyond it in constructive ways.

THE MODERN CONTEXT OF CHRISTOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Some evangelicals are tempted to immerse themselves in Chalcedonian or Genevan controversies without ever rising to the surface to address, or even contemplate, contemporary christological issues and their application. But others run an opposite risk. This is the risk of being so enamoured of NT Christology as it is currently pursued in the academic discipline of NT studies, that 'Christ' in any meaningfully orthodox sense recedes from sight.²² **P. 120**

A mere moment's reflection will remind us that much academically oriented NT Christology radically repudiates the high Christology of the creeds and, evangelicals insist, of the NT documents themselves. The possibility of the full range of relevant evidence getting a fair hearing under such circumstances is not encouraging. The recent collection of essays edited by Stephen T. Davis called *Encountering Jesus: A Debate on Christology*,²³ constitutes a case in point. There both John Hick and J. M. Robinson are careful to show both their expertise as New Testament scholars (Robinson is especially vehement in recounting his credentials) and their disbelief of any semblance of Chalcedonian Christology—precisely as a result of their academic scrutiny of the NT, which they see as lending no support to subsequent credal Christology. Their point of view is echoed polyphonically in the essay by Reumann mentioned earlier, which sets forth in excess of twenty different models or types of Jesus, Christ, or both which are represented in scholarly literature of recent decades.²⁴ These include, e.g., Schweitzer's apocalyptic messiah, McCasland's and Fosdick's great teacher, Bultmann's existentialist rabbi or prophet, Allegro's Essene teacher of righteousness and later magic mushroom guru, Brandon's political revolutionary, Yoder's pacifist, Swidler's proto-feminist visionary, and any number of tradition-historically based reconstructions.

True, among these more non-traditional understandings one also finds Dodd's suffering servant, and this is a salutary reminder that if evangelical voices seem rare in this discussion, it may not always be so much the hostility of the covert presuppositions of the discipline as the unoriginal, generally weak, and sometimes non-existent scholarship characterizing too much evangelical research in the field of NT Christology. Still, we must not be oblivious to the socio-political realities of current academic study of Jesus as the Christ, or non-Christ, or anti-Christ, as the case may be. And the fact that modern study of Jesus is so fragmented in its methods and findings, and so rarely arrives

²² As it is, e.g., in William Thompson's *The Jesus Debate: A Survey and Synthesis* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 1985).

²³ Atlanta: John Knox, 1988.

²⁴ See 'Jesus and Christology', in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. by E. J. Epp and G. W. MacRae (Philadelphia/Atlanta: Fortress/Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 520–524.

at conclusions which would furnish any base for evangelical proclamation in general, let alone hard-nosed interaction with serious rivals like Islam, suggests that evangelical commitment to involvement in the discussion does have its practical limits—at least within the paradigm which seems at present to control the discussion. While [p. 121](#) every effort should be made to learn all that the discipline's practitioners can teach us, and while there is a serious need for qualified scholars with evangelical convictions to be more prominent and vocal in the discipline than is presently the case in order to move the discipline in a more constructive direction, we cannot afford to squander all our energy trying to accomplish before the eyes and ultimately in the hearts of erudite intransigents that which God's Word and Spirit themselves have been unable to bring about.

My point is this. The NT's christological message, as evangelical scholars articulate it, can be muted by undue preoccupation with the councils and the Reformers. But equally it can be stilled due to an exaggerated optimism that the SBL/AAR crowd would believe if we could, so to speak, bring Jesus up from the dead to warn them; when the more crucial issue is whether they have yet bent the intellectual knee far enough even to take Moses and his relevance to Jesus (as Jesus saw it) seriously—which in most cases they clearly have not. I do not in any way wish to weaken zeal for more serious evangelical involvement at the most painstaking and arcane levels of discussion within the discipline of NT Christology. But such involvement's ultimate responsibility is not to the SBL and AAR, any more than it is to the IBR or ETS, but to Christ, to the biblical witness to Christ, and to his body the church. And that body's present and future effectiveness is closely tied to the leadership it receives, not least in response to the challenge which world religions, in particular Islam, present. This brings us to our final point.

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE REALIZED FUTURE

Recently a spokesman for underground Christian leaders in an iron curtain nation hostile to Christianity implored several American evangelical scholars to lend them aid, at whatever cost to ourselves, in light of the imminent threat facing that country's Christians. The threat? *Glasnost*. And why is *glasnost* seen as dangerous to Christians in this communist land by this church leader and thinker who lives and works there? Because he sees his fellow believers as utterly unprepared for the social realities and theological challenges which political and cultural liberalization will inevitably bring with it.

This leader's insight and plea challenge us in our rapidly changing American setting as we think of NT Christology and its relationship with Islam. Whatever happens in his country in coming months, the truth and the church will be well served by such visionary readiness and sensitivity to possible cultural developments. Ironically, we live in [p. 122](#) a setting where a kind of *glasnost* of vast religious significance and cultural dimensions has long been a part of the overall landscape; 'In twenty years, 40 per cent of the U.S. work force will be minorities', and white students at the University of California at Berkeley are already only 48% of the total enrollment.²⁵ While minorities obviously do not necessarily imply non-Christian religions, in many cases they do. Yet preparations, not for some vague eventuality, but for the state of affairs already with us, are slow if not utterly lacking. Wheaton College has not found it easy to locate many qualified candidates for a full time position in the area of world religions, a post still unfilled. Sermon series in evangelical churches, some of which now have temples and mosques in their neighbourhoods, dealing with world religions are still uncommon; one is likelier to find a popular seminar on the

²⁵ Margaret Wilkerson, 'The Curriculum of Cultural Diversity', *Academic Connections* (Summer 1989) 1f. (1).

New Age movement or, in some traditions, an old-fashioned prophetic conference, than serious review and biblical assessment of the teachings and the appeal of Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam. (Active evangelistic outreach to local enclaves of non-Christian immigrants is for the most part still in its infancy, if indeed conceived at all, with some notable exceptions.) Most Bible and theology majors in conservative Christian colleges still never see, much less interact seriously with, the scriptures of other religions.

It is largely true that from the Muslim point of view ‘the climate for any lively reckoning with the significance of Jesus ... is hardly propitious’²⁶—which is to say that Muslims usually see little reason at this point to dialogue with Christians about the different views their respective scriptures take of the man from Nazareth. It is nonetheless true for us as Christians that ‘what has authority for some of the human race must have relevance for all’.²⁷ In the words of Kenneth Cragg, a distinguished Christian Islamicist who has devoted his life to this very thing, we ought to ‘sustain a travail for the New Testament to be read’.²⁸ In all places at all times—and this includes of course Muslims everywhere today.

Moreover, in important respects circumstances *are* propitious for evangelical involvement in proposing new ways (or reinvigorating important old ones) of reading Jesus, ways that would eventuate in [p. 123](#) bringing our views of Jesus into more active engagement with those of Islam. 1988’s national SBL/AAR meeting saw a mere two papers and two panels devoted to NT Christology.²⁹ By comparison, there were twenty-five papers and a number of panels on Buddhism, and nearly as many devoted to Islamic topics. Here is a golden opportunity to gain a foothold within a pluralistic context which would welcome competent investigation into the pressing comparative religions issue of how Jesus is regarded in both Quran and in the literature of the early church, whether orthodox or heterodox, all seen in the light of current trends in religious and theological studies.

Evangelicals are in some ways ideally suited to take the initiative here. Without making grandiose claims for their own admittedly imperfect comprehensions of the full significance and ramifications of the Christology they articulate, they at least know well the inadequacies of myriad aberrant christological formulations due to their longstanding interaction with the purely immanent Christ of critical orthodoxy. Western evangelicals have for two centuries now existed in a climate where Jesus (it is insisted in influential circles) can be seen only in non-Trinitarian terms as a first-century Jewish prophet and teacher. This Jesus of post-Enlightenment historical-critical theology has obvious affinities with the Jesus of Islam.³⁰ While evangelicals have been largely ineffective in thwarting Western secularization in the past two hundred years, they have often at least kept the memory and meaning of the living Christ alive, even if only imperfectly. As Islam moves into the Western world and inevitably takes on some of the West’s cultural

²⁶ Kenneth Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), p. 282.

²⁷ Cragg, ‘Preface’, in *Readings in the Qur’an*, selected and translated by Cragg (London: Collins, 1988), p. 9.

²⁸ Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim*, p. 287.

²⁹ Figures based on the 1988 SBL/AAR program guide.

³⁰ Cf. Cragg, *Jesus and the Muslim*, p. 285.

baggage,³¹ the same arguments which have told against the demythologization of Christ in the secular West (even if the West has too often ignored arguments) may prove useful in calling Muslims to reflect more responsibly on the demythologized Jesus of the Quran seen in the light of a fuller range of evidence than is normally considered. It should also be observed that by no means all of the readings of Jesus emanating from the discipline of NT studies are hostile to an orthodox Christology; the Czech NT scholar Petr Pokorný's recent monograph is a notable and exciting case in point,³² and work like his is not without significance as evangelicals seek to interact within the discipline as well as within the larger comparative religions milieu.

Sources for such study are available as never before. Cragg's excellent topical arrangement of some two-thirds of the Quran, translated into elegant English, may mark a new watershed in college-level Quranic studies, especially since it is published as a relatively inexpensive paperback and takes pains to give thematic coherence to material which, non-Muslims generally feel, the Quran presents in a highly confusing arrangement.³³ Passages dealing explicitly with Jesus, or Muslim beliefs about him often borrowed from apocryphal material arising in centuries well after the time of Christ,³⁴ are gathered within a short section of less than a dozen pages.³⁵ Appended to this paper are several additional studies which are pertinent to any attempt to relate work in NT Christology to the realities of Islam and especially its understanding of itself in the light of the Jesus its scriptures present. Works like Cragg's *Jesus and the Muslim* are replete with lengthier and broader bibliography.³⁶ Standard encyclopedia articles and popular-level studies like J. Dudley Woodberry's *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*³⁷ furnish entry-level orientation (as well as several more challenging studies) into basic facts and issues.

CONCLUSION

I am not maintaining that evangelicals should de-emphasize what can be learned from scrutiny of classical contexts of christological discussion, whether patristic or Reformation. Indeed I would argue for the abiding importance of those contexts. Nor do I call for a decreased involvement in the technical, sometimes anti-evangelical researches

³¹ For allusions to ways in which this is taking place see Cragg, 'Contemporary Trends in Islam', *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, ed. by J. Dudley Woodberry (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research & Communications Center, 1989), pp. 31ff.

³² *The Genesis of Christology* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1987); cf. his earlier programmatic comments in 'Probleme biblischer Theologie', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 106/1 (1981) 2–8.

³³ Cragg, *Readings in the Qur'an*, selected and translated by Cragg (London: Collins, 1988).

³⁴ Cf. McConnell, 'The Quranic Depiction of Jesus', paper read at the Fortieth Annual ETS meeting, Wheaton College (IL), November 1988, pp. 7, 25 n. 24, who cites William St. Clair Tisdall, *The Sources of Islam* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1901), pp. 46–73.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 'Prophets and Messengers from Adam to Jesus', pp. 163ff.

³⁶ Note also the extensive and invaluable 'Annotated Bibliography on Islam', pp. 359–385 of the work cited in the next note.

³⁷ Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research & Communications Center, 1989.

into things christological carried on in mainline academic study of the NT. If anything I ask for an increase in such activity. **P. 125**

But I do believe that as evangelicals labour to keep abreast of and to advance current research in NT Christology, they ought to be cognizant of Islam's use of Jesus. While the Jehovah's Witnesses' misreading of [John 1:1](#), or their gratuitous textual emendation of [Colossians 1:17](#), are doubtless the object of professorial asides in many a Christian college or seminary, islamic (mis)appropriation of Jesus too seldom, one suspects, receives similar explanation and where necessary correction. And again, from another point of view, time is too seldom taken to show how Islam's reading of Jesus feeds into the larger body of Muslim belief and practice, an exercise which would be useful in two ways. First as a means of acquiring critical sympathy for their views; and second, possibly, as a model for how some similarly triumphalistic and politically aggressive strands within conservative evangelicalism make analogous untenable use of Jesus: not as a theological end in himself, but as a cog in a much larger religio-political juggernaut.

Pedagogically, such obliviousness to the Jesus of Islam reflects a cultural parochialism ill-befitting the institutions we serve, many of which are striving valiantly to cultivate a credible third-world awareness. Professionally it signifies a lost opportunity to involve ourselves in research and debate that has both academic and spiritual promise. Missiologically our failure to take Islam's Jesus seriously is a strategic error on our parts as leaders, for it fails to prepare our students, our parishioners, and ourselves for a religious future to some extent already with us, one which may see an attempt to reduplicate the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries.³⁸

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The Concept of God in Minjung Theology and Its Socio-economic and Historical Characteristics¹

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The chaos and crisis of modern theology, it is said, has been derived from the loss of God. Today's theology discusses the man-made god projected through philosophy and ideology instead of describing the Triune God who is met and served in the whole personal and

³⁸ Cf. Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), esp. chs. 3–7.

¹ Trans. Myung Hyuk Kim, *Trend of the Modern Church* (Seoul: Sungkwang Publishing Co., 1987), pp. 250–295.