

THE TEXTUAL TRADITIONS OF BAḤĪRĀ: DECIPHERING THE SOURCE IN THE *SĪRA*
LITERATURE AND THE POLEMICS OF THE BAḤĪRĀ PROPHECY

by

SETH DAVIS BAILEY

(Under the Direction of Kenneth Honerkamp)

ABSTRACT

Ibn Ishāq's *sīra* narrates a story between the Christian monk Baḥīrā and Muḥammad that occurs during a caravan journey with his uncle as a child. When the caravan comes to Syria, they meet Baḥīrā in a cell that had been continuously occupied by monks. In this cell, Baḥīrā possessed a book passed down from these monks from which he gained his knowledge and anoints Muḥammad as the next prophet. This event results in the formation of an inter-religious polemic between the Muslim account and the Christian recensions that refute certain aspects of the encounter found in the textual traditions of Baḥīrā. The encounter is affirmed, attacked, or transformed, but the origin of the manuscript is not addressed. This thesis asserts that the manuscript that Ibn Ishāq cites is based on a Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospel of John known in Medina around 700 CE.

INDEX WORDS: Baḥīrā, Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā, Muḥammad, Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Kathīr, foreknowledge, Paraclete, Aḥmad, *sīra*, Gospel of John, Ibn Hishām, Waraqaḥ, *al-menahhemānā*, *Ḥanīfs*, “Seal” of Prophethood, Barbara Roggema, Kaʿb, *perikletos*, *parakleto*

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

The foundational stories that constitute the pre-revelation years of Muḥammad's life have been narrated through the biographical endeavors of such historians as Ibn Ishāq (d. 767 CE/153 AH), Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833 CE/ 218 AH), Ibn Sa'd (d. 845 CE/230 AH), Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373 CE /774 AH), and in more recent works through the assimilation of earlier materials by Martin Lings (d. 2005 CE) and others. The biographical narratives of Muḥammad (*sīra*) include, among other aspects and events, how Muḥammad was raised, his early encounters with varying faiths, and internal leanings towards monotheism before the visitation by Gabriel.¹ One central event that is of importance in this discussion occurs during a caravan journey when Muḥammad is either nine or twelve years of age.² The recording of this event results in the formation of an inter-religious polemic in the traditional Muslim account and in the post-Islamic Christian recensions that comprise the textual traditions of Baḥīrā in the encounter between Muḥammad and a desert dwelling-monk named Baḥīrā.³

Among the extant textual traditions, scholars all seemingly ignore the original source that Baḥīrā consults in his cell to recognize the signs of Muḥammad and him

¹ Fred M. Donner, "The Historical Context," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane McAuliffe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 23-26. The specific naming of Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Hishām, Ibn Sa'd, and Ibn Kathīr has been added for emphasis.

² Martin Lings, *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (New York, NY: Inner Traditions International, 1983) 29. Lings notes that other sources put Muḥammad at 12 years old for this trip.

³ Sources for the Muslim tradition will be from Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Kathīr and their commentaries.

being the next prophet. Initial scholarly work on the Christian stories began with Richard Gottheil in 1898 with what he named *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*. In his research, Gottheil dated the Recensions to around the eleventh century CE (Roggema to the ninth) and arranged the varying accounts into recensions with a brief historical overview and literary analysis to show that the polemic was established through a set of apocalyptic visions and prophecies.

After Gottheil, little scholarly research followed for nearly a century until work by Barbara Roggema and Krisztina Szilágyi. This work significantly expanded Gottheil's arrangement of the Recensions and added to the extant materials available for research. Roggema's published research began in 1997 with "The Legend of Sergius-Baḥīrā: Some Remarks on Its Origins in the East and Its Traces in the West" and this was followed by her expanded and major work in 2009 with *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā* that included a newer translation of the *Legend*. In these works, Roggema gave greater context to the *Legends* and explored the interplay of Muslim and Christian discourses on the *Legend* and, more importantly, translated an additional recension that contained Christian Qur'anic exegesis.

After Roggema's first article in 1997, Krisztina Szilágyi added to the discourse in 2008 with the release of her article, "Muḥammad and the Monk: The Making of the Christian Baḥīrā Legend," by expanding upon Gottheil's work on the arrangement of the Recensions and upon the circulation of the varying manuscripts. Szilágyi cites that the major differences within the Recensions come either before or after what Szilágyi terms the synoptic or common material within all the recensions in some form. Additionally, focusing not on the translation like with Roggema, Szilágyi focused on the

Legends ascription to Baḥīrā and states, that if it were not for Gottheil, the *Legend* may not have been attached to the Muslim account.

However, in spite of the considerable research on the *Legends* and in the Baḥīrā encounter, neither the original source of the ancient manuscript cited in the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq, nor the prophecy concerning the “seal of prophethood” on Muḥammad’s back, are fully discussed. This is further shown in separate work on Ibn Ishāq’s *sīra* concerning the Paraclete passage that directly points to a reference to the Gospel of John, yet the connection is not made between this citation and the book cited by Ibn Ishāq that Baḥīrā consults. Specifically, in work by L. Bevan Jones in 1920, A. Guthrie and E.F.F Bishop in 1951, Montgomery Watt from 1953-1961, along with substantial findings from Alfred Guillaume in 1950 with his article “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” all scholars concur that the passage on the Paraclete is coming from a Syriac influence. Guthrie and Bishop even state that the source in Ibn Ishāq’s *sīra* suggests that it is both oral and scriptural for the Paraclete.⁴ Furthermore, in his article mentioned above, Guillaume profoundly states that the text Ibn Ishāq quotes for the Paraclete is an alternate translation of the New Testament reference through a Medinan translation for his cited passage from the Gospel of John 15:23.⁵

The above review of scholarly work demonstrates that previous research had all of the pieces necessary to examine what the origin of the book Ibn Ishāq states was passed down to successive generation of monks and finally to Baḥīrā, but the pieces are never combined and addressed. Scholars, whether examining the Paraclete or the

⁴ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, “The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad”, *The Muslim World* 41 (1951): 256.

⁵ Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.” *Al-Andulus* 15 (1950): 289.

Legends, appear to work independently of one another, but when integrating the findings of both areas, the book can be further elucidated.

Even within the Christian recensions that respond to the Muslim account, there is the inclusion of the “seal of prophethood” and prophecy and the Recensions address the creation of the book and of Baḥīrā’s knowledge. However, this idea is validated not by scriptures, but through Mt. Sinai visions that validate the Arab conquests, with God as the causing agent, for the purpose of chastising the Church through the Arabs.⁶ As such, the polemic contained in the various textual traditions of the Baḥīrā account rest on hidden scriptures that are not explicitly mentioned in Ibn Hishām’s redaction of Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*. The encounter with Baḥīrā is affirmed, attacked, or transformed, but why is the ancient manuscript that leads Baḥīrā to initially encounter Muḥammad never addressed?

To investigate these questions and claims, this thesis is divided into four main chapters. Chapter Two is centered on the aspects of the Muslim narrative of the encounter between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad and the role of its redactor. Christian responses to the Muslim narrative through the Christian Recensions are analyzed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four deals with the claim in Ibn Ishāq’s *sīra* that Muḥammad is the Paraclete and the counter-arguments to it by the Christian Recensions. The theme of foreknowledge underpinning Muslim accounts and biographies is examined in Chapter Five. These chapters will be followed by a final conclusion in Chapter Six.

⁶ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Boston: Leiden, 2009). This will be discussed in Chapter Two on the Christian recensions.

In more detail, Chapter Two will begin by examining the Muslim account of the encounter between Baḥīrā the monk and Muḥammad by examining the full account from the biographer Ibn Ishāq (d. 767 CE/153 AH) with additional narrations by Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373 CE /774 AH). This narrative relates an important early event in the life of Muḥammad and is comprised of several points that will occur throughout this thesis which include foreknowledge from an unspecified book, recognition of miraculous signs, descriptions of physical attributes of Muḥammad, warnings to protect Muḥammad, and denial of Muḥammad as a prophet. Additionally, the author, Ibn Ishāq and the later role of his redactor Ibn Hishām, will also be analyzed for possible motives for why the manuscript is in the account, but without a referent to the specific work.

Chapter Three introduces and profiles the Christian Recensions that collectively form “...four related Christian texts which modern scholars call the *Baḥīrā Legend* or the *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*.”⁷ The purpose of including the Recensions and in such detail is to outline that the main aims of the *Legends* is to provide a safe compartment for Islam within Christianity and directly includes many motifs from the Muslim narrative. Moreover, the Recensions respond directly to the assertion that Muḥammad is the Paraclete by pinning this influence on an errant Jew who corrupted the teachings of Baḥīrā.

The individual recensions are classified as the East-Syrian Recension (ES), the West-Syrian Recension (WS), the Short Arabic Recension (A1), and the Long Arabic Recension (A2). The *Legends* post-date the Muslim narrative and are believed to have

⁷ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Boston: Leiden, 2009), 2-3.

come into being in the ninth century⁸ and form a counter-history to Islam to connect Christianity and Islam through historical events and to apologetically explain away aspects of Islam that appear opposed to Christian doctrine. Within this scope, Chapter Three focuses on the motifs, commonalities and differentiations between and among the four extant recensions. Additionally, it examines the uniformity in each recension's address that Christian scripture were being used by Muslim biographers for Muḥammad.

Chapter Four examines the concept of foreknowledge through an unspecified original book or books concerning prophethood referenced in the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq in the Muslim Baḥīrā/Muḥammad account. In addition to this account, there is also another relevant passage found later in Ibn Ishāq's work that speaks of the Paraclete and its attribution to Muḥammad. This chapter will investigate Ibn Ishāq's translation of the Paraclete and the accounts' attribution of the Paraclete being Muḥammad to show further evidence that a probable source for the scripture reference Baḥīrā uses to recognize Muḥammad as the next prophet is a result of copy of the Gospel of John circa 700 C.E. in Medina.⁹

Methodologically, Chapter Four will look at Ibn Ishāq's translation and semantic use of the Paraclete, his Medinan influences, and the different views and imports among Muslim and Christian beliefs on the Paraclete and its role in the polemic. This method is for the ultimate purpose of showing the implication of both a physical and

⁸ Barbara Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the Qur'ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur'ān and Sīra," in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Boston: Leiden; Brill, 2001) 58.

⁹ According to Barnabas Lindars in *The Gospel of John*, the date of the Gospel of John is said to be around 85-95 CE and from Ephesus (though Syria is an option) but not widely diffused until 115 CE.

oral influence. By showing the import, discussion, and apologetic endeavors from Muslims and Christians on the Paraclete, it relates directly to the overarching idea that Biblical scriptures were being used to account for Muḥammad's annunciation in the Baḥīrā account.¹⁰

The intention of Chapter Five is to contextualize the previous chapters by showing that the theme of foreknowledge underpins the Muslim accounts and biographies in the form of, what Gordon Newby describes as, sacred history and is affected by the confluence of beliefs in Medina among Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Chapter Five, specifically, will examine the origin and role of foreknowledge surrounding Muḥammad based on Muslim assertions as it relates to the source on which Baḥīrā recognizes Muḥammad as the next prophet. This will be done by looking at four main areas of foreknowledge reported within the *Sīra* literature of Muḥammad. These areas concern pre-Islamic Arabian and Yemenī foreknowledge, Jewish foreknowledge, Christian foreknowledge, and a final area on physical descriptions of Muḥammad's "seal" taken from imports from the other three areas.

As a whole, the *sīra* literature portrays Jewish foreknowledge to have its origins within the Torah via messianic expectations and centers such foreknowledge with the birth, migration, and power of the Prophet. For Christian foreknowledge, the overall importance of this exegetical exercise for the *sīra* writers was possibly to shore up the affirmation accounts by having Baḥīrā base his knowledge off of scriptures passed down from monks before him and in accounts of "pure" Christians who await a prophet to come from Arabia based on scriptures. The overall importance of relating the

¹⁰ Montgomery Watt, "His Name is Aḥmad," *The Muslim World* 43 (1953): 115.

foreknowledge of pre-Islamic Arabs, Jews and Christians to Muḥammad was to apologetically solidify his prophethood by combining scriptural referents with extra-Biblical accounts through anecdotes and prophecies passed down through the *Ḥanīfiya*.

In sum, this thesis will investigate the possibility that the original manuscript that Ibn Ishāq cites is a Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospel of John known in Medina around 700 CE.¹¹ The Gospel of John was combined with Ibn Ishāq's own vision of a sacred history with the scriptures he cites in the Baḥīrā/Muḥammad account being part of the larger body of text that composes the ideal form of the *Qur'ān*. By incorporating a larger body of work into his vision of history, Ibn Ishāq was able to place Muḥammad in the sacred Abrahamic history of the prophets. Additionally, the Biblical scripture used in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* amounts to an Islamic apology in which Ibn Ishāq relied on Jewish converts for references and information on Hebrew scriptures. Through these reporters, Jewish Messianic expectations were imparted and this contributed to why Ibn Hishām may have omitted the manuscript reference in his redaction.¹²

¹¹ This will be elaborated on later and is based on "The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D." by Alfred Guillaume.

¹² Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 64.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE MUSLIM ACCOUNT AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCES

The narrative of the encounter between Baḥīrā the monk and Muḥammad is available today through the works of biographers such as Ibn Ishāq (d. 767 CE/153 AH), Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833 CE/ 218 AH), Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373 CE /774 AH), and Ibn Saʿd (d. 845 CE/230 AH). This narrative is significant in the life of Muḥammad and is comprised of several points that will be key to this thesis. Thus, the entire narrative will be cited below with attention given to each facet of the narrative that will be treated later in detail throughout the thesis.

In particular, the narrative of this encounter will be cited from the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq¹³ through Alfred Guillaume’s *The Life of Muḥammad; a translation of Ishāq’s Sīra al-Rasūl Allah* and Martin Lings’ *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, with clarifications added by Ibn Kathīr and others regarding the meeting and the mention of an original text foretelling Muḥammad’s arrival in Arabia. The key facets within the account that pertain to the overall thesis are:

- 1) Foreknowledge gained through an unspecified source concerning prophethood inherited from previous generations of monks
- 2) Scriptural knowledge and recognition of miraculous signs as being the impetuses that compelled Baḥīrā to break his normal habits of ignoring the Arabs passing by in their caravans to Syria
- 3) Descriptions of physical attributes as signs of recognizing Muḥammad—particularly the “seal” of prophethood
- 4) Miracles as signs: the clouds and trees shading and bending to Muḥammad
- 5) Warnings to protect Muḥammad and denial of Muḥammad

¹³ The *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq provides the most details and appears to be the longest account.

The Muslim Account

Ibn Ishāq, through the redactor Ibn Hishām, cites the following story in his work on the life of Muḥammad, and it begins as follows when Muḥammad is nine years old (or twelve) traveling in the company of his uncle Abū Ṭālib on a caravan to Syria for trading purposes:¹⁴

Abū Ṭālib had planned to go on a merchant caravan to Syria, and when all preparations had been made for the journey, the apostle of God, so they allege, attached himself closely to him so that he took pity on him and said that he would take him with him, and that the two of them should never part; or words to that effect. When the caravan reached Buṣrā in Syria, there was a monk there in his cell by the name of Baḥīrā, who was well versed in the knowledge of Christians. A monk had always occupied that cell. There he gained his knowledge from a book that was in the cell, so they allege, handed on from generation to generation. They had often passed him by in the past and he never spoke to them or took any notice of them until this year, and when they stopped near his cell he made a great feast for them.

Firstly, the narrative labels Baḥīrā as a person knowledgeable in the scriptures and then states that the book Baḥīrā possessed was passed down from monks before him. This foreknowledge (upon seeing this caravan) concerning prophethood inherited from previous generations of monks compelled Baḥīrā to break his normal habits of ignoring the caravan. Moreover, not only did he not ignore the caravan, but he even prepared a feast for them. Ibn Ishāq, as he continues the narrative, states the reason for this shift was that,

It is alleged that that was because of something he saw while in his cell. They allege that while he was in his cell he saw the apostle of God in the caravan

¹⁴ Martin Lings, *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, 29. See footnote 2.

when they approached, with a cloud overshadowing him [individually shading him from the sun that followed the caravan] among the people. Then they came and stopped in the shadow of a tree near the monk. He looked at the cloud when it overshadowed the tree, and its branches were bending and drooping over the apostle of God until he was in the shadow beneath it.

So, in seeing these miraculous signs and in light of the scriptural knowledge he possessed from successive generations of monks, Baḥīrā is able to recognize the portents of the miraculous signs and it is due to these signs that there is the impetus that Baḥīrā felt compelled to break his normal habits of ignoring the caravan.

Ibn Ishāq continues that,

When Baḥīrā saw that [the signs], he came out of his cell and sent them word, ‘I have prepared food for you, O men of Quraysh, and I should like you all to come both great and small, bond and free.’ One of them said to him, ‘By God, Baḥīrā! Something extraordinary has happened today, you used not to treat us so, and we have often passed by you. What has befallen you today?’

What is interesting in this section of the narrative is the rapport that the two parties hold with one another, meaning that there was familiarity among them even though Baḥīrā was a hermit. However, the focus is upon the question “What has befallen you today?” with the emphasis being knowledge from Baḥīrā’s book combined with outward signs so as to further demonstrate Baḥīrā’s inability to remain isolated. The narrative addresses the actual question asked of Baḥīrā as to why the caravan had been previously ignored, but now fully engaged. In answering the question, Ibn Ishāq subsequently narrates,

He [Baḥīrā] answered, ‘You are right in what you say, but you are guests and I wish to honor you and give you food so that you may eat.’ So they gathered together with him, leaving the Apostle of God behind with the baggage under the tree, on account of his extreme youth.

Though Baḥīrā requests the whole party to be in attendance, they do not listen to this request and, based on the descriptions in his book and the signs he saw from afar,

Baḥīrā quickly realizes that the whole party is not present which is seen next in this Davidic-like motif when Muḥammad (the focus of the meeting) is left to tend to the goods while the men feasted:

When Baḥīrā looked at the people he did not see the mark, which he knew and found in his books, so he said, ‘Do not let one of you remain behind and not come to my feast.’ They told him that no one who ought to come had remained behind except a boy who was the youngest of them and had stayed with their baggage. Thereupon he told them to invite him to the meal with them. One of the men of Quraysh said, ‘By al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā, we are to blame for leaving behind the son of ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abdu’l-Muṭṭalib.’ Then he got up and embraced him and made him sit with the people. When Baḥīrā saw him he stared at him closely, looking at his body and finding traces of his description (in the Christian books).

What can be seen in this passage is, again, that the reason for Baḥīrā’s encountering the caravan is fully based on his knowledge from the unspecified book, which compelled him to meet the group from Arabia.

Additionally, in the above section of the passage, another facet is also revealed and continued subsequently, that, in addition to signs and scriptural referents to interpret the signs, there is also reference in Baḥīrā’s book to actual descriptions of the Prophet.¹⁵ The narrative continues and elaborates on this with:

When the people had finished eating and gone away, Baḥīrā got up and said to him [Muḥammad], ‘Boy, I ask you by al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā to answer my question.’ Now Baḥīrā said this only because he had heard his people swearing by these gods. They allege that the apostle of God said to him, ‘Do not ask me by al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā, for by Allah nothing is more hateful to me than these two.’ Baḥīrā answered, ‘Then by Allah, tell me what I ask’; he replied, ‘Ask me what you like’; so he began to ask him about what happened in his sleep, and his habits, and his affairs generally, and what the Apostle of God told him coincided with what Baḥīrā knew of his description.

The traces Baḥīrā knew and found in his scriptures about Muḥammad are further elaborated on with the following when Baḥīrā examines Muḥammad and extensively

¹⁵ This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

and furtively states that his knowledge could not otherwise be known except from his scriptures:

Then he looked at his back and saw the seal of prophethood between his shoulders in the very place described in his book. When he had finished he went to his uncle Abū Ṭālib and asked him what relation this boy was to him, and when he told him he was his son, he said that he was not, for it could not be that the father of this boy was alive. 'He is my nephew,' he said, and when he asked what had become of his father he told him that he had died before the child was born. 'You have told the truth,' said Baḥīrā. 'Take your nephew back to his country and guard him carefully against the Jews, for by Allah! [sic] if they see him and know about him what I know, they will do him evil; a great future lies before this nephew of yours, so take him home quickly.'

So his uncle took him off quickly and brought him back to Mecca when he had finished his trading in Syria.

This portion of the narrative with warnings to protect Muḥammad is immediately followed by the realization of Baḥīrā's prediction with the following account:

People allege that Zurayr and Tammām and Darīs, who were people of the scriptures, had noticed in the apostle of God what Baḥīrā had seen during that journey which he took with his uncle, and they tried to get at him, but Baḥīrā kept them away and reminded them of God and the mention of the description of him which they would find in the sacred books, and that if they tried to get at him they would not succeed. He gave them no peace until they recognized the truth of what he said and left him and went away.¹⁶

This account sets up a polemic later seen in Christian responses to this narrative and in additional *sīra* sections concerning Jews and Christians who deny what the *sīra* literature states is explicit truth about the prophethood of Muḥammad.

Overall, through this narrative, we see that Baḥīrā notices miraculous signs following a member of the caravan party and this, with the scriptures he references, forms the basis for the encounter. Martin Lings elaborates on why Baḥīrā encountered

¹⁶ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad; a translation of Ishāq's Sīra al-Rasūl Allah with introduction and notes by Alfred Guillaume* (Lahore, Karachi, Pakistan Branch: Oxford University Press, 1967) 79-81.

Muḥammad by describing that the basis for his initiating a meeting was through the insight he received from the book passed down through successive generations of monks inhabiting the cave that included old manuscripts with predictions of a coming prophet for the Arabs. Connecting Baḥīrā to Waraqah¹⁷ (an Arab convert to Christianity and Khadījah's cousin), Lings states that like Waraqah, Baḥīrā was awaiting a prophet during his lifetime through foreknowledge from scriptures.¹⁸ In the Waraqah b. Naufal account in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, he and three others living in Mecca recognized the idolatry of Mecca and each sought out true religion like the *Ḥanīfs* (pre-Islamic Arabian monotheists). Waraqah found true religion in Christianity and studied and mastered the Biblical scriptures.¹⁹

Ibn Kathīr reports the same story as in Ibn Ishāq's account. Outlining the personal interactions between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad, Ibn Kathīr reports that Baḥīrā asks Muḥammad questions and to swear by the gods *al-Lāt* and *al-'Uzzā* in his answers. Muḥammad does not swear by these idols but by God, thus confirming signs Baḥīrā knows about from his source materials. Baḥīrā then proceeds to search Muḥammad for the physical signs of prophethood. When he finds the seal on his back, Baḥīrā calls out to Abū Ṭālib to bid his party farewell with the following warning:

Take your brother's son back to his own country and guard him from the Jews. For, by God, if they see him and know what I know, they will do him evil. This nephew of yours has a great future before him; take him back soon to his own country.²⁰

¹⁷ Chapter Four on the Paraclete discusses that it is Waraqah who affirms that Muḥammad was visited by the *Nāmūs*

¹⁸ Martin Lings, *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, 29.

¹⁹ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 99.

²⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I: A Translation of *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 1998) 176.

Additionally, Ibn Kathīr reports that Yunūs b. Bukayr (using the authority of Ibn Ishāq) cites extra material concerning the events at the cave with warnings against the Romans. The warnings to keep Muḥammad safe come as Baḥīrā implores Abū Ṭālib and his caravan not to go to Syria or Byzantine territory, saying that the Romans would recognize and kill Muḥammad based on the descriptions that they had of him, and as Baḥīrā finishes this warning, he turns around,

...and, to his surprise, saw seven Romans who had arrived. He greeted them and asked why they had come. They replied, 'We have information that there's this prophet who will come forth this month and so we have been sending men along each route; news we had of him brought us along this route of yours.' 'Do you', Baḥīrā asked, 'have anyone superior to you coming along behind you?' They replied, 'No; it's just the information we had about him [that] brought us along this road of yours.' Baḥīrā then asked them, 'Have you ever known any matter God wished to bring about that anyone was able to reverse?' They said they had not, and then pledged him allegiance and stayed with him there at Baḥīrā's place.²¹

In the overview of the above accounts, there is the concept of foreknowledge through an unspecified original book concerning prophethood and the physical seal (or through revelation in the Christian recensions which will follow), and in warnings to protect Muḥammad. To elucidate such concepts, this chapter will examine the roles and influences of Ibn Ishāq and his redactor Ibn Hishām on the formation of the biographical texts recording the meeting between Muḥammad and Baḥīrā and the possibility of omission of the original source.

²¹ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 176-177.

The Author and His Redactor

Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq (b. 704 CE/85AH, d. 767 CE/153 AH) had Christian roots as it is purported that he was the grandson of a captured Christian brought to Medina from a church at ‘Ayn Tamr in Iraq. Ibn Ishāq studied tradition in Medina from a historical/biographical perspective and subsequently traveled to Egypt in search of further knowledge and history. He returned to Medina around 733 CE/115 AH to continue gathering material from citizens of Medina and to then compile what he had found.²² After returning from Egypt and compiling his materials in Medina, Ibn Ishāq then traveled to Baghdad where he wrote his book on *sīra* around a century after Muḥammad’s death at the behest of the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr from which he received caliphal patronage.²³ However, the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq is not extant and the only surviving records are through the redaction by Ibn Hishām who died around 833 CE/218 AH.²⁴

According to Gordon Newby, in addition to service to the caliph, he states that “the purpose [of this endeavor] was to write ‘salvation history,’ the aim of which is *kerygma* [κήρυγμα], the preaching of the religious message” and included the history of the world from creation up until the life of the Prophet.²⁵ Newby asserts that the

²² Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.” *Al-Andulus* 15 (1950): 289.

²³ Gordon Darnell Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia: from ancient times to their eclipse under Islam* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988) 145 and Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” 289.

²⁴ Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989) 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2. *Kerygma* (κήρυγμα) is a Greek New Testament term for proclamation or preaching.

literary model for this *sīra* was the New and Old Testament. The Old Testament model outlines creation up to Muḥammad, and the New Testament the life of Muḥammad.²⁶

In this literary model, three sections compose Ibn Ishāq's *sīra*: the *Kitāb al-Mubtada'* (The Book of Beginnings or The Book of Genesis), the *Kitāb al-Mab'ath* (The Book of Sending Forth or The Book of the Advent of the Prophet Muḥammad), and the *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* (The Book of Military Expeditions).²⁷ Each of the three sections is distinguished by subject matter, and to a degree, by source material.²⁸ In the makeup of the *Kitāb al-Mab'ath*, it consists of tales from Jews, Christians, and pagans foretelling Muḥammad and his mission as a prophet.²⁹

The overarching category of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* falls into the category of sacred biography. Quoting Frank E. Reynolds and Donald Capps from *The Biographical Process*, Newby writes that the mythical ideal in sacred biographies is,

...somewhat fluid at the time the sacred biography is written or compiled, [and] the selection of biographical material is an extremely vexing problem. A single reported episode may have a constitutive effect on the resulting mythical ideal.³⁰

Accordingly, in Ibn Ishāq's method of collection, he held an uncritical view of sources and used what was available through Arab legends, oral traditions, and reports from those who had converted to Islam. Also, he made extensive use of the *Isra'iliyat* (Jewish and Christian traditions) in his *sīra*, which contained stories from Jews and Christians.³¹ One purpose, according to Newby, for including the *Isra'iliyat* was to link his *sīra* and the

²⁶ Gordon Darnell Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia*, 145-146, footnote.

²⁷ Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Qur'ān to previous Abrahamic scriptures through his accounts. Newby states that Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, especially the *Kitāb al-Mubtada'*, is a commentary on the Bible, as well as a commentary on the *Qur'ān*, and is meant to foster the Muslim claim that Islam is the heir to Judaism and Christianity.³²

In the following generations around the time of the 'Abbāsīd Empire, opinions on the use of extra-Islamic sources fell out of favor and Muslim scholars began to first frown upon and then openly object to and ban the uncritical use of sources such as the *Isra'iliyat*.³³ Newby holds that the legal community sought to institute a version of Islam that afforded direct governance by God's laws on individuals, and this was in opposition to the use of indirect sources that did not detail such matters as to the social and religious life. In this climate, the extra-Islamic sources fell by the wayside and were subsequently rejected.³⁴ It is in this atmosphere, Newby maintains, that the Egyptian scholar Ibn Hishām exemplified the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq that is known today. This redacted version, Newby asserts, eliminated nearly all of the *Kitāb al-Mubtada'* and portions of the *Kitāb al-Mab'ath*.³⁵

Consequently, the uncritical view that led Ibn Ishāq to include additional materials was omitted more than likely due to the milieu of the redactor.³⁶ Thus, it is quite possible that Ibn Ishāq's brief account of the ancient manuscript in the monk's cell may well be a result of Ibn Hishām erasing the records but keeping the story under the Muslim view that the Bible is *tahrīf* (corruption of Jewish and Christian

³² Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 3.

³³ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

scriptures).³⁷ Newby asserts that Ibn Ishāq is writing a sacred history and includes Biblical accounts and narratives to build up the image of Muḥammad along the line of succession with previous prophets.³⁸ As such, Ibn Ishāq took the *Qur'ān* as an ideal model as *Umm al-Kitāb*, and if Jewish and Christian materials fit in with this ideal pattern, even if it was not explicit in the *Qur'ān*, then it was deemed acceptable before the transition away from the uncritical use of sources.³⁹

The *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq, Newby believes, serves as a *Qur'ānic* commentary and builds up the stories of Biblical figures and also surpasses the rabbinic material by additionally connecting Muḥammad to the Jewish and Christian traditions. As a result, in Newby's view, when the *Sīra* discloses that there were rabbis in Arabia who foretold of Muḥammad's advent, he states that "...it is offering after-the-fact justification for Islam's doctrinal and political positions towards Judaism after the period of the expansion of Islam, particularly in areas of Iraq."⁴⁰ This view of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* relates to Rubin's assertion that,

...from the very beginning of their contacts with the *ahl al-kitāb* (Christians and Jews), the [*sic*] Muslims had to sustain the dogma that Muḥammad did indeed belong to the same exclusive predestined chain of prophets in whom the Jews and Christians believed.⁴¹

³⁷ Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 8-9 and 21. On pages 8 and 9 Newby states that the *Sīra* of Ishāq is not extant and the only surviving records are through the redaction by Ibn Hishām (d. 833 CE). Taking into account the historical setting in which Ibn Hishām edited the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq, I propose that, through Newby's statement that the known *Sīra* is an *epitome* of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, Ibn Hishām molded the Baḥīrā account to fit within the new limits of what sources could be used, and thus possibly erased specific references to the original source. On page 21 is the discussion of *taḥrīf* and its influence.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 21. *Umm al-Kitāb* means 'mother of the book,' and implies a primordial or preexistent *Qur'ān*.

⁴⁰ Gordon Darnell Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia*, 145-146, Chapter 6 footnote 1.

⁴¹ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad As Viewed By The Early Muslims* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995) 21.

Thus, to Rubin, by aligning Muḥammad within the same literary tradition that formed the Biblical prophets and their motifs, Muḥammad's biography needed to be formed according to Biblical models.⁴² Consequently, to announce Muḥammad's prophethood, Muslims (Ibn Ishāq included) sought scriptures just as followers of Jesus did for evidence in Biblical passages of Muḥammad's confirmation as a prophet in the line of succession of prophets.⁴³

As the redactor of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, Ibn Hishām does not, according to Newby, include much of the Hebrew/Christian accounts.⁴⁴ Rubin agrees, saying that,

...the process of Islamisation of the biblical description of Muḥammad did not cease with the interpolation of a *Qur'ānic* extract into it. The downgrading of the Bible as a document of attestation is indicated in other versions, where the Prophet's description has been entirely detached from the biblical sphere...⁴⁵

This is a possible cause for why the ancient book the monk consults—and which compels him to arrange the meeting with Muḥammad because he associated the signs above Muḥammad with his scriptures—is not named since it would be assumed to have a Christian origin which makes it an unacceptable source material as the *Isra'iliyat* fell in disrepute. What could be considered acceptable would be to include the unspecified book giving affirmation to Muḥammad and linking him with previous prophets, but without citing the Christian source.⁴⁶

To be considered in tandem with why Ibn Hishām possibly removed this material, one must consider possible reasons why Ibn Ishāq included the reference of the book monks of consecutive generations possessed foretelling Muḥammad's

⁴² Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁴ Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 4.

⁴⁵ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 34.

⁴⁶ Alfred Guillaume, "The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D."

prophethood (which will now be referred to as the ancient manuscript) and who was his intended audience. Ibn Ishāq wrote his *Sīra* as a history for the ‘Abbāsid court so it contained a teaching element for Muslims, yet was also written for a Jewish and Christian audience since he was among an interfaith society with a Muslim majority. Some elements seek to bridge the gap between the faiths and show adhesion, yet by this same action, Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra* functions also as an apology. Within Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*, earlier prophets are shown to foretell the coming of Muḥammad as the last prophet in the lineage of prophets.⁴⁷ Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra* also portrays Muḥammad as the last prophet in a long line of prophets who fulfilled the prophecies found in John and Isaiah.⁴⁸ With this aspect of his *Sīra* acting as an apology, a detailed look at the Christian recensions in the next chapter will be helpful in viewing Ibn Ishāq’s assumption of affirmation in the Bible and the Christian responses to these assumptions.

⁴⁷ Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 21-22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE RECENSIONS

Many narratives exist about the Baḥīrā/Muḥammad encounter, some in the form of anecdotes and short references from varied sources, but Barbara Roggema states that these post-Islamic narratives from the ninth century onward⁴⁹ form the foundation of “...four related Christian texts which modern scholars call the *Baḥīrā Legend* or the *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*.”⁵⁰ These recensions are classified as follows:

- 1) The East-Syrian Recension (ES)
- 2) The West-Syrian Recension (WS)
- 3) The Short Arabic Recension (A1)
- 4) The Long Arabic Recension (A2)

The Baḥīrā Legend has its modern founding in a preeminent work by Richard Gottheil (1862-1936)⁵¹ entitled *A Christian Baḥīrā legend* in 1898. In this work, Gottheil formats all subsequent research with his arrangement of the varying accounts into

⁴⁹ Post-Islamic in the sense that these stories assert a different foundational account of Islam’s beginnings and are dated after traditional Islamic accounts.

⁵⁰ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Boston: Leiden, 2009), 2-3. On page 158, Roggema tells of *The Disputation of Bēt Ḥālē* as another narrative example. In this work, Muḥammad knew the term “God’s Word and His Spirit” through a monk and from the Gospel of Luke. He then later quotes that Muḥammad knew of such things through the teacher of Baḥīrā, but Baḥīrā did not teach the Trinity to Muḥammad because it would be too much for the Arabs of the time to handle and that they would equate the Trinity with polytheism and give partners with God. Roggema states that *The Disputation of Bēt Ḥālē* is the oldest text that survives that mentions Sergius Baḥīrā and shows him as the source of Muḥammad’s monotheism.

⁵¹ Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend* (Weimar: Emil Felber, 1898). Gottheil (1862–1936) was an American Semitic scholar born in Manchester, England, but moved to the United States as a child. Gottheil graduated from Columbia College in 1881 and earned his doctorate from Leipzig in 1886. He was an editor for the *Columbia University Oriental Series*, the *Semitic Study Series*, and the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

regional groups using the term recension to differentiate them.⁵² Additionally, Gottheil relates that the story of the encounter between Muḥammad and the Christian Monk Baḥīrā is the basis for a polemic established through a set of apocalyptic visions and prophecies styled to show that the teachings of Muḥammad were not original and that the Prophet was a fraud compelled to espouse the beliefs of Baḥīrā to bring the Arabs to the worship of one God.⁵³

Yet, apart from this significant contribution through Gottheil's structuring and brief historical overview of the *Legend*, Barbara Roggema calls Gottheil's translation in 1898 a poor one,⁵⁴ and states that little research has been done on these stories since his time. Gottheil states that he had access to and made use of three Syriac manuscripts and that they were modern copies from Jacobite copyists of the eighteenth century.⁵⁵ From this position, Gottheil dates the original from the fourteenth or fifteenth century CE.⁵⁶ Roggema, basing her work on more recent material and a greater availability of manuscripts in Syriac and texts translated by Arabic-speaking Christians, has shed more light on the *Baḥīrā Legend* and added another recension to the original three available to Gottheil.⁵⁷

Contrary to the Islamic stories that say that Baḥīrā knew from textual sources that a prophet would appear shortly out of Arabia, the Recensions show that Islam's rise was revealed to Baḥīrā in a vision while on Mt. Sinai and later transmitted to

⁵² Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 200.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁵⁷ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 1-2.

Muḥammad.⁵⁸ Roggema, agreeing with Gottheil, says that the *Legend* “...consistently goes against the grain of the respected sources of Islam, but never explicitly so. It presents itself as an innocent account of a man who wandered around the desert and found a Christian there who tells him his story.”⁵⁹ Through this story, the Recensions seek to connect Christianity and Islam through historical events and to apologetically explain away aspects of Islam that appear opposed to Christian doctrine since the Recensions hold that Muḥammad learned all he knew from Baḥīrā.⁶⁰ The results of this can be seen in the *Letter of Hārūn al-Rashīd to Constantine VI*, which asks why Muḥammad did not call the Arabs to Christianity if he had a Christian teacher.⁶¹

The extant versions that make up the *Legend* are called recensions because the major differences from the Muslim account are due to what Barbara Roggema states are “...deliberate attempts of redactors to create a new text through interventions in existent texts.”⁶² Regarding the Syriac recensions, Gottheil states that the Jacobite and Nestorian manuscripts cover the same material, but vary to such a degree that they need to be dealt with as two recensions with a common original.⁶³ Roggema, likewise, views the Recensions not as separate stories, but rather a Christian legend created in response to the Muslim account. The different recensions show the stages of evolution of the *Legend*, with two composed in Syriac and two in Arabic. The Long Arabic Recension (A2) varies greatly from the other three mentioned, and the first three are

⁵⁸ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 200.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 34. See Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 189.

⁶⁰ The Muslim account is dated to at least the time of Ibn Ishāq (d. 767 CE) while the Recensions date to one hundred or more years afterwards. This will be elaborated on subsequently.

⁶¹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 102.

⁶² Ibid., 3.

⁶³ Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 200.

considered synoptic, which will be elaborated on later. The Recensions, Roggema concludes, date to around the first ‘Abbāsīd century (‘Abbāsīd dynasty lasted from 750-1258 CE), though it is also noted that hard-copy evidence only dates to the thirteenth century CE.⁶⁴ Even with the addition of new manuscripts, this dating is close to the conclusion Gottheil arrived at when he dated the *Legend* to the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century CE based on symbolism found in the apocalyptic visions.⁶⁵ Thus, the *Legends* are believed to have come into being in the ninth century.⁶⁶

Roggema characterizes this century under the ‘Abbāsīds as a time of strife and civil war. In this unrest, apocalyptic Christian writings were produced likening the strife of this milieu to the birth pangs that would be experienced in the end of days, and inserted motifs of the Lion (Rome) that would restore order before the wars at the end of time.⁶⁷ Such texts were the first literary responses by Christians to Islam and upheld the Near Eastern literary tradition that the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic works were affiliated.⁶⁸ The writings were Syriac and Arabic apologetics composed to explicitly reject Muslim claims that Muḥammad had received revelation from God, was the Paraclete said to be announced in the Gospels, or was a genuine prophet, as in the Judaic traditions.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 3-5.

⁶⁵ Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 192.

⁶⁶ Barbara Roggema, “A Christian Reading of the Qur’ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur’ān and Sīra,” in *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Boston: Leiden; Brill, 2001) 58.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶⁹ Sidney H. Griffith, “The Prophet Muḥammad: His Scriptures and His Message According to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac From the First Abbasid Century,” in *The Life of Muḥammad*, ed. Uri Rubin (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995) 377.

Roggema, working from extant materials, states that the Recensions that compose the *Legend* circulated in the East-Syrian, West-Syrian, Melkite, and Coptic communities and served as a work of Christian apologetics against Islam through a literary narrative.⁷⁰ The Recensions each contain an apocalyptic narrative and Griffith states that the Syriac versions are more similar to the Muslim tradition of Baḥīrā.⁷¹ Although all the recensions veer from the Muslim account, there is similarity among them as each recension begins with a traveling monk (the narrator) who meets Baḥīrā in his old age and near death after forty years without having seen another Christian. Baḥīrā tells the traveling monk of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem and his revelatory vision atop Mt. Sinai where an angel gave Baḥīrā an apocalyptic vision showing the course of Muslim history, the impending rule of the Arabs, and his future encounter with Muḥammad and how Muḥammad would accept Baḥīrā's teachings.⁷² The narrator relates that after Baḥīrā receives the vision filled with apocalyptic events and a heavenly ascent, he is sent by an angel to the emperors Maurice (582-602, Rome) and Khusrau II (590-628, Persia) to foretell their defeat by the Arabs. Baḥīrā then goes to *Bēt Armāyē* to preach the veneration of only one cross, which results in his persecution and exile in Arabia, where, among the Arabs (the *Banū Ismā'īl*), he proclaims their future rise to power. Because of this, they build him a well and a cell to inhabit. Seven days after

⁷⁰ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 5.

⁷¹ Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad," 382.

⁷² Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 382 and K. Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk: The Making of the Christian Baḥīrā Legend," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008): 171-173.

recounting his story, Baḥīrā dies and the narrator then relates the rest of the story through his interactions in Arabia and through Baḥīrā's disciple Ḥakīm.⁷³

The narrator imparts that Baḥīrā gave the Arabs a book that Baḥīrā called the *Qur'ān* and because of this and what Baḥīrā proclaimed to them, they buried Baḥīrā with great ceremony. At Baḥīrā's burial, there is a miracle via his bones as they reveal a murderer among the Arabs. One of the men who helped bury Baḥīrā has his hand wither away and thus reveals his guilt. After this account, the Jewish scribe Ka'b is introduced and is accused of corrupting Baḥīrā's teachings and introducing the idea of Muḥammad being the Paraclete.⁷⁴ This corruption lasts until today according to the *Legend*.⁷⁵

Through Baḥīrā's disciple Ḥakīm, the narrator then goes back in time and recounts more of Baḥīrā's involvement in Arabia. He tells how the well that the Arabs built functioned as a gathering place for Baḥīrā to teach them and it is at the well where his prophecies are told about the coming of Muḥammad. After the teachings at the well (some time in the future), Baḥīrā sees Muḥammad and recognizes him from his visions and from the signs above his head and from the clouds and trees giving him shade. Muḥammad meets Baḥīrā and Baḥīrā blesses him and explains Christianity to Muḥammad. After this, Baḥīrā asks Muḥammad to spare the lives of Christian monks in his coming conquests, and tells Muḥammad to attribute his teachings to the angel

⁷³ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 382 and K. Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 171-173..

⁷⁴ The notion of the Paraclete will be addressed in Chapter Four, but notably concerns *Qur'ān* 61:6, John 15:23 and Ibn Ishāq's reference in his *Sīra* on page 104 in Ibn Hishām's, *The Life of Muḥammad*.

⁷⁵ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 382 and K. Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 171-173.

Gabriel. Baḥīrā then promises Muḥammad a book for his followers and sends it to him affixed to a cow's horns while Muḥammad is teaching some followers so that his adherents believe it is from God. This story is followed by another apocalypse that goes into further detail of how the Arabs will come to power and elaborates on the former story.⁷⁶

Given the above outline, it can be seen that the *Legends of Baḥīrā* in their various forms have Islam being founded by the monk Baḥīrā and Muḥammad being the receptacle for his teachings. Muḥammad is not a prophet in the Christian recensions and thus these texts develop a counter-story to the Muslim account and form a counter-history building on Islamic stories.⁷⁷ The overall effect of the *Legends* from Szilágyi's point of view is to not only rewrite the Muslim past from its earliest inception, but to also legitimize the Arab conquest through visions from God that the Arabs would rule for a time before being defeated, and address certain doctrinal claims of Islam.⁷⁸

What follows next is a sizable outline in the following areas:

- 1) An outline of the motifs within the synoptic recensions
- 2) An outline of regional commonalities among the Recensions
- 3) A detailed outline of each recension

These areas will be examined to show that, in addition to the Islamic assertions using scriptures for Muḥammad's annunciation, there is an expansive body of Christian responses that use scriptures in the polemical debate as well. This aspect supports the claim herein that the book Ibn Ishāq cites is based on a Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of

⁷⁶ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 382 and K. Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 171-173.

⁷⁷ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 34.

⁷⁸ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 169.

the Gospel of John. In order to support this assertion, this chapter will utilize extensive work mainly from Barbara Roggema and Krisztina Szilágyi to outline the *Legend of Baḥīrā* as they represent the only work, outside of Gottheil on this legend and elaborate in detail on his previous research.

Motifs of the Synoptic Recensions

Expanding greatly on the designations of the *Legend* by Gottheil, Krisztina Szilágyi states that, except for minor changes to names and minute details, the major differences within the Recensions come either before or after the common (or synoptic) material.⁷⁹ The common material that Szilágyi refers to was first developed by Gottheil based on four manuscripts.⁸⁰ As this outline shows, the synoptic recensions are the same in the following areas with all of the components of the common material (designated as M) contained in four distinct units pioneered by Gottheil and further researched by Szilágyi:

- A: The life of Sergius as told to Mār Yahb (includes Sergius' vision on Mt. Sinai and his first apocalypse)
- B: The corruptions by Ka'b
- C: The deeds of Sergius as told by his disciple Ḥakīm
- D: The second apocalypse of Sergius⁸¹

Regarding (A), the material contained in it creates essentially a biography of Baḥīrā containing hagiographical material and literary topoi.⁸² The topoi in this hagiographical synopsis composes a saintly life of Baḥīrā through these motifs:

⁷⁹ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 173.

⁸⁰ Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 199.

⁸¹ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 173.

- 1) Forty years in the desert
- 2) Dying seven days after being visited by the narrator
- 3) Pilgrimage to Mt. Sinai and Jerusalem
- 4) Miracle wrought through his bones
- 5) Wandering in the desert
- 6) Arabs' benevolence to him

According to Szilágyi, what makes this story unique is the omnipresence of Islam and Islamic motifs. The motifs listed above are normative motifs of Christian writings, as Szilágyi asserts that there are Biblical and hagiographical examples of seeing visions on mountains, but states that it is atypical to encounter visions like with Sergius which Szilágyi writes,

...incorporate so much from Muslim apocalyptic imagery: the Kingdoms of the Banū Ismā'īl and the Banū Hāshim are followed by those of the Mahdī son of Fāṭima, the Banū Sufyān, the Banū Qaḥṭān, the Mahdī son of 'Ā'isha and the Green King, before the Kingdom of the Romans.⁸³

Szilágyi states that the apocalyptic vision, however, concludes with a traditional Christian apocalypse describing the End of Days.⁸⁴ Overall, these motifs seek to create a saintly life of Baḥīrā with normative topoi of Christian writings, but the inclusion of Islamic apocalyptic imagery is also used to show that Christian visions are accounting for the rule of the Arabs and even include their own traditional imagery.⁸⁵ Thus, as with Roggema, the apocalypses produce topoi with the new conquests and spread of Islam being interpreted as a temporary phenomenon just as in Biblical accounts where

⁸² Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 173-174.

⁸³ Ibid., 173-174.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

God used foreign powers to chastise His people.⁸⁶ To be quickly addressed here, (D) follows the same order as in (A), but with more detail.⁸⁷

In the corruptions of Baḥīrā's teachings by Ka'b (B), Szilágyi's topoi include Christian anti-Islamic polemical literature. The two themes that make up this unit come, according to Szilágyi, from the standard collection of polemical ideas. The first one is the identification of the Paraclete with Muḥammad and that its source is from a corrupting Jew named Ka'b. The second topos is that either Ka'b or other Jews corrupted the original teachings of Baḥīrā that composed the true doctrines of Islam following the death of Baḥīrā, who is said to be Muḥammad's Christian master.⁸⁸

In the deeds of Sergius as told by his disciple Ḥakīm (C), there are the hagiographical motifs mentioned above and also polemical topoi with Muḥammad. This account states that Muḥammad was instructed by Baḥīrā in order to account for the birth of Islam and subsequently describes how Baḥīrā created the *Qur'ān*. Additionally, there are other polemics addressed, such as the description of the Muslim Paradise as a completely sensual and sexual place because of the reported abasement of the Arabs with their physical desires, which was scandalous to Christian sensibilities.⁸⁹ This section of the *Legend* in all of the synoptic versions ends by indicating that Muḥammad liked the teachings of Baḥīrā very much and that Sergius (Baḥīrā) wrote for the Arabs the book, which they called the *Qur'ān*.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 62.

⁸⁷ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 176.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 175. See also pages 188-189 as it explains that the Syriac recensions allude to the widespread image of the Arabs as a pleasure-seeking and lustful people.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

Commonality of the East-Syrian and West-Syrian Recensions

In both the East-Syrian (ES) and West-Syrian (WS) recensions, the monk's name is Sargīs, but is at one time mentioned as Baḥīrā (his Muslim name).⁹¹ Baḥīrā is said to be in Arabia due to exile for his opposition to the veneration of more than one cross in churches.⁹² Both the ES and WS recensions agree with the occurrence that Muḥammad questioned Sargīs (Baḥīrā) and accepted the beliefs Baḥīrā taught him. The apparent intent of this action was, according to Griffith, to show that Sargīs (Baḥīrā) was the source of Muḥammad's preaching and not God.⁹³

Commonality of the Arabic Recensions

Common to both the Short (A1) and Long Arabic (A2) recensions is that the monk is only called Baḥīrā and not Sergius or Sargīs. In these recensions, Baḥīrā gives a lengthy guilt confession to another monk/narrator of the story, with a variation of the name Murhib, who visits Baḥīrā on his deathbed. The vision is also recounted in the

⁹¹ Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad," 382. On page 197 of *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, Gottheil states that, "In the oldest Arabic accounts of Mohammed's interview with his teacher, the latter is not mentioned by name. He is simply called *Rāhib* (=monk, anchorite). At a later time he is called *Nestor*, which may mean nothing more than the monk was a Nestorian, and *Baḥīrā*. Al-Mas'ūdī is the first one to identify him with *Sergius*; —or, rather, the Christian who lived at this time (332 AH)." Gottheil also footnotes that Al-Mas'ūdī thinks Sergius and Baḥīrā are different persons.

⁹² Gordon Darnell Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia*, 36. Within the struggle over the nature of Jesus, Newby states that doctrinal loyalty bled into state loyalty as the Church became the governing body of the empire when Justinian instituted a theocratic state. Councils were used to unify the Church and dissenting views were branded heretical. Many Christians fled to Arabia just as Jews had done to escape persecution and this eventually played a role in the Christian internecine struggle.

⁹³ Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad," 383.

Syriac versions, but the Ibn Ishāq-like portions found in the traditional account are not included. Instead, it tells of Muḥammad coming to Baḥīrā to learn the monk's doctrines and the monk being the author of the *Qur'ān*.⁹⁴ Just as in the ES and WS recensions, these versions have Muḥammad learning all his knowledge from a Christian monk and not from God through an angel (possibly Gabriel), and Griffith asserts that this insinuation is clearly an apologetic and polemic aim of the author to show that Muḥammad is not only not a prophet, but that Islam has its origin based on ideas from a heretical monk that Griffith states, "Muslims themselves refer to in their traditions of the prophet."⁹⁵

The East-Syrian Recension (ES)

In the ES Recension, the narrator is Mar Yahb (WS=Isho'yahb). Unlike in the Muslim accounts, Baḥīrā receives revelation about Muḥammad from Mt. Sinai and not from ancient scriptures. The source of the Islamic view of the Paraclete and false interpretations of the Bible come from the Jewish scribe and rabbi Ka'b (Kalb) who is responsible for revising Baḥīrā's works and teachings and saying that Muḥammad is the Paraclete.⁹⁶ Additionally, in this version, the *Qur'ān* is involved and Ka'b is stated to have misunderstood everything Sargīs (Baḥīrā) taught and deliberately revised Baḥīrā's works and teachings to say that Muḥammad is the Paraclete.⁹⁷ This addresses, according to Griffith, the accusations by some Muslims who claimed that Ka'b was

⁹⁴ Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad," 384.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 384.

⁹⁶ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 254-309.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 254-309.

responsible for introducing Jewish practices into Islam and that the role of the story for the Syriac authors was to equate Islam to Judaism.⁹⁸

Related to the misinterpretation of Baḥīrā's teachings is the way Baḥīrā is portrayed in this recension. The description of Baḥīrā's attitude towards the veneration of more than one cross is said by Szilágyi to be a way of saving Sergius' reputation from being branded as a heretic for the ensuing polemic because of his interactions with Muḥammad and the false religion that forms. This endeavor to save the monk's reputation is then followed by three descriptions in three short accounts dealing with the birth of Islam. On this basis, Szilágyi contends that the ES Recension is a formation of three manuscripts and that these accounts are distinct from the *Legend*. Within the three ES manuscripts available, one manuscript only briefly speaks of idol worship, while the others go to some length in their description. Szilágyi asserts that this is the result of two copyists based on the varying lengths.⁹⁹

In the first account, it is noted here by Szilágyi that Ka'b is responsible for corrupting the teachings of Sergius and that the Arabs were engaged in idol worship. The second account relates to the first account in that the Arabs' identification of Muḥammad with the Paraclete is told and held to be founded on the false expectation that Muḥammad would rise from the dead after three days based on Ka'b's influence. Lastly, an explanation for the origins of the *Qur'ān* is described. This origin is also based on Ka'b's deeds on the adding of heretical teachings such as that of the Paraclete to Sergius' teachings. Also included in this account is a reference to al-Ḥajjāj (governor of Iraq, 694-714 CE) to assert that,

⁹⁸ Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad," 383-384.

⁹⁹ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 177.

...all the copies of the *Qur'ān* were full of error, so al-Ḥajjāj ordered them all to be burnt, and, choosing from the Old and New Testament whatever he liked, wrote a new scripture which he called the *Qur'ān*.¹⁰⁰

Consequently, the ES Recension not only allocates blame to the Jewish scribe Ka'b, but also tries to mitigate the blame of Baḥīrā and his writing of the *Qur'ān* by alluding to his piety and good intentions. Moreover, by insinuating that the governor of Iraq formed a *Qur'ān* based on a personal selection of Bible passages, the ES Recension adamantly asserts the *Qur'ān* to be a human formation formed with human hands and not from God.

The West-Syrian Recension (WS)

Unlike the ES Recension cited above, the differences in the West-Syrian Recension are unique. Notably, the WS Recension is the only version where the narrator is called Isho'yahb. Also notable is the difference from the ES Recension in that material only contained in the appendices of the ES Recension is found in the body of the text in the WS Recension.¹⁰¹ Szilágyi states that the materials from these appendices were explicitly inserted by copyists to further the aims of the counter-history and polemic to Islam.

To begin with, the WS Recension starts off much differently than the ES Recension. This is because it opens with a rather lengthy account of the conversion of the last Lakhmid king of Ḥīra (580-602), al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir, to Christianity. This opening with references to both a kingly conversion and Christian dynasty and the

¹⁰⁰ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 176.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 178.

location of al-Ḥīra (in modern-day Iraq) gives credence to Baḥīrā's message. This account gives credence because, as Szilágyi asserts, the reference is meant to explain why Sergius was welcomed among the Arabs and gives a basis for how his teachings and presence were well accepted.¹⁰²

Just as in the ES Recension, the WS Recension also portrays Ka'b (in this recension referred to as Kalb) as the one responsible for altering Baḥīrā's teachings and even equates Muḥammad with Jesus and his resurrection by proclaiming that Muḥammad would rise after three days as Jesus did. The account of Ka'b's error involving Muḥammad's body when it is not resurrected three days later is quite vivid. The WS Recension goes into much more detail on Ka'b's error with a more elaborate account of the non-resurrection of Muḥammad and the death of Ka'b. The WS Recension also puts the narration about Muḥammad's death right after the death of Sergius, which Szilágyi says, "...creates a telling contrast between the miracle-working bones of the saintly monk and the rotten corpse of the imposter."¹⁰³ Yet, despite Ka'b being wrong about Muḥammad rising in three days, the notion of Muḥammad being the Paraclete persists according to this recension because of the Arabs' irrationality, which is a harsher judgment than is made in the ES Recension.

It is also worth mentioning that in the WS Recension, the itinerant monk and narrator Isho'yahb learns of Sargīs Baḥīrā's encounter with Muḥammad through an early disciple of Baḥīrā's named Ḥakīm. As was stated above, the WS and ES accounts are the closest to the Muslim account, and this account has elements central to the Muslim version with Baḥīrā reported to have lived near a well where Arabs stopped

¹⁰² Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 178.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 178.

while traveling. The narrator reports that, while at his cell, Baḥīrā sees the young Muḥammad and the cloud shading him and believes him to be a great man. The fundamental difference from the Muslim account is that this version does not say Muḥammad will be a prophet, but that he will be a powerful leader among the Arabs.¹⁰⁴

Connected with this form of the prophecy, the WS Recension makes no reference to such knowledge of Muḥammad's advent coming from books or based on a book. Ibn Ishāq relates that Baḥīrā referred to scripture to know that Muḥammad was the next prophet, but in this account, all of the monk's knowledge is derived from an unnamed angel from atop Mt. Sinai while on a pilgrimage.¹⁰⁵ This account allows for Baḥīrā's apocalyptic vision to be based on divine revelation, which established and validated how Muslims rose to power.

The Short Arabic Recension (A1)

The Arabic recensions are much different in style and quality than the Syriac recensions and give a more human touch to the characters, dialogue, and imagery they portray,¹⁰⁶ while the Syriac recensions try to demonstrate their authenticity by including background on Christianity among the Arabs. Szilágyi believes the Arabic redactors to be more successful in this pursuit by making the account more lively,

¹⁰⁴ Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad," 383.

¹⁰⁵ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 313-373. These motifs will be elaborated on later.

¹⁰⁶ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 178.

coherent, and unified¹⁰⁷ and that overall, like Gottheil, believes that the Arabic account is woven into a more consistent whole.¹⁰⁸

Yet, in spite of the difference in literary quality, the Short Arabic Recension (A1) follows the same Syriac literary structure and the redactor only changes the minor details to make it more vivid. Additionally, when reading the A1 Recension, it is the only recension where the narrator is Marhab. This narrator portrays Sergius as a good Christian who does not instruct Muḥammad in outrageous ideas about Paradise or other concepts that would render him a heretic, and all conversations with Muḥammad are given with reasoning for why his teachings are being given.¹⁰⁹

Also, a striking variance noted by Szilágyi, and to readers of the *Legends*, is that with the ES and WS Recensions, the disciple Ḥakīm is present throughout the story instead of sporadically.¹¹⁰ Just as in the other versions, Ka'b is responsible here as well for introducing the Paraclete as Muḥammad based on Jesus' sayings from his interpretations of scripture. This recension also appears to be the first recension to mention a physical sign of anointing on Muḥammad. As in the other versions, a warning against the Jews is found as well,¹¹¹ but what separates the A1 and the A2 Recensions is the extent to which the *Qur'ān* is used. This version employs the *Qur'ān* within the apologies asserted above, but the Long Arabic Recension employs it extensively.

¹⁰⁷ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 179.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 190.

¹⁰⁹ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 179.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹¹¹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 376-431.

The Long Arabic Recension (A2)

According to Gottheil, Roggema, and Szilágyi, the Long Arabic Recension (A2) is not considered to be similar to the other three recensions discussed above and, for this reason, will require much more elaboration. Along with extensive use of the *Qur'ān*,¹¹² of which Baḥīrā confesses to have written for Muḥammad, the A2 Recension differs in the confessional endings it tacks on.¹¹³ In this way, the A2 Recension does not follow the Syriac structure cited above and is much longer than the other three recensions. When reading this recension, it appears that the redactor deals more freely with the Syriac material than in the A1 Recension and the corruption by Ka'b is missing.

Furthermore, in the A2 Recension, there is no disciple of Baḥīrā mentioned and instead Baḥīrā tells his story to the narrator Marhab and dies at the end of the story. In the other versions of the story, Baḥīrā dies in the middle and all is told by another monk, whereas in this version he retells his story himself and confesses that he wrote the *Qur'ān*.¹¹⁴ After his death, there is no burial or miracle account, thus altering the story, but making the account follow a more coherent timeline. However, even with the omitted material, this account is much longer than the Synoptic accounts because, unlike the others, it includes Baḥīrā's Christian interpretation of *Qur'ānic* passages and Islamic rituals to justify his creation of the *Qur'ān*. Additionally, there is a deathbed confession by Baḥīrā with multiple parts.¹¹⁵

¹¹² About forty as some verses are combined.

¹¹³ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 180.

¹¹⁴ Barbara Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the *Qur'ān*: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of *Qur'ān* and *Sīra*," 58.

¹¹⁵ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 180.

Moreover, in this recension, there are no miracles or signs given, and instead Baḥīrā notices Muḥammad's skill and adeptness and wants to help him lead the Arabs. This is in contrast to the dimwitted and illiterate personification of Muḥammad in the other recensions, which Roggema claims further emphasizes God's sovereignty over the matter. Also, Roggema states that instead of citing Muḥammad as the Paraclete from John, Baḥīrā asserts the opposite and cites John 16:2 with Muḥammad essentially acting as a persecutor of Christians.¹¹⁶ Additionally, possibly the most salient feature of this recension is found in chapter 18:11 where Baḥīrā speaks to the narrator, saying:

{18.11} Before I saw this vision, which I saw at Mount Sinai, I studied all the books with prophecies of the Prophets and the Torah and the things described by the learned regarding astrology on the basis of the conjunctions and rules of the stars and what it indicated about the reign of the Sons of Ishmael, who are the worst of all people, and what God Almighty imposed on his servants.¹¹⁷

The implication of this passage is quite distinct from the other three accounts. Based on this confession, Baḥīrā consults previous scriptures looking for the next Prophet, but upon finding Muḥammad among the Arabs after his Mt. Sinai visions, Baḥīrā asserts that Muḥammad is not necessarily a prophet, but destined to lead the Arabs. Thus, Baḥīrā wishes to guide Muḥammad and the Arab people based on the foreknowledge he has obtained.

Also, as alluded to, this longer Arabic version of the *Legend of Baḥīrā* employs the *Qur'ān* as a strategy to show that the *Qur'ān* has its origins in Christianity¹¹⁸ and uses the

¹¹⁶ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 434-527.

John 16:2: They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 509.

¹¹⁸ Barbara Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the Qur'ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur'ān and Sīra," 70.

Qur'ān extensively in an apologetic form. Roggema separates verses¹¹⁹ used in the A2 Recension from the *Qur'ān* as Pro-Christian, Anti-Christian, and Neutral¹²⁰ and says that the use of these verses was a strategy to show that the *Qur'ān* had its origins in Christianity in response to Muslim writers such as Ibn Ishāq. Pro-Christian verses are emphasized while verses that “...do not agree with Christian views are shown to be interpreted in the wrong way by Muḥammad and his people.”¹²¹ Other versions of the *Legend* that go against Christian ideals are said to be from the negative influences of Ka'b on Muḥammad after Baḥīrā's death.¹²²

Pro-Christian Verses

Three examples of pro-Christian verses from the *Qur'ān* can be found with 10:94, 5:82, and 43:81. *Sūra* 10:94 reads¹²³

So, if thou art in doubt regarding what We have sent down to thee, ask those who recite the Book before thee. The truth has come to thee from thy Lord; so be not of the doubters

and Baḥīrā then responds saying, “By this I mean that the Holy Gospel is truer than all books, and cannot be impaired by those who want to discredit it, nor can it be changed or falsified.”¹²⁴ With *Sūra* 5:82, the pro-Christian sense is quite clear. It reads,

¹¹⁹ Pro-Christian: Q 10:94, 5:82, 43:81; Anti-Christian: 4:157, *Sūra* 112; Neutral Verses: 2:2. Neutral verses do not refer directly to Christianity, but are interpreted in such a way by Christians and the opposite way by Muslims. Example: Baḥīrā opens up the story with the *basmala*.

¹²⁰ Barbara Roggema, “A Christian Reading of the *Qur'ān*,” 59.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 70.

¹²³ All verses of the *Qur'ān* will be cited using A.J. Arberry's translation of the *Qur'ān* from *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

Thou wilt surely find the most hostile of men to the believers are the Jews and the idolaters; and thou wilt surely find the nearest of them in love to the believers are those who say 'We are Christians'; that, because some of them are priests and monks, and they wax not proud.¹²⁵

Roggema, however, adds that Muslim theologians generally interpret this not to indicate all Christians, but rather Christians from Abyssinia who converted to Islam or those in Najrān, or even Baḥīrā.¹²⁶ Additionally, it should be noted that Roggema says that the first part of the verse in 5:82 is seen to be used to refute Muḥammad's belief in Christians being polytheists and that Baḥīrā makes it known that it is the Quraysh that are the polytheists, whereby providing further justification of his altruistic intent.¹²⁷

Concerning *Qur'ān* 43:81, it reads "Say: 'If the All-merciful has a son, then I am the first to serve him.'" This verse is included in the *Legend* and is said to be used in connection with *Sūra* 109, which states:

Say: 'O unbelievers, I serve not what you serve and you are not serving what I serve, nor am I serving what you have served, neither are you serving what I serve. To you your religion, and to me my religion!'"

What can be deduced from Baḥīrā on this point is that he and Muḥammad/the Arabs do not agree on the divinity of Christ and resolve to solidify these differences in a compromise which ultimately results in Baḥīrā's defeat in arguing divinity, yet Baḥīrā still maintains and affirms that the Christian view is the correct one.

¹²⁴ Barbara Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the Qur'ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur'ān and Sīra," 59.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 59.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 59.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 59.

Neutral Verses

The verses mentioned in the A2 Recension as neutral are those that do not refer directly to Christianity, but are interpreted in such a way by Christians and the opposite way by Muslims. An opening example of this is when Baḥīrā opens up the story with the *basmala*,¹²⁸ which, to Muslims would mean affirmation of Islam, but to Christian readers of the time, Roggema asserts, could mean a general affirmation of God within a Christian context. In general, the interactions between Muḥammad and Baḥīrā within the neutral verses appear to be dialectical as they negotiate how to establish the religion. When Baḥīrā says that Muḥammad should teach his people how to pray, Muḥammad says that his people will not tolerate long prayers and standing, thus the number of prayers are reduced. In effect, Baḥīrā takes the place of God and Muḥammad the place of Moses in the night journey accounted in the *Ḥadīth*. Baḥīrā then suggests seven prayers and reading of the Psalms.¹²⁹

According to Roggema, the above type of occurrence would be considered “Counter-*asbāb al-nuzūl*”¹³⁰ because it describes parodies of the *Ḥadīth* accounts regarding prayer and miracles.¹³¹ What is interesting about this example is why Baḥīrā addresses the night journey. Baḥīrā states that he taught and described to Muḥammad

¹²⁸ Barbara Roggema, “A Christian Reading of the Qur’ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur’ān and Sīra,” 60.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 63.

¹³⁰ Counter-*asbāb al-nuzūl* means counter-circumstances of revelation

¹³¹ Barbara Roggema, “A Christian Reading of the Qur’ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur’ān and Sīra,” 63.

about heaven from his apocalyptic visions and from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but why would Christians affirm a journey of this nature with the events that unfold?¹³²

Overall, Baḥīrā comes in conflict with Muḥammad on the laws created for the Arabs and their desire to follow them. This is where counter-*asbāb al-nuzūl* readily appears and Muslim customs and concepts are trivialized, though the account still remains close enough to the Muslim version to make it a recognizable parody.¹³³ Such an instance can be seen in areas where Baḥīrā attempts to establish a law for Muḥammad and his followers to adhere to. These areas are in prayer, fasting, and food laws. In creating this law, Roggema states that,

...Baḥīrā identifies the Christian symbolism of his inventions. For example, the threefold aspects of prayer refer to the Trinity, and when he describes paradise to Muḥammad he explains that its four rivers refer to the four gospels.¹³⁴

A second example is with the *qibla*, where Baḥīrā tells Muḥammad to have his people pray towards the east and away from Mecca, but they protest saying they will not abandon the direction of their ancestors. Baḥīrā relents to Muḥammad and uses the guise of a new revelation to change the *qibla*.¹³⁵ In this example, we see Christian criticism in that God appears to change his mind in the new direction of prayer, thus within the *Legend*, it is the result of man's doing.¹³⁶

¹³² Barbara Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the Qur'ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur'ān and Sīra," 67.

¹³³ Ibid., 64.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 63.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 64.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 64-65.

Anti-Christian Verses

The main use in the A2 Recension of Roggema's collection of anti-Christian verses rests in *Sūra* 112 and 4:157. *Sūra* 112 is reported by Roggema to be often used in anti-Trinitarian arguments, but Baḥīrā explains that he wrote it during a time of hopelessness when the Arabs were seen as beyond hope of conversion.¹³⁷ This *sūra* (112) reads: "He says: 'I likened God to the one they used to worship and I made him *ṣamad*, not hearing and not seeing; like a stone.'" Roggema translates the word *ṣamad* as "massive" or "lifeless," as this is the interpretation she asserts Christians have traditionally given to this almost "untranslatable" word.¹³⁸ Behind this citation is what appears to be Baḥīrā's assertion that the Islamic religion is idolatrous as it is essentially a religion created from his mind, and also that he has thus put a stumbling block in the Arabs' path to seeing Christ as divine.

Sūra 4:157 speaks of the crucifixion of Christ and reads as follows: "They have not killed him and they have not crucified him, but it only appeared so to them." In this, Baḥīrā claims to have written this, and he adds: "I meant by this that Christ did not die in the substance of his divine nature."¹³⁹ However, as will be seen in the deathbed confessional, the redactors did not find this to be completely sufficient in expiating his culpability.

¹³⁷ Barbara Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the Qur'ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur'ān and *Sīra*," 60.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

The Confessions

This reported anti-Christian inclusion by Roggema of *Sūra* 4:157 in the *Qur'ān* leads into the varying deathbed confessionals the redactors have included in the A2 Recension. Overall, the creation of the *Qur'ān* does not necessarily appear to be the greatest sin Baḥīrā is accused of, but rather the consolations he gave to Muḥammad when he included the anti-Trinitarian verses. However, unlike the rebuking and lamenting in the synoptic recensions, Baḥīrā is portrayed here as a pious Christian who acted in good faith and was not at fault for the circumstances that came about during most of the A2 Recension. He tried to convert Muḥammad and the Arabs to no avail and this is one topic addressed in the deathbed confessional.

In relation to this deathbed confessional, Gottheil designated that the confessional (named E) was the oldest of the *Legend* manuscripts and believed that it formed the *Legend's* foundation.¹⁴⁰ Gottheil asserts this viewpoint because 1) it contained the shortest of all the texts and 2) was written before the various redactions. However, he states in *A Christian Baḥīrā legend* that he did not have the “courage to use it in the notes to the Arabic text” because of its reported poor condition.¹⁴¹

Building upon and using Gottheil's work with the confessions, Szilágyi states that there are three sections in the confessional of the A2 Recension that are not in the other recensions and refers to them as E, E₁, and E₂, suggesting the ending went through redactions. Gottheil did not appear to breakdown E into more than one part. Szilágyi's versions are defined as:

¹⁴⁰ Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 201.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

E: an additional section in A2 after D consisting of E₁ and E₂
E₁: first part of E only in A2
E₂: the second part of E only in A2

In the E account, Szilágyi says that the confession tapers off and switches to the narrator, but then continues with the monk deploring his actions and stating he will receive no mercy from God for his deeds and that blessed are those who persevere until the end and do not succumb to conversion or heresy. In response to this, the narrator states that God is merciful and is thus kind and compassionate to Baḥīrā on his deathbed.

In E₁, the confession continues as Baḥīrā states that his main sins are telling Muḥammad to claim prophethood and for including anti-Trinitarian verses in the *Qur'ān*.¹⁴² In spite of this, the monk is portrayed as being a devout Christian similar to the synoptics. Baḥīrā confesses to knowingly disobeying God and inserting anti-Trinitarian verses in the *Qur'ān*, and believes his sins are too great for forgiveness, which is also found in the E version with the narrator's consolation.¹⁴³

Elaborating further, Szilágyi states that the polemic in E₁ and E₂ are different and at the heart of E₁ is the inclusion of the anti-Trinitarian verses in the *Qur'ān*, which Szilágyi states could in no way be positively interpreted in Christian doctrine. Thus, the monk's sin in E₁ is the inclusion of these verses more so than the founding of Islam. Szilágyi states also that *Sūrat al-ikhhlās* (*Sūra* 112) is then fully quoted.¹⁴⁴ The overall effect of this confession is that by having the monk teach heresy, it accounts for the doctrines of Islam. Szilágyi claims that, "...the copyist perhaps added this part, because

¹⁴² Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 181.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 182.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 183. See above for verse.

A2, instead of recounting the activities of Ka'b, contains only allusions to those who come after Baḥīrā and corrupt his *Qur'ān*," thus as a whole, this accounts for what is stated through Ka'b elsewhere, but implicitly.¹⁴⁵

In the confession found in E₂, Szilágyi states that this version,

...does not seem to have a similarly precise polemical agenda. Its copyist perhaps added to the text five polemical topoi which he might have considered impossible to leave out of a comprehensive explanation of the origins of Islam.¹⁴⁶

In this way, there is justification for when Muḥammad appeals to Baḥīrā for lax laws because his people are too lascivious and could not conform to Christian morals and ideals. Thus, a cited example is that Baḥīrā then writes in the *Qur'ān* the freedom to engage in unrestricted polygamy.¹⁴⁷

Even with the relatively delicate treatment the monk is receiving for his sinful confession, there is this in the latter half of the confessional with E₂ that seems to imply that Baḥīrā is still not completely aware of his own culpability with this statement from the A2 Recension which says,

'Do not reproach me, neither you nor the one who reads it, for what I have done and committed, because I knew what I knew, I understand and discerned that he would rule, and that it was inevitable that he would rise, and reach his aim and achieve his goal...So I wrote to the believers about his intention, and obtained from him a treaty and promises of his care for them all the days of his rule.' After this Marhab asks for God's blessing on Baḥīrā, thanks the monk, describes how he was honored and loved by the Arabs. So the story ends.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 183.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 183.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 183.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 182.

This counter-reproach omits his inclusion of the anti-Trinitarian views and provides justification for the visions he saw on Mt. Sinai. The only blame then that remains would be his disobedience of declaring the ruler of the Arabs to be a prophet.

Environmental Aspects of the Recensions

With the above analysis of each recension complete, it is important to understand that the Recensions formed amidst the strife that Roggema portrays as part of 'Abbāsid rule for Christians. It is in this milieu that the Mt. Sinai visions of the Recensions develop with visions Baḥīrā has fitting into the apocalyptic motif and literary style with the Mt. Sinai vision suggesting the,

...end of the 'Abbāsid rule at the time of the seventh Caliph. However, rather than predicting the end of Islamic rule as a whole...Baḥīrā's vision continues with a number of Islamic messianic figures who will govern the world before the final salvation of believers in Christ.¹⁴⁹

Roggema states that such literary writings are restricted by convention where "...its originality is crammed within the rigid constraints of convention, but these constraints also form one of the securing factors of the apocalypse's claim to genuineness," meaning that by following tradition and the modes set before in the above quote, it would be assumed that the lack of deviation from what is consider true will result with individual biases being absent.¹⁵⁰ As stated before, in terms of the recensions of the *Legend*, the apocalypses dealt with the new conquests and spread of Islam by producing

¹⁴⁹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 64.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

apocalyptic topoi that interpreted such a spread as a temporary phenomenon in line with Biblical accounts where God used foreign powers to chastise His people.¹⁵¹

As Islamic rule proved to be more than just a temporary event in the eighth century, literature moved more towards refutations and apologetics.¹⁵² In the rigid constraints of the apocalyptic construct, the language and literary style is laden with motifs in the eschaton, and was first used by Jews and then Christians, and subsequently adopted by Muslims through transmission by early converts to Islam. The Christian recensions, Roggema states “...adopt the Muslim prophecies that were formulated in a symbolic language that was very familiar to their own,” meaning that the apocalyptic motifs were imbued with Muslim tradition and formulated in literary writings, and in the response from Christians and Jews. These Muslim characteristics were then incorporated in the apologetic and polemic responses.¹⁵³

Hence, the Recensions seek to connect Christianity and Islam through historical events and to explain away Islam by showcasing the doctrinal similarities and alluding to the supposition that Islam is an altered form of Christianity from a heretical monk. Thus, Roggema states that “within this apologetic enterprise the most challenging task was to explain away the aspects of Islam that appear[ed] at face value as diametrically opposed to Christian doctrine and hostile to the Christian community.”¹⁵⁴ As each recension is a counter-history account built on a single Islamic narrative, it is through agreement with some facets in the Muslim sources that the Recensions try to persuade its literary audience of the new counter-history it proposes. Moreover, Roggema claims

¹⁵¹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥrā*, 62.

¹⁵² Ibid., 62.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 64-65.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 102.

that the most notable feature of the Recensions is its agreement with Muslim belief that God has supported the Muslim conquests.¹⁵⁵ Roggema asserts that this is done through a first-person eyewitness account.

Construction of the Motifs and Linkage to Baḥīrā

Further reviewing work by Richard Gottheil, one sees the relation between Baḥīrā and the circulation of the *Legend* and its motifs, thus elucidating the creation of the first-person account Roggema refers to above. Szilágyi's further explication of Gottheil's breakdown of the *Legend* into (A), (B), (C), and (D) confirms Gottheil's claim that (A) [the life of Sergius, which includes the Mt. Sinai vision and the first apocalypse] was the earliest part of the *Legend*.¹⁵⁶ In this way, even with the addition of newer manuscripts, this dating roughly concurs with the conclusion Gottheil arrived at when he dated the *Legend* to the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century CE based on symbolism found in the apocalyptic visions.¹⁵⁷ Gottheil states further on this matter that in addition to the eleventh or twelfth century for the overall date, "...the second part—the real Baḥīrā legend—may be a good bit older; while the third part [the second apocalyptic vision] need not have been composed at a very much later date."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 34. This can again be demonstrated with Chapter 18.11 of A2 that shows Baḥīrā's assent to Muḥammad's later conquest through scripture and visions.

¹⁵⁶ Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 192.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 192.

Additional examination by Szilágyi on Gottheil's dating leads to a further specification of dating by identifying that the apocalyptic vision on Mt. Sinai recorded by Mār Yahb is indicative of the reign of al-Ma'mūn (d. 833 CE/217 AH) based on the eschatological imagery of the Kingdom of the *Mahdī*.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, the main goal of (A), Szilágyi states, was to give an unsettling prophecy to the Arab conquest in Christian literature where none existed and to give a source for the Arab development of doctrine and monotheism.¹⁶⁰ This explanation comes in the form of an account from Sergius (Baḥīrā) revealing that he wrote the *Qur'ān* for the Arabs in (A).¹⁶¹ Additionally, we find in (C) that the Arabs came to Sergius and asked him about all types of subject matters and followed whatever Baḥīrā told them because he taught them some doctrine which they chose to follow.¹⁶²

Moreover, when looking at the construction of the Christian *Legends*, Szilágyi states that there are three versions of the Muslim Baḥīrā Legend which all have the motifs of the synoptic recensions and are known from the works of Ibn Bābawayh (d. 991 CE/380 AH), Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833 CE/ 218 AH), Ibn Bukayr (d. 815 CE/ 199 AH), al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066 CE/ 458 AH) and Ibn Sa'd (d. 845 CE/230 AH) who were at least alive and active around the time of the writing of (M).¹⁶³ It should be noted here that Ibn Hishām and Ibn Sa'd are both mentioned among these biographers, which could suggest an inter-play between the Christian recensions and their biographical works

¹⁵⁹ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 186-188. See Richard Gottheil, *A Christian Baḥīrā legend*, 195.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 186-188.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 201.

¹⁶² Ibid., 201.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 196.

concerning the Paraclete and Muḥammad.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, when looking at the *isnāds* (chain of transmitters) of the biographies, the chains, according to Szilágyi,

...point to an Iraqi, probably Kūfan, provenance in the case of the versions that influenced the encounter episode of (M), agreeing with the Iraqi origin of (M). These transmitters were active from the second half of the eighth to the late ninth century CE.¹⁶⁵

However, Szilágyi states that though the encounter episode of (M) is similar to the Muslim account,

...their only common motif is missing: in the Muslim legend Muḥammad always stops at the cell of the monk on his way to Syria for trade, not in order to water the cattle at the well of the monk as in (M).¹⁶⁶

Szilágyi goes on to say that the Muslim versions do not address or associate a monk at the well at all and the encounter between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad takes place while Muḥammad is en route to Syria with his uncle on a caravan trip and not while close to where Muḥammad lived.¹⁶⁷ She states that “...the scene of the meeting and the role of the well indicate that the encounter episode was fashioned to fit (A), and not the other way around...”¹⁶⁸ Though the first portion is correct from the Muslim account, it omits work by Ibn Kathīr who in his *sīra* states that when Muḥammad was telling Khadījah about his visions and dreams, this was related:

Khadījah said, ‘Rejoice! For, by God, I well know that God will not do you anything but good. I bear witness that you are the prophet of this nation whom the Jews await. My servant Nāsiḥ and the monk Baḥīrā both told me this and advised me more than 20 years ago to marry you.’ And she stayed with the Messenger of God (ṢAAS) until he had eaten, drunk, and laughed. She then went off to see the monk, *who lived close by to Mecca* (emphasis added). When she drew near and he recognized her, he said, ‘What is wrong, O mistress of all the women

¹⁶⁴ This is addressed in Chapter Four.

¹⁶⁵ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 196.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

of Quraysh?’ She replied, ‘I have come to you for you to tell me about Gabriel.’ He replied, ‘Glory be to God, our most holy Lord! How is it that Gabriel is mentioned here, in this land whose people worship idols? Gabriel is the trusted servant of God, and his envoy to His prophets and to His messengers. It is he who was the companion of Moses and Jesus.’¹⁶⁹

Consequently, putting Baḥīrā in close proximity to Muḥammad is in accordance with Ibn Kathīr’s account with Khadījah going to Baḥīrā when Muḥammad begins having revelations.

Additionally, because of this narration from Ibn Kathīr, Biblical motifs should be examined once more. Firstly, the construction of the well could be a motif used by the redactors to form an account similar to that of Jesus and the Samaritan woman found in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John as a place of instruction from someone with superior knowledge and wisdom to one lacking understanding. This is relevant in relation to another significant motif regarding King David with a Davidic motif found in all the synoptic Christian recensions and found in five versions of the Muslim legend.¹⁷⁰ The Davidic motif of Muḥammad is used when Muḥammad, as a small boy, is kept behind while the rest of the caravan party goes into the cave with Baḥīrā. Baḥīrā notices the one whom he saw signs upon is not present and at once has the party bring Muḥammad up to the cave from tending the caravan.¹⁷¹

In light of what has just been elaborated upon by Szilágyi, (C) may be the only section that did not circulate independently as it is dependent upon the teachings of Sergius and his establishment in Arabia.¹⁷² Also, in (C), the focus shifts from the Arabs

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 296.

¹⁷⁰ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 193. The A2 Recension lacks these motifs; Muḥammad will rule because of his abilities.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 188.

as conquerors and victors to the Arabian religion.¹⁷³ While (A) implicitly questions the origins of Islam, (C) does so openly in the account of Baḥīrā instructing Muḥammad. In the dialogue between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad we learn about the lenient teachings Baḥīrā gives Muḥammad and the Arabs. The doctrines are like Christian doctrines, but, in agreeing with Szilágyi, the required practices are more liberal.¹⁷⁴ The reasons in the Recensions for this alteration of doctrines is claimed to be because of the lascivious nature of the Arabs. Szilágyi states that, “A1 explicitly refers to the dilemma of the monk who wanted to transmit the truth, yet could not induce the Arabs to follow it...”¹⁷⁵ and by some reasoning decided to alter teachings in a compromising and defeating approach with hopes of change later. Such ideas are reminiscent of the Islamic doctrine of change with an evolving community.¹⁷⁶

Lastly, referring to the apocalypse found in (D), this unit is more detailed and probably circulated separately from (A), as both (A) and (D) could stand on their own. However, when (A) and (D) were connected, Szilágyi claims the text to be more coherent and more relevant.¹⁷⁷ Thus, when Baḥīrā was connected to the text as the protagonist,

...a copyist redactor wrote down the story as he imagined it on the basis of these legends and other standard hagiographical, polemical, and apologetic material, thus creating (C) [the deeds of Sergius as told by Ḥakīm].¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 188-189.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 188-189.

¹⁷⁶ Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2006), 82.

¹⁷⁷ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 188.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Overall, and in contrast to this last point, Szilágyi asserts that on the basis of (M), these descriptions seem to refer to another legend that “...credited Sergius with the foundation of Islam not as the teacher of Muḥammad, but instead of Muḥammad.”¹⁷⁹ However, with what has been added above, this does not appear to make sense. In (A), is there not the account of seeing Muḥammad in the distance and then proclaiming him a prophet or one who will lead? Muḥammad being the one receiving instruction is crucial to the story, not Muḥammad being a side note to the monk. This is made clearer in Szilágyi’s own words with the statement that,

...the Muslim Baḥīrā legend could not have served as the ‘basis’ for its Christian namesake. The Christian legend consists of several independent parts, each comprising a number of polemical and other topoi; the encounter episode, the only section of the narrative similar to the Muslim story, is just one of these building blocks. (A), the oldest part of the legend, does not contain any motif from the Muslim Baḥīrā legend, although the encounter episode is of central importance for (C), it seems to have been introduced at a later phase of the development of the legend in a rather careless manner.¹⁸⁰

If the Muslim account is not a skeletal structure for the Recensions, but rather the event in question was taken and then responded to in other ways, why would they seek to mask Muḥammad within the shadow of the monk, especially if the encounter episode later becomes integral to the polemic by setting up the meeting and instruction between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad? In response to this question, Szilágyi states that the encounter between Muḥammad and the monk is a later addition to the *Legend* and was indeed borrowed from the Muslim account and combined with both Baḥīrā’s

¹⁷⁹ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 201.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 192-193.

instruction of Muḥammad and the second apocalypse, but the *Legend* itself was not modeled around the encounter episode.¹⁸¹

The *Legend* is then hinged on (A) being the original story of the *Legend* and then the Muslim version being tacked on to it later. If this is the case, then why is there so much hinged on this account? What were the early Christians responding to mostly? Was it the rule of the Arabs as the initial prodding that led to the writing of the *Legend* solely to justify Arab rule, and only later did the polemic become specific to the actual founding and workings of Islam?¹⁸² Within the scope of this chapter, the answer to this question is not clear. However, related to this question is the issue of how Sergius in the Christian accounts became identified with Baḥīrā in the Muslim legends. Szilágyi states that *bḥīrā* in the context of the Baḥīrā Legend is seen as a proper noun, but without this context, it becomes a common noun meaning elect or prophet.¹⁸³ So, he could then be called “Sergius, prophet of the Arabs.”¹⁸⁴ In this respect, the encounter episode seems more likely to stick to the original legend with the key figure representing it affixed to the initial encounter of the Muslim account and then the Christian legend.

Turning now back to Gottheil, his work is crucial to understanding how Baḥīrā became affixed to the legend that bears his name. Szilágyi asserts that the encounter episode appears to be a later addition to the Recensions because of the rough form it takes within the *Legend* and that the *Legend* borrows from the Muslim account during the ninth century. The new encounter episode was introduced, Szilágyi asserts, to

¹⁸¹ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 199.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

...combine the legend of Muḥammad's instruction by the monk with the life of the visionary Sergius and his second apocalypse. But as the legend was not fashioned around the encounter episode...the Christian story can hardly be the derivative of the latter; instead, the two originated and for a time circulated independently from each other.¹⁸⁵

Szilágyi then says that the modern work of Gottheil on the *Legend* had much to do with this ascription to Baḥīrā and states, “Had Gottheil mentioned the name Sergius in the title of his edition instead of Baḥīrā, it would not have occurred to anyone to view these Syriac and Arabic texts as transformations of the Muslim Baḥīrā Legend.”¹⁸⁶ However, according to Roggema, when Gottheil was rendering the *Legend* he did not have the longer Arabic version available to him, so his limited range of available manuscripts left his work unfinished.¹⁸⁷ With all parts put together, the parts would make a transformation of the Muslim legend because having the totality of the different sections alter the encounter with Muḥammad and all later encounters.¹⁸⁸ With this in mind, it may also be possible to see why the names Baḥīrā and Sergius (or any variant rendering of Sergius) are so interchangeable and vary from each recension to the other. Moreover, Szilágyi posits that the identification of Sergius with Baḥīrā also has older roots and states that this identification

...was not part of the original (M), but was introduced as the result of a philological error; a copyist-redactor of the legend must have mistaken the Syriac common noun *bḥīrā* for the name Baḥīrā.¹⁸⁹

This error seems logical, but if copyists of the time made this mistake, then it seems harsh to lay blame on Gottheil for following in the same path as those closer to

¹⁸⁵ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 199.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁸⁷ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, the Introduction.

¹⁸⁸ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 199.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 202.

the original work when he did not possess all four major versions. However, Szilágyi continues with the inference that

If someone familiar with the Muslim legends, and perhaps having Arabic as his mother tongue, copied (M), he could have easily understood *bḥīrā* as a proper noun, and identified the otherwise dissimilar characters of the monk Sergius with the monk Baḥīrā. He might then have inserted the encounter episode and Muḥammad's instruction by the monk.¹⁹⁰

It should be noted that *bḥīrā* is said to come at the beginning of (M) and it is the only time this word is used. Also, the dissimilar characters of Sergius and Baḥīrā are not as apparent as to Szilágyi; otherwise the copyist would not have successfully paired these two figures into one entity. However, Roggema states that Baḥīrā's

...'existence' was contested by Muslim sources, but we could say that his existence, and with that of his authority, is also established within the legend itself. The text gradually 'proves' Baḥīrā's existence by showing the Christian essence of part of the *Qur'ān*. Baḥīrā's authoritativeness also grows, and this in turn can be used to interpret whatever does not seem to fit the Christian mind at first sight. The authoritativeness created within the legend has its function outside: it works as a justification for Christians to interpret the *Qur'ān* in the first place.¹⁹¹

It can be inferred from this statement that Baḥīrā's existence is secondary to the function of the *Legend*. Additionally, whether Baḥīrā is a title or a proper name, the rendering in the account found in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* cites it as a proper noun.

Additionally, the Recensions form an inclusive framework and Szilágyi states that

For one Christian, the founder of Islam was the Christian monk who gained the Arabs' respect and loyalty by healing their sick and prophesying for them a glorious future; for another, it was Muḥammad, the simple-minded child converted to Christianity by the talented young man, and later misled by Jews;

¹⁹⁰ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 202. *Bḥīrā* is the only instance where it is used in (M) and comes towards the beginning of the text.

¹⁹¹ Barbara Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the *Qur'ān*: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of *Qur'ān* and *Sīra*," 73.

for still another, it was Muḥammad, the talented young man, perfectly fit to lead his people, but unable to understand the intricacies of Christian theology.¹⁹²

Within this assertion, one sees within this synopsis essentially one of the main aims of the *Legends*—to provide a safe compartment for Islam within Christianity.

Conclusions

In this way, Roggema holds that the components of the *Legend* are a formed response and challenge to the rise of Islam and the character of Sergius/Baḥīrā is an instrument for this purpose. The components form a response in three distinct ways. The first is by developing a counter-history, rewriting the crucial events in Islamic history surrounding divine revelation and intervention and removing such divine claims. The second response allows a Christian worldview that includes and allows the Arabs to be rulers over Christians and neutralizes Islamic triumphalism. The last response enables Christian to deal with doctrinal claims of Islam.¹⁹³

Thus, regardless of Szilágyi's assessment of the combination of characters and the many redactions, Szilágyi still asserts that the *Legend's* most important function was to present "...Islam in a way that helped Christians to maintain their religious identity in the Islamic world."¹⁹⁴ By making the doctrines of Islam come from the distorted teachings of a Christian monk who wrote the *Qur'ān* for the Arabs, they removed any divine attributes from the text and moved the totality of it into the actions of a heretical monk. Furthermore, by moving Islam into the Christian category of heresy,

¹⁹² Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 204.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 169.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 205.

Islam was neutralized and “... gave hope that the perfidious doctrine of the Ishmaelites would prevail no longer than that of Arius.”¹⁹⁵ Consequently, though the work of this heretical monk makes Christianity look unfavorable in the account, it gives the overall impression that Islam is a false religion and the result of yet another heretic coming out of the Christian church with false doctrines.

In summation, the purpose of this chapter has been to analyze the components of the *Legend* in their make up and their response to Muslim influences and accounts. This is relative to the overall question of the origin of Baḥīrā’s source in Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*, as the Recensions speak of foreknowledge and the origins of Islam. However, as shown above, the rise and development of Islam was done from a vastly different perspective within Christian traditions. Overall, Ibn Ishāq and his contemporaries appealed to the Christian monk’s anointing of Muḥammad in their Islamic accounts and explained that Baḥīrā had this foreknowledge from an ancient book.¹⁹⁶ The Recensions deny this fact adamantly and relate the rise of Islam to be from a

...heavenly vision on Mt. Sinai, which confirmed the prophecies about the might of the Sons of Ishmael found in the book of Genesis. In A2 the monk’s clairvoyance is taken even further. There are references in this recension to the monk occupying himself with astrology, which allowed him to foretell that the downfall of the Sons of Ishmael is written in the stars.¹⁹⁷

Thus, the monk confirms that Islam is temporary, and also by using astrology, the monk consequently condemns himself. In this way, the *Legends* utilize the apocalyptic visions and unorthodox methods of divination to downplay the role of Islam and the heretical work of the monk. Conveniently, once this knowledge is acquired and has

¹⁹⁵ Krisztina Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 205.

¹⁹⁶ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 200.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

been effectively used, the *Legends* can then deny and rebuke the monk for his work. As stated above, this enables the Recensions to categorize both Islam and the monk in the area of heresy and compartmentalize it as yet another errant ideology. This view then lends itself to all subsequent issues in Christian/Muslim discourses and can be seen in such concepts as the Paraclete with lasting effects until today.

CHAPTER FOUR:

AḤMAD AND THE PARACLETE

In the Muslim account of Baḥīrā and Muḥammad found in the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq and other Muslim biographers, there is the concept of foreknowledge through an original unspecified book or books concerning prophethood. In addition to the account wherein Baḥīrā recognizes Muḥammad as the next prophet, there is also a relevant passage found in Ibn Ishāq's work that speaks of the Paraclete and its attribution to Muḥammad. These polemics within the Muslim account and in the textual traditions of Baḥīrā rest on hidden scriptures that are not explicitly mentioned in Ibn Hishām's redaction of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*. This chapter will investigate Ibn Ishāq's translation of the Paraclete and the account's attribution of the Paraclete being Muḥammad and foretold in the *Qur'ān* by Jesus as composing a large polemic addressed by Christians, found in the Recensions, and by Muslim exegetes to show further evidence that a probable source for the scripture reference on which Baḥīrā uses to recognize Muḥammad as the next prophet is a result of copy of the Gospel of John circa 700 CE in Medina.¹⁹⁸

It should be noted here at the onset of this chapter that research into the polemics of the Baḥīrā accounts within Christianity and Islam is particularly difficult due to the vested or sectarian interests that are an integral facet of scholarly discourse;

¹⁹⁸ According to Barnabas Lindars in *The Gospel of John*, the date of the Gospel of John is said to be around 85-95 CE and from Ephesus (though Syria is an option) but not widely diffused until 115 CE.

whether on the parts of Christian academics or Muslim scholars. This is particularly true in the case of the polemic dealing with the Paraclete and who or what the Paraclete represents within the respective faith traditions of the participants in the discourse. Some Christian scholars such as William Muir suppose that the *Qur'ān* was altered to accord with a pre-existing concept that existed prior to the official collection of the *Qur'ānic* text itself or that writings were formatted with pragmatic approaches to announce the Prophet. On the other hand, there are numerous Muslim accounts, such as that of Kais al-Kalby,¹⁹⁹ of how Biblical passages referred to in the *Qur'ān* were later deleted from the Bible by Christians. Consequently, no scholar or writer on the following matter of the Paraclete is excluded from having some bias or vested interest for his or her particular faith or cultural tradition and all matters should be read with this in mind.

To explicate this polemic and its source, this chapter will show that the Paraclete is key to the interpretation of foreknowledge of Muḥammad's mission announced in the *Qur'ān* and will specifically examine *Qur'ān* 61:6, which reads,

And when Jesus son of Mary said, 'Children of Israel, I am indeed the Messenger of God to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be Aḥmad.' Then, when he brought them the clear signs, they said, 'This is a manifest sorcery.'

and its awareness among Muslim writers and its relationship with the following areas:

- 1) Ibn Ishāq and the Paraclete
- 2) Influence of origins in Medina
- 3) Semantics of Aḥmad and the Paraclete
- 4) Muslim Beliefs on the Paraclete
- 5) Christian Beliefs on the Paraclete
- 6) The Recensions and the Paraclete

¹⁹⁹ Kais al-Kalby is a former lawyer and the founder of the American Muslim Cultural Association.

Ibn Ishāq and the Paraclete

Ibn Ishāq (d. 767/8 CE /153 AH) is the earliest known Muslim writer and biographer to reference Muḥammad as the Paraclete from the Gospel of John. His model of sacred history in its original form is lost, but was redacted and produced by the Egyptian philologist Ibn Hishām (d. 828/33 CE / 218 AH). The passage under investigation concerning the Paraclete through the word *menahhemānā* dates prior to 151 AH / 767-8 CE.²⁰⁰ In Ibn Ishāq's redacted *sīra*, there is a translated excerpt from the Gospel of John that shows what form of the Gospels existed in Ibn Ishāq's time in Medina during the eighth century.²⁰¹ The text Ibn Ishāq quotes, Guillaume asserts, is an alternate translation rather than a misquotation or deliberately altered text. Ibn Ishāq uses the New Testament reference from the Gospel of John through a Median translation for his cited passage from the Gospel of John 15:23.²⁰² What follows is Guillaume's translation from this version of the Gospel of John:

He that hateth me hateth the Lord. And if I had not done in their presence works which none other before me did, they had not had sin: but from now they are puffed up with pride and think that they will overcome me and also the Lord. But the word that concerns the *Nāmūs* must be fulfilled 'They hated me without a cause', i.e. without reason. But when the Comforter has come whom God will send to you from the Lord's presence, he (shall bear) witness of me, and ye also because ye have been with me from the beginning. I have spoken to you about this that ye should not be in doubt.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Stephen Lambden, "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse: The Advents of the Paraclete, Aḥmad and the Comforter (*Mu'azzī*)."
Scripture and revelation; papers presented at the First Irfan Colloquium Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1993): 83.

²⁰¹ Alfred Guillaume, "The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.," 289.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 289.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 291. This quotation can be found on page 104 in Ibn Hishām's, *The Life of Muḥammad*.

After translating this passage of John, Guillaume states that Ibn Ishāq adds to this text in his own words that: “The *Menahhemānā* [a Syriac word for the comforter] (God bless and preserve him!) in Syriac is Muḥammad; in Greek he is the Paraclete.”²⁰⁴ From this, Guillaume claims that Ibn Ishāq is quoting from a Semitic version of the Gospel via the reference to *menahhemānā*, but that this version and citation mean that it also did not come from a Peshitta version.²⁰⁵ Thus, Guillaume concludes and states that Ibn Ishāq had access to a

...Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels which will conclusively prove that the Arabic writer had a Syriac text before him which he, or his informant, skillfully manipulated to provide the reading we have in the *Sīra*.²⁰⁶

In accounting the story of Baḥīrā and Muḥammad, Ibn Ishāq used this version of the Gospel of John found in Medina for further justification via the Comforter in John as one basis in foretelling the coming of the Prophet.²⁰⁷ By including a scriptural manuscript of ancient origin, Ibn Ishāq made the source of Baḥīrā’s ancient book contained in the Baḥīrā/Muḥammad encounter the Gospel in order to employ techniques connecting the three faiths in a continuous line.²⁰⁸

The above assertion can be further elucidated through Ibn Ishāq’s narrative methodology because when Ibn Ishāq gathered and used sources derived from Jewish prophecies, Guillaume asserts that he normally cited his informants, but from the passage related to prophecy on Muḥammad and the source for Baḥīrā’s information, the sources are extremely cryptic. Guillaume maintains that:

²⁰⁴ Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” 291.

²⁰⁵ Standard version of the Syriac Bible

²⁰⁶ Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” 292.

²⁰⁷ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 47.

²⁰⁸ Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” 292. See page 104 in Ibn Hishām’s *The Life of Muḥammad* for the translation.

Generally, when Ibn Ishāq speaks of Jewish prophecies or expectations of a Messiah he gives the names of his informants or some hint as to whence he got his information—but in our passage he uses the vaguest possible term *balaghanī*, ‘it has reached me.’ This we may perhaps infer that his informant was a Christian. Had he been a Muslim Ibn Ishāq would have given his name. Possibly he asked a Christian whether Christ had promised that someone should follow him. He would be told of the promise of the descent of the Holy Spirit (which he would interpret to mean Gabriel coming to Muḥammad)...²⁰⁹

So when looking at the original source through historical sources and textual research, Guillaume states that Ibn Ishāq’s information came from Syrian Christians through his textual analysis and because of Ayla’s proximity to St. Catharine’s Monastery on Mt.

Sinai where two of the lectionaries he used were discovered.²¹⁰ Agreeing with

Guillaume’s findings, Horowitz states that,

The passage about the Paraclete on St. John’s Gospel (XV, 23-27) which was interpreted as [r]eferring to Mohammed is quoted by Ibn Ishāq in the form [of] a literal [sic] Arabic translation, and this...shows a close resemblance to the Palestinian-Christian version.²¹¹

In this way, Guillaume and Horowitz both state that Ibn Ishāq quotes a translation and not an alteration of the Gospel of John.

Influence and Origins

In order to adequately analyze the information above, a further look at the author, his redactor, and the sources available during their time is helpful. As stated in Chapter Two, Rubin relates that Muslims’ contact with “People of the Book” led them to sustain the *Qur’ānic* doctrine that Muḥammad was in the same long line of prophets

²⁰⁹ Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” 296.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 295.

²¹¹ Josef Horowitz, “The Growth of the Mohammad Legend,” in *The Life of Muḥammad*, ed. Uri Rubin (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995) 277-278.

that Jews and Christians believed in through exegetical exercises and, in this way, the biographer Ibn Ishāq sought scriptures to validate this *Qur'ānic* assertion.²¹² However, when Ibn Ishāq cites scripture or refers to manuscripts that Christian monks referred to for this purpose, he does not cite the passage's source. As asserted before, this could be because the ancient book the monk consults is from the *Isra'iliyat* (Jewish and Christian traditions which fell into disrepute during his redactor's time) or that Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* includes the material but not the source because it was unknown but was related to him orally and worked for his purposes.²¹³ For example, we can see this again from another well-known biographer in one of Ibn Kathīr's passages quoting Ibn Ishāq reporting the following:

‘They claim, according to what people said, that Zurayr, Tammām, and Darīs—all believers in the Scriptures—had also seen what Baḥīrā noticed in the Messenger of God (ṢAAS) on that trip with his uncle Abū Ṭālib. They tried to get to him, but Baḥīrā kept them away from him, making reference to God and to the description of him and mention of him they would find in the Holy Scripture, as well as the statement that they would not succeed in getting him. They recognized the reference he was making to them, and since they believed what he said they let the boy alone and went away.’²¹⁴

What is the Holy Scripture referenced here? Guthrie and Bishop state that Ibn Hishām, in his redaction, seems to be drawing from a Syriac Gospel source. Consequently, in order for Ibn Kathīr's *Sīra* to be referencing the comforter in John to be named *al-menaḥḥemānā*, he would be drawing from the same source. Corroborating this point, Guthrie and Bishop cite Professor F.C. Burkitt who states that the Palestinian Syriac version of John is the only Syriac manuscript where the word *al-menaḥḥemānā* occurs,

²¹² Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 21.

²¹³ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 9 and Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” 296. This will be elaborated on later.

²¹⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 176. This account can be found on page 81 of Ibn Hishām's *The Life of Muḥammad*.

and since Ibn Kathīr is citing Ibn Ishāq for this passage, then the logical conclusion asserted here is that this may be what is cited.²¹⁵ Additionally, Burkitt states that the redactor Ibn Hishām might have been in contact with monks from St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai, which is also what Guillaume asserts in that Ibn Ishāq's information came from Syrian Christians in his textual analysis.²¹⁶

Another possible source is recorded in Ibn Kathīr's *Sīra* and could be a possible influence and mentioning of the Bible in Medina and comes as follows:

Al-Bayhaqī related that 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥakam b. Rāfi' b. Sinān said, 'Some of my older male relatives told me that they had in their possession a document they had inherited before Islam and still had when God brought Islam. When the messenger of God (ṢAAS) came to Medina they told him of it and brought it to him. In it is written, 'In the name of God, His words are truth while those of evil-doers shall perish.'²¹⁷

Thus, when Guillaume refers to a version of the Gospel in Medina, this could quite well be an even earlier copy of what he found to be dated to around 700 CE. Elaborating in even more detail, Guthrie and Bishop state from their correspondence with Burkitt the following:

Mr. Burkitt considers that 'Aḥmad' could not, because of etymological difficulty, have come directly from Greek. On the other hand, he draws attention to the fact that some Aramaic-speaking Christians of Palestine in communion with Constantinople were, at the time of Mohammed [sic], using a Syriac version of the Gospels and not Greek. Mr. Burkitt has demonstrated that this version 'probably originated in the sixth century as part of the efforts of Justinian and Heraclius to abolish Judaism from Judea and Samaria.' In this letter Mr. Burkitt points out that this version has a translation of *parakletos* and not a transliteration as have the Syriac Vulgate (Peshitta) and its predecessor the Curetonian. This Syriac word is *manahmanā* [*menahhemānā*].²¹⁸

²¹⁵ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, "The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad," 251.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 295.

²¹⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 239-240.

²¹⁸ L. Bevan Jones, "The Paraclete or Mohammed," *The Muslim World* 10 (1920), 118-119.

Given the above, there are two points to emphasize and introduce before moving to the semantic meanings and influences on the Paraclete and the word *Aḥmad* (from the root *ḥmd* meaning praise). In their correspondence with Burkitt, Guthrie and Bishop report Burkitt's findings that *Aḥmad* is not derived from Greek, but from Syriac. Burkitt is reported to say that the Syriac version did not exist before 566 CE and that this version was the one used by Christians in and around Syria in Muḥammad's time.²¹⁹ Ibn Hishām states that the *al-menahḥemānā* means Muḥammad and that in Greek this is translated as *al-baraq̄litis* or the Paraclete, which is found in other Syriac versions besides the Palestinian one.²²⁰ Thus, when Paraclete is rendered as *Aḥmad*, it is coming from a double translation. Additionally, with these assertions, Guthrie and Bishop put the Gospel of John in Medina a hundred years earlier than Guillaume and state a reason for its arrival (via Burkitt) was because of efforts by Justinian and Heraclius to abolish Judaism. Guthrie and Bishop go further and address the source in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* suggesting it was oral in that,

Certain words have a Greek ring though their path to Arabic may well have been Syriac. Dr. Black thinks that Ibn Hishām was following a text or version of the Syriac in this passage. There are single features in common with the Peshitta, the Palestinian Syriac and with the Arabic of Tatian....this would all favor an oral channel for our Muslim authors.²²¹

Thus, Guthrie and Bishop, using work from Burkitt and Black, cite that when Ibn Hishām cites John 15:26 in his biography, instead of *parākletos* he cites *al-menahḥemānā* which is from Palestinian Syriac. Thus it is possible Ibn Hishām got his authority from

²¹⁹ L. Bevan Jones, "The Paraclete or Mohammed," 119.

²²⁰ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, "The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad," 251-252.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 256.

a Palestinian Syriac version.²²² Also found is the Greek transliterated word *nomos* (law or spirit of law) as the *nāmūs*.²²³ Guthrie and Bishop emphasize this by saying that the use of *nāmūs*, along with *al-baraq̣lītis* and *nomos*, shows a Greek origin, but through a Syriac medium.²²⁴

What is interesting where the sources and origins are concerned is that they not only pinpoint a particular version of John to the authors and even to Muḥammad through the literal use of *al-menaḥḥemānā*, but also that in reference to the Paraclete or of Aḥmad, Ibn Hishām makes no mention of *Qur’ān* 61:6²²⁵ with Jesus’ prophecy of Muḥammad.²²⁶ In writing a sacred history connecting Islam and Muḥammad with the primordial faith and the succession of previous prophets, why was a *Qur’ānic* mention (especially *Sūra* 61) not tied to the manuscripts of the Christians to seal their apologetic argument for their reading of John with *Qur’ānic* verses where it directly addresses the use of Aḥmad? If the verses originate from God, Guthrie and Bishop believe using them would only have more backing, yet they use Christian sources for apologetic effect.²²⁷ Summarizing this point, Guthrie and Bishop state that both Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām were scholars of the *Qur’ān* and in other places of the *Sīra* cite the *Qur’ān* broadly, but

²²² L. Bevan Jones, “The Paraclete or Mohammed,” 119.

²²³ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, “The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad,” 252.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 252.

²²⁵ *Qur’ān* 61:6

And when Jesus son of Mary said, 'Children of Israel, I am indeed the Messenger of God to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be Aḥmad.' Then, when he brought them the clear signs, they said, 'This is a manifest sorcery.'

²²⁶ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, “The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad,” 252-253.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 254.

not here. They imply that neither biographer knew the assumed reading of *periklutos* (περικλυτός)²²⁸ for *paraclete* (παράκλητος)²²⁹, and its possible rendering of *Aḥmad*.²³⁰

With this observation that there is no *Qur'ānic* proof text to follow Ibn Ishāq's or Ibn Hishām's propounded assertion that Muḥammad is the Paraclete, Guthrie and Bishop expound further using *Qur'ān* 61:6, where the pronoun "he" is questioned. They cite Dr. Richard Bell (*The Qur'ān Translated*) as reporting that the pronoun "he" is probably concerning Jesus but "sometimes taken to refer to the promised messenger who is identified with Muḥammad."²³¹ They further state that without the clause about *Aḥmad*, the context could be seen to read that it was Jesus who was being referred to and not Muḥammad.²³² For these reasons, they suggest that the words "good tidings" and "*Aḥmad*" found in *Qur'ān* 61:6 are an interpolation after Muḥammad's death and this is why there is no proof text with the *Sīra* citation.²³³ Going even further, Guthrie and Bishop state that if *Aḥmad* is removed from the verse, the passage might refer to what happened at Pentecost as recorded in the Book of Acts.²³⁴ Additionally, they call into question the translation of the Paraclete reference to *Aḥmad* in terms of practicality. In *Sūra* 47, Muḥammad is referred to by his known name, but in *Sūra* 61 it is translated as his superlative, which was not yet known, asking

²²⁸ Celebrated or praised

²²⁹ One who consoles, one who intercedes on our behalf, a comforter or an advocate

²³⁰ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, "The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad," 252-253.

²³¹ Ibid., 254.

²³² Ibid., 254-255.

²³³ Ibid., 255.

²³⁴ Ibid., 255.

why or how this would be the case.²³⁵ The next section will examine in detail the distinctions of the Paraclete and the many renderings it brings.

Semantics of Aḥmad and the Paraclete

Moving into the semantics of the Paraclete, Muḥammad, and Aḥmad, Lambden describes the word Paraclete as a transliteration into English of the word *Paracletus* from Latin in the Vulgate of Jerome (d. 420 CE) from the Greek word *paraklētos*. This word, Lambden states, is likely to be the word found in the John passages with its meaning giving an active sense in the Greek.²³⁶ In what will be seen later in the section on Christian beliefs of the Paraclete, Lambden describes the Paraclete meaning to have multiple aspects that convey ideas such as teaching, reminding, witnessing, exhorting, strengthening, helping, and comforting/consoling. This multiplicity of meaning means that no one translation into English, or any other language for that matter, can unite the varying roles of the Paraclete found in John.²³⁷

In Ibn Ishāq's rendering, Rubin states that Ibn Ishāq cites the Paraclete as *al-Munḥamannā* (Hebrew *menaḥem*, "comforter"), deriving that *al-menaḥḥemānā* in Syriac is Muḥammad, and that it means *al-Baraqlītis* (Paraclete) in Greek.²³⁸ L. Bevan Jones posits that the translation of *al-menaḥḥemānā* is said to be more closely related to "the comforter" (*paraklyetos*) rather than "the praised."²³⁹ Furthermore, Guthrie and Bishop

²³⁵ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, "The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad," 255.

²³⁶ Stephen Lambden, "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse," 70-71.

²³⁷ Ibid., 70-71.

²³⁸ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 23.

²³⁹ L. Bevan Jones, "The Paraclete or Mohammed," 119.

state that Dr. Matthew Black of the University of Leeds produced findings that the only Syriac version of John that renders *Parakletos* as *menahhemānā* is the Palestinian version, and that the classical Syriac has a very different meaning, stating that:²⁴⁰

‘*Nuhamā* is the regular word for resurrection (according to Payne Smith) and is not found in classical Syriac with the sense of ‘to comfort.’ Consequently the Palestinian Syriac has followed the tradition that *Parakletos* means ‘Comforter.’²⁴¹

With this information, Montgomery Watt states that, assuming Ibn Ishāq is the author of the Paraclete passage of his *Sīra*, “...then by his time the confusion of *paraklētos* and *periklutos* had taken place, for he notes that Muḥammad is linguistically equivalent to the ‘Syrian’ *manḥamannā* and the Greek *baraqlītis*.”²⁴² Watt reinforces this idea by citing from al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on *Sūra* 61:6 with the following:

Though himself giving the orthodox interpretation, [he] is unable to quote any earlier commentator as authority for it. As he is in the habit of giving strings of authorities for very slight matters, it is reasonable to suppose he knew of no reputable exegete who had held what was in his time the standard and obvious view.²⁴³

Going further Watt states that the passage shows that the prediction of the Paraclete in the New Testament was applied to Muḥammad before the middle of the second century²⁴⁴ and Rubin states that commentators like al-Razī (d. 1210 CE/607 AH) “...adduced from the New Testament the verbatim quotations of the Paraclete passages in their commentary on the *Qur’ānic* verse about *Aḥmad*.”²⁴⁵ What this may indicate is

²⁴⁰ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, “The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad,” 253.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 253.

²⁴² Montgomery W. Watt, “His Name is Aḥmad,” *The Muslim World* 43 (1953): 113-114.

²⁴³ Ibid., 113.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 113.

²⁴⁵ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 23.

that the connection of the Paraclete and *Aḥmad* may be a populace stance and originate from an oral account.

Transitioning into the terms surrounding Muḥammad with *Aḥmad*, Sir William Muir²⁴⁶ writes about the birth story of Muḥammad with the following account:

Then he [ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib] took the young child in his arms, and went to the Kaʿba; and as he stood beside the Holy house, he gave thanks to God. The child was called Moḥammad. This name was rare among the Arabs, but not unknown. It is derived from the root *ḥamada*, and signifies ‘The Praised.’ Another form is AḤMED, which having been erroneously employed as a translation of ‘*The Paraclete*’ in some Arabic versions of the New Testament, became a favorite term with Muslims, especially in addressing Jews and Christians; for it was (they said) the title under which the Prophet had been in their books predicted.²⁴⁷

With this excerpt from Muir’s *The Life of Mohammad*, he makes the above assertion that *Aḥmad* (“The Praised”) is being confused with the Paraclete through work with the Arabic roots. Additionally, Lambden’s work states that the word or concept of the Paraclete does not occur in the *Qurʾān*, but *Qurʾān* 61:6 could be used to apply it elaborating that,

The application of the paraclete promises to Muḥammad was largely borne out of the Muslim exegesis of this verse for apologetic purposes. Muslim apologists came to argue that one named Aḥmad (loosely=Muḥammad) was the fulfillment of (sometimes rewritten versions of) the Paraclete promises.²⁴⁸

Thus, when Rubin cites *Qurʾān* 61:6 to say that Jesus is said to have brought good tidings about a prophet to come whose name is “*Aḥmad*”, that it,

²⁴⁶ Sir William Muir (1819-1905 CE) was a Scottish Orientalist born in Glasgow, Scotland. He entered the Bengal Civil Service in 1837, served as secretary to the governor of the North-West Provinces, was a member of the Agra revenue board, and was in charge of the intelligence department. In 1865 he was made foreign secretary to the Indian Government and knighted in 1867. In 1876 he became a member of the Council of India in London, was elected president of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1884, and was elected principal of Edinburgh University in 1885 until his retirement in 1903. In his career, he has written extensively on Islam.

²⁴⁷ Sir William Muir, *The life of Mohammad from original sources* (Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1923), 5.

²⁴⁸ Stephen Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” 78.

...has already been noticed by Islamicists that 'Aḥmad' could be related to the statements in the New Testament about the coming of the Paraclete, the 'Comforter' (John 14:16 and 26; 15:26). It has been noted that 'Aḥmad' reflects the perception of Paraclete in the sense of the Greek *periklutos*, 'celebrated,' hence 'Aḥmad.' Scholars are not convinced, however, whether *Qur'ānic* Aḥmad itself already draws on the New Testament.²⁴⁹

However, Seyyed Nasr is convinced of the link through his assertion and disagrees with both Rubin and Muir when he states the following:

If the *Qur'ānic* description of Jesus is closely analyzed, it will reveal Jesus as possessing three aspects, pertaining to the past, the present and the future, and corresponding respectively to his function of preserving the Torah, celebrating and perpetuating the Eucharist and announcing the coming of the Prophet of Islam. The Muslims interpret the *perikletos* (meaning the Illustrious) as *parakletos* (the Praised), which corresponds to one of the names of the Prophet of Islam, Aḥmad (from the root *ḥmd* meaning praise).²⁵⁰

By perpetuating the Eucharist, Nasr appears to imply that the Last Supper event, without Jesus announcing the coming of Muḥammad, would be inconceivable to Muslims for Jesus to omit.²⁵¹ Additionally, what can be noticed within this quotation is an alternate use of the Greek and Arabic for this point, with the odd indication of choosing a particular interpretation to support the idea that it would be inconceivable for Jesus to not mention Muḥammad. Quoting Lambden, he states that,

While the proper name Muḥammad means 'often praised' the name Aḥmad means 'more worthy of praise' or 'most praiseworthy.' Though there is no exact, clear, or obvious canonical Gospel reference to a messiah with this name (or equivalent), most *Qur'ān* commentators equate the 'one with praiseworthy name' the Aḥmad mentioned in *Qur'ān* 61:6, with Prophet Muḥammad.²⁵²

With this information, Lambden succinctly details an apparent influence of Nasr's correlation of Aḥmad with the Paraclete.

²⁴⁹ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 22.

²⁵⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981) 210.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁵² Stephen Lambden, "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse," 76-77.

Further analyzing this language, a key point to focus on in the English translation is the translations of “one with praiseworthy name,” “more worthy of praise,” and “bringer of good tidings.” For instance, in Ibn Kathīr’s *Sīra*, there is the following narration from al-Bayhaqī:

He said, ‘In the *Qur’ān*, God named him [Muḥammad] *rasūl*, ‘messenger’, *nabī*, ‘prophet’, *ummī*, ‘unlettered’, *shāhid*, ‘witness-giver’, *mubashir*, ‘bringer of good tidings’, *nadhīr*, ‘admonisher’...” and other names.²⁵³

The name “bringer of good tidings” is an interesting one. It appears more as an adjective than a noun in how it is used, especially with the interpretations of the meanings of *Aḥmad* outlined above.²⁵⁴ This can be bolstered by research from Lane cited in Watt’s article “His Name is Aḥmad” when Lane discusses an Arab proverb that includes the word *aḥmad* as an adjective with the following meanings: more attributive of praise (to a thing); gaining more praise for oneself; and more deserving of being praised.²⁵⁵ Lane then translates the passage with *Aḥmad* in the context of *Qur’ān* 61:6 to mean: “announcing the good tidings of a messenger who will come after me whose name is more worthy of praise.”²⁵⁶

As the semantic disagreements are shown with those in favor and those opposed to the translation of *menaḥḥemānā*, *Aḥmad*, and Muḥammad with the Paraclete or the “one to come” using similar arguments with varying conclusions, Watt concludes that,

...the identification of Muḥammad with the Paraclete may be historically independent of any use of the name Aḥmad. The argument may run: Jesus foretold the coming of the Paraclete, and Paraclete and Muḥammad are the

²⁵³ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 130.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Montgomery W. Watt, “His Name is Aḥmad,” 113.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

same in meaning. After all, Muḥammad is just as good a translation of *periklutos* as Aḥmad.²⁵⁷

Even so, Watt still acknowledges that there is a confusion between *paraklētos* and *periklutos*.²⁵⁸ Guthrie and Bishop state with more fortitude that the Muslim interpretation is not possible on philological grounds and that the interchange of *Periklutos* for *Parakletos* is a misreading.²⁵⁹ This perspective does not occur in the Islamic view as stated by Nasr and what follows will be an outline of the Islamic view of the Paraclete.²⁶⁰

Muslim Beliefs on the Paraclete

Muslim beliefs concerning the Paraclete can be seen in the foundational account by Ibn Ishāq. By having a Christian monk at the heart of Islam recognizing Muḥammad, Abel states that “...Islam provided a remedy for the absence of a textual promise concerning its founder, and this point, as is known, formed one of the essential arguments of the Christian polemic.”²⁶¹ So, to announce Muḥammad’s prophethood, Muslims looked to the scriptures just as followers of Jesus did for evidence in Biblical passages of Muḥammad’s confirmation as a prophet in the line of succession of prophets.²⁶² What follows is Ibn Ishāq’s account:

²⁵⁷ Montgomery W. Watt, “His Name is Aḥmad,” 114.

²⁵⁸ Stephen Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” 113, footnote 67.

²⁵⁹ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, “The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad,” 253.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ A. Abel, “Baḥīrā.” In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 7. ed. C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, and Pellat (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

²⁶² Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 21.

Among the things which have reached me about what Jesus the Son of Mary stated in the Gospel, which he received from God for the followers of the Gospel, in applying a term to describe the apostle of God, is the following. It is extracted from what John the Apostle set down for them when he wrote the Gospel for them from the Testament of Jesus Son of Mary: 'He that hateth me hath hated the Lord. And if I had not done in their presence works which none other before me did, they had not had sin: but from now they are puffed up with pride and think that they will overcome me and also the Lord. But the word that is in the law must be fulfilled, 'They hated me without cause' (i.e. without reason). But when the Comforter has come whom God will send to you from the Lord's presence, and the spirit of truth which will have gone forth from the Lord's presence he (shall bear) witness of me and ye also, because ye have been with me from the beginning. I have spoken unto you about this that ye should not be in doubt.' The *Munaḥḥemana* (God bless and preserve him!) in Syriac is Muḥammad; in Greek he is the Paraclete.²⁶³

Thus, reporting on material that Jesus spoke of and which John recorded, Ibn Hishām (via Ibn Ishāq) introduces John 15:23 (and could even see it in John 16) and the Paraclete being Muḥammad. Instead of Jesus speaking of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of truth, the author assumes him to be speaking of the Apostle of God (Muḥammad) through the translated word *Munaḥḥemana* which is supposedly a Syriac Bible translation referring to the Greek word Paraclete.²⁶⁴

This account and its assertion are what Uri Rubin says constituted the forming of Muḥammad along Biblical motifs through the theme of annunciation. As a prophet is called by God, Rubin states that Muḥammad would be predestined as part of the motif with his rise to be annunciated by previous prophets to herald his emergence.²⁶⁵ With Christian criticisms of no apparent textual promise, some Muslims sought to combat Christian criticisms by searching for predictions and confirmations of Muḥammad in the Bible; especially since they have such confirmations in the *Qur'ān*.

²⁶³ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 104.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 104.

²⁶⁵ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 21.

According to Watt, they noticed John chapters fourteen through sixteen with the mention of the Paraclete. In these chapters they found support for Muḥammad by identifying the Prophet with the Paraclete by seeing a similarity in meaning between the meanings *paraklētos* with *periklutos*, which Watt states is confusion in meanings.²⁶⁶ It is within this framework that Muslims sought an annunciation and now view Muḥammad as fulfillment of the Paraclete, in opposition to the event at Pentecost recorded in the Book of Acts by Christians.

Looking at the source of the Paraclete passages in John, we see Muslim commentators base their commentaries on *Qur'ān* 61:6 as seeing Jesus announcing a messenger who will come after him. This can be found in the Recension of Ubayy, where the messenger is *Aḥmad* and is the “seal of the prophets.” *Qur'ān* 61:6 reads as follows:

And when Jesus son of Mary said, ‘Children of Israel, I am indeed the Messenger of God to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be Aḥmad.’ Then, when he brought them the clear signs, they said, ‘This is a manifest sorcery.’

So, when looking at the Gospel of John in 14:16, 14:26 and 16:7,²⁶⁷ it announces the sending of the Paraclete and Anawati states that the early versions of John transcribe the term *parakletos* without translating it and this becomes *fārakhlīt* in Arabic.²⁶⁸

Citing this well-known verse, Badawi states that “...an interesting aspect of this *ayah* is that in the original revelation uttered by Prophet Jesus, even the name of the

²⁶⁶ Montgomery Watt, “His Name is Aḥmad,” 114-115.

²⁶⁷ George Sale, in Preliminary Discourse, suggests that the Gospel text on which these assertions are based has the rendering of famed, illustrious, and rendered in Arabic as Aḥmad. See G.C. Anawati, “‘Īsā.” In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 7. ed. C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, and Pellat (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

²⁶⁸ G.C. Anawati, “‘Īsā.” In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 7. ed. C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, and Pellat (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

long-awaited Messenger was given: *Aḥmed*, which is another name of Prophet Muḥammad.”²⁶⁹ This belief that *Aḥmad* and the Paraclete have identical meanings is not held by many scholars because of the varying meanings and interpretations that the Paraclete has. Even in Christian transcriptions, *parakletos* is transliterated and imported as is. However, on other grounds, outside of semantic meanings, we have narrations from such Muslim scholars as Ibn Kathīr that state the following:

Almighty God has related of the last of the prophets of the Israelites, Jesus, son of Mary, that he stood up among his people and addressed them as follows, “I am the Messenger of God to you, verifying what is in the Torah that came before me and announcing the coming of a messenger who will come to you after me and whose name is Aḥmad’ (*sūrat al-Ṣaff*, LXI, v. 6). And in the Gospel there are the tidings of *al-Fārqaḷīt*, ‘the Paraclete’, by whom Muḥammad (ṢAAS) is meant.”²⁷⁰

Here the Paraclete (in conjunction with *Aḥmad*) is mentioned, but instead of a chain of reasoning as seen in Ibn Ishāq’s account that makes no mention of *Qur’ān* 61:6, we have the connection of the Paraclete and *Aḥmad* being confirmed through Jesus. What is doubly interesting in this verse and narration is that Jesus is talking to the Jews in this passage yet it is meant for the Arabs whom he is not talking to directly.

With *Qur’ān* 61:6 used as an established parameter, it will be helpful to view Muslim ideas on the Greek renderings of the Paraclete in light of the overall summation seen above. In the work of Kais al-Kalby, he uses semantic reasoning to link Muḥammad and the Paraclete. Al-Kalby’s conclusions are considered valid by many Muslim scholars, however, his methods to reach the standard conclusion seem rather unconvincing in his particular reasoning to the conclusion that the Paraclete, translated as “comforter,” is also directly translatable as prophet. From this position,

²⁶⁹ Jamal A Badawi, *Muḥammad in the Bible*. (Cairo, Egypt: Al-Falah Foundation, 2005) 6.

²⁷⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 238-239.

al-Kalby reasons that Jesus is then referring to Muḥammad who will come later. Citing John 14:26, he states that the Holy Spirit/Holy Ghost is a reference only to angels or scripture, and that it was never used to describe one particular thing or person.²⁷¹ Kalby states,

Jesus says that the father 'God' will send this prophet (Holy Ghost). Jesus also says that this prophet will teach you things and mention my name. Prophet Muḥammad and his companions had no previous knowledge of the Bible scriptures, yet Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) related the story of Jesus in the *Qur'ān*. Jesus also says that Prophet Muḥammad will tell you everything I have said to you.²⁷²

However, the *sīra* literature seems to contradict this fact, for instance through accounts of Waraqah and Baḥīrā and of Khadījah.²⁷³ Going further, al-Kalby states that the comforter in John 16:9 is a real person and not the Holy Spirit who is seen as an untouchable or unspeakable entity.²⁷⁴ Yet in this same line of thought he states

Jesus says those from any nation who do not accept the prophecies of Jesus as being the Word of God, that Jesus is the son of Mary, the perfect and pure, and those who do not believe that Jesus is a prophet of God are making a mistake. God has told us through the *Qur'ān*, that Jesus is a prophet of God.²⁷⁵

The question to then ask is how will, in a physical state, Muḥammad remain with mankind forever as the Paraclete is supposed to if it is concrete and not in some way abstract as the concept of the Word of God appears to be? Al-Kalby clears up much confusion in his semantic reasoning when he cites *The Archeology of World Religions* by Jack Finegan and *Qur'ān* 61:6, stating that,

²⁷¹ Kais al-Kalby, *Prophet Muḥammad The Last Messenger in the Bible* (New York, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'ān, 2005) 402.

²⁷² Ibid., 402.

²⁷³ See Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 296.

²⁷⁴ Kais al-Kalby, *Prophet Muḥammad The Last Messenger in the Bible*, 407.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 407.

The possible basis for this is John 16:7 where in Greek the word for Comforter (*napaknros*) is very similar to the word for ‘renowned’ (*neprkavros*), the latter being the meaning of the names Aḥmed and Muḥammad.²⁷⁶

This translation with the transliterated Greek words are unlike the scholarship cited above, and it is intriguing that Jack Finegan does not use the word Paraclete anywhere in this citation.

Unlike al-Kalby, Koorshid Khanum Qassim Ali Jairazbhoy does use the conventions cited above upon analyzing the verses of John 14:15-16, John 15: 25-26, John 16:7-8, and John 16: 12-13 in terms of prophecies of Muḥammad in the New Testament. Jairazbhoy displays the Greek *Perikalutas* (stated as comforter) and *Parakletos* (stated as illustrious), and then expounds that *Perikalutas* was in no way spoken by Jesus, but that it was *Parakletos*, which he uttered, which corresponds with the Arabic word for *Aḥmad*.²⁷⁷ Jairazbhoy then refutes Sir William Muir’s view on these two translations when Muir says *Aḥmad* was wrongly used as a translation of *Perikalutas* in some Arabic versions of the New Testament, and that *Parakletos* was a forgery for *Perikalutas* done by an ignorant or conspiring monk during Muḥammad’s time.²⁷⁸ In defense of the position Jairazbhoy holds he states that,

It is a well-known fact that a person was expected by a great number of Christians in accordance with the prophecy from a very early period, which shows that the construction put on the passage in the Acts by the Roman Church and by Protestants was not general,²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Kais al-Kalby, *Prophet Muḥammad The Last Messenger in the Bible*, 559. Referenced from *The Archeology of World Religions*, ed. Jack Finegan (New Jersey, 1952), 494-495.

²⁷⁷ Koorshid Khanum Qassim Ali Jairazbhoy, “The Holy Prophet Muḥammad Foretold in Ancient Scriptures.” *The Woking Muslim Mission & Literary Trust* 2 (2008): 7-8. Ali Jairazbhoy is a Muslim scholar from India and his work is published by the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at-e-Islam Lahore.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 7-8.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

and cites the heretic Montanus as an example.²⁸⁰ As to be conveyed in the Christian section, the Church Fathers and Christendom in general were not looking for another before the *Parousia*, however, offshoots such as with Montanus stand as true.

Additionally, Lambden asserts that modern Islamic writers believe the Gospel reading of *paraklētos* is corrupt because it does not directly correlate with the name *Aḥmad* in the *Qur'ān*. The Gospel of John and the promise of “one to come” would be more accurate if it included “the true Johannine promised one as a ‘celebrated’ (=periklutos= *Aḥmad*) prophet figure—not merely the Paraclete as the Holy Spirit.”²⁸¹

Looking further at Muir for elaboration on Jairazbhoy’s viewpoint, we can see the issue raised that puts their views in conflict and will show further the Muslim view of the Paraclete. For example, Muir discusses the expectation Jairazbhoy states among Jews and Christians, but with the distinction that the confidence that Muḥammad showed when appealing to Jews and Christians concerning the expectation of a promised prophet must “...‘even as they recognized their own sons’ is very singular, and must surely have been countenanced by converts from both religions.” Muir goes on to say that two incompatible expectations were skillfully combined to form a proof of Muḥammad’s mission with the combining of the Jewish messianic anticipation and the distinct anticipation by Christians of the second coming of Christ. In this way, the proof of Muḥammad’s mission was “...fused into a common argument for a common prophet expected by both Jews and Christians and foretold in all the Scriptures.”²⁸²

This view reinforces the view held by Rubin, but this construction with perceived

²⁸⁰ Khoorshid Khanum Qassim Ali Jairazbhoy, “The Holy Prophet Muḥammad Foretold in Ancient Scriptures,” 7-8.

²⁸¹ Stephen Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” 79.

²⁸² Sir William Muir, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources*, 157.

engineering is not what Muslim scholars hold as true.

In this way, from the foundation in *Qur'ān* 61:6 and in the account in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, it can be seen that *Aḥmad* and the Paraclete are integrally linked to the expectations of the "one to come." Moving on further in annunciation, we can see examples in the *Ḥadīth* of Bukhārī, Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn Sa'd that outline from Muḥammad himself that he is *Aḥmad*, which in the reasoning seen above, would mean under the Muslim perspective that he would then also be the Paraclete. In Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī there are two similar narrations worth viewing. The first is narrated by Jubair bin Mutim with the following:

Allāh's Apostle said, "I have five names: I am Muḥammad and Aḥmad; I am Al-Mahi through whom Allāh will eliminate infidelity; I am Al-Hashir who will be the first to be resurrected, the people being resurrected there after; and I am also Al-Aqib (i.e. There will be no prophet after me).²⁸³

The second from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is also narrated by Jubair bin Mutim:

I heard Allāh's Apostle saying, 'I have several names: I am Muḥammad and I am Aḥmad, and I am Al-Mahi with whom Allāh obliterates Kufr (disbelief), and I am Al-Hashir (gatherer) at whose feet (i.e. behind whom) the people will be gathered (on the Day of Resurrection), and I am Al-Aqib (i.e. who succeeds the other prophets in bringing about good).²⁸⁴

The most salient feature of these narrations is that it is reported from the Prophet's own mouth that he is *Aḥmad*. And, as said before, this means that under the Islamic perspective that translates the Paraclete as illustrious or praised, then Muḥammad would then be stating he is the Paraclete. Another facet to note is the description Muḥammad gives of himself that resembles some aspects of the Christian roles of the Paraclete in convicting and consoling. The narration states he obliterates disbelief

²⁸³ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī Volume 4, Book 56, Number 732.

²⁸⁴ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī Volume 6, Book 60, Number 419.

(convicting) and will be the gatherer whom the people will stand behind at the resurrection and judgment (consoler). Though similarly used, however, the nature of conviction remains distinct because of the divinity of Christ asserted in Christianity.

Furthermore, examining a narration from Ibn Sa'd, we have this account concerning an appellation of the Prophet:

He (Ibn Sa'd) said: Abū 'Āmir al-'Aqadī, whose name was 'Abd al-Malik Ibn 'Amr, informed us: Zuhayr Ibn Muḥammad informed us on the authority of 'Abd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Uqayl, he on the authority of Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī i.e. Ibn al-Ḥanafīyyah that he heard 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalīb saying: The Apostle of Allāh, may Allāh bless him, said: I have been named Aḥmad.²⁸⁵

In this narration we see not that Muḥammad's name is *Aḥmad*, but what appears to be that Muḥammad was in some way given the name *Aḥmad*, meaning something prophetic or adjective, thereby elevating this assertion to divine appellation.

Additionally, we can see more elaboration on Muḥammad's facets in Ibn Kathīr's *Sīra* with the following transmission regarding the glad tidings Jesus brought and their relationship to Muḥammad by the Prophet himself:

Imām Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Yasār stated that Thawr b. Yazīd related to him from Khālīd b. Ma'dān, from the Companions of the Messenger of God (ṢAAS), that they, the Companions, asked, 'O Messenger of God, tell us about yourself.' He replied, 'The prayer of my father Abraham, the glad tidings of Jesus, and (the fact that) my mother saw, when she was pregnant, that a light came from inside her that illuminated Buṣrā in Syria'.

The chain of authorities for this tradition is also excellent.

It contains good news for the people of our community in the lands of Buṣrā. It is the first place in Syria to receive the light of prophethood; and to God all praise and favor are due. That is why it was the first city of Syria to be conquered. It was taken peacefully during the caliphate of Abū Bakr, God be pleased with him. The Messenger of God (ṢAAS) traveled there twice in the

²⁸⁵ Ibn Sa'd. *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*. English trans. by S. Moinul Haq, assisted by H.K. Ghazanfar, vol. I (Karachi, Pakistan: Pakistan Historical Society, 1967) 114.

company of his uncle Abū Ṭālib when he was a boy of 12. It was there the story of Baḥīrā the monk was set, as we have related above.²⁸⁶

In this transmission by Khālīd b. Maʿdān, there are references to *Qurʾān* 61:6 with “glad tidings,” “good news of one to come,” and reference to Baḥīrā. There is no direct listing of Aḥmad as with al-Bukhārī, but there is, however, ultimately the tie to the proclamation made by the Christian monk Baḥīrā in Buṣrā of Muḥammad’s prophethood confirmed in scripture, which *Qurʾān* 61:6 attests. Thus, with Baḥīrā even looking for another prophet, this story seeks to confirm the expectation and annunciation of another and frames the Islamic view within the parameters of one continuous religion from Abraham.

As a continuous succession, there is this narration in al-Bukhārī’s *Ḥadīth* that appears to reference Waraqaḥ and the writing of the Gospels stating that:

Jawami'-al-Kalim means that Allāh expresses in one or two statements or thereabouts the numerous matters that used to be written in the books revealed before (the coming of) the Prophet.²⁸⁷

In line with this view that there are passages now removed from the Bible, there is the work *Muḥammad in the Bible* by Jamal Badawi whose purpose is to find the profile of “that prophet (Comforter or Paraclete in most translations) to come” within the scriptures with *Qurʾān* verses 61:6, 2:89, 2:146-147, 3:81 as his starting points.²⁸⁸ Badawi believes that the profile of Muḥammad was clear to many Jews and Christians around the Prophet and his contemporaries to the point that they accepted Muḥammad as the fulfillment of prophecies in the Bible.²⁸⁹ However, Badawi does state that there is no

²⁸⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 232.

²⁸⁷ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī Vol. 9, Book 87, Number 111

²⁸⁸ Jamal A Badawi, *Muḥammad in the Bible*, 6.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 6-7.

reason to assume all Biblical prophecies are reserved for Muḥammad and that Jesus did fulfill some of them. One example from Badawi is found in Deuteronomy 18:18 which does refer to Muḥammad.²⁹⁰ Jairazbhoy goes further and states that Muḥammad has been foretold in *all* sacred books of religion in the world with one Old Testament example from Isaiah 21:7, stating the two riders are Jesus upon the ass and Muḥammad upon the camel.²⁹¹

Working from the *Qur'ān*, Badawi, in line with Jairazbhoy, cites *Qur'ān* 3:67-88 to show the connectedness of the revealed texts of the Bible and the *Qur'ān* through the identity of Abraham with,

67 No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim and one pure of faith; certainly he was never of the idolaters. 68 Surely the people standing closest to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who believe; and God is the Protector of the believers

followed by Isaiah 11: 1-2,

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD

Badawi believes, with the other evidence he has given, that these verses clinch the argument in showing confirmation of Muḥammad in the Bible, thus linking him with

²⁹⁰ Jamal A Badawi, *Muḥammad in the Bible*, 7.

Deuteronomy 18:17-18 (NASB)

17 The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

All verses of the Bible will be from the *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²⁹¹ Khoorshid Khanum Qassim Ali Jairazbhoy, "The Holy Prophet Muḥammad Foretold in Ancient Scriptures," 6.

the Paraclete.²⁹² Accordingly, with the above passages, the Islamic view Badawi propounds shows that the verses refer not to Jesus but to someone like Moses, who is a brother to the Israelites and not of the Israelites themselves, indicating that the closest in brothers would be of the line of Ishmael since the Jews were of the line of Isaac.²⁹³ In closing this thought from Badawi, there is commentary in his work on *Qur'ān* 3:81 which states,

...Allāh took covenant of the Prophets to believe and render help 'personally through their followers' to the messenger who will come confirming what was revealed to them...²⁹⁴

thereby summing up his viewpoint and that of what Annemarie Schimmel states is the educated or scholarly Muslim position on the Paraclete.²⁹⁵

In summary, the above discussion on Muslim views of the Paraclete conveys that the *Qur'ān* imparts sayings and deeds of earlier prophets, which have been either lost or corrupted, "...such as Christ speaking in the cradle or his explicit declaration that a prophet would come after him, whose name would be *Aḥmad*."²⁹⁶ Regarding *Aḥmad*, Lambden, in accordance with Watt, states that even if the reference to *Aḥmad* is in the form of an adjective, it could still have merit in the Muslim interpretation by

²⁹² Jamal A Badawi, *Muḥammad in the Bible*, 23.

²⁹³ Ibid., 25.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 6, footnote 7.

Qur'ān 3:81

And when God took compact with the Prophets: 'That I have given you of Book and Wisdom; then there shall come to you a Messenger confirming what is with you -- you shall believe in him and you shall help him; do you agree?' He said. 'And do you take My load on you on that condition?' They said, 'We do agree.' God said, 'Bear witness so, and I shall be with you among the witnesses.'

²⁹⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam: An Introduction*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

²⁹⁶ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 12.

then reading the verse as “to be announcing good tidings of a messenger who is more worthy of praise.”²⁹⁷

In this overview of Muslim thought on the Paraclete, there is a degree of uniformity in the assertion of Muḥammad as the Paraclete and his role in that assertion. What can be seen in this next section regarding Christian views of the Paraclete tends to be the opposite. There is uniform belief that the Paraclete is the Holy Spirit, but in what capacity, there is a variety of opinion.

Christian Beliefs on the Paraclete

Christian beliefs about the Paraclete can be seen in light of the Gospel that John chooses to align himself with, which is *kērygma*, meaning to preach or proclaim.²⁹⁸ In this sense, the writer of the Gospel of John did so with the intent of spreading the “good news” of Christ. In this Gospel, “John accepts the Fatherhood of God, the idea of God as sole creator, and the messiahship of Jesus.”²⁹⁹ The writer is emphatic about the humanity of Jesus, on faith in Jesus, and on the idea of love as obedience to God. The crucifixion and resurrection constituted the act of redemption and in this proclamation is the urgency to accept the message of Jesus before the Kingdom comes.³⁰⁰ As this Gospel was written to preach ultimately the messiahship of Jesus, its adoption by Muslim biographers and exegetes into another tradition created a polemic and even

²⁹⁷ Stephen Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” 113, footnote 45.

²⁹⁸ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 35.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

converts from within to the religion of Islam added to this polemic with certain imports.³⁰¹

According to Stephen Lambden, the concept of the Paraclete in the early Christian centuries up through the early Church Fathers in the Patristic era and beyond have held that the Paraclete spoken of by Jesus in the Gospel of John was and is a divine personification of the Holy Spirit. Lambden states that this belief was standard among the Church Fathers.³⁰² Thus, “the expected Paraclete was, for most Christians, the post-Easter gift of the Holy Spirit,” and within orthodox Christendom the Paraclete is within the substance of the Trinity.³⁰³ Pentecost in chapter two of the Book of Acts is then seen as the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise of “the one to come.”³⁰⁴ Basing his reasoning here only on semantic usage, G.W.H. Lampe, in his article “Paraclete,” states that the Spirit is the personal personality of the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Truth because of its usages in the Gospel with masculine pronouns and adjectives. The Paraclete is thus the revealer of Christ and takes the place of Jesus’ physical presence as the incarnation and the Word of God. As such, the Paraclete is “another paraclete” given to the disciples after the ascension.³⁰⁵ Using John 16:7 as a basis, Barnabas Lindars states that from this writing, Jesus and the Spirit cannot be present to the disciples at the same time, indicating a personal relationship between Jesus and the Paraclete whereby one sends the other to continue the work of the former.³⁰⁶ According to Lambden through the

³⁰¹ Montgomery Watt, “His Name is Aḥmad,” 115.

³⁰² Stephen Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” 73.

³⁰³ Ibid., 74.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 74.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 74.

³⁰⁶ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 500.

John 16:7 (NASB)

work of Casurella in *The Johannine Paraclete in the Church Fathers*, this relationship includes the person and nature of the Spirit, though this was still being questioned among Christian writers. However, the notion of the Spirit and the Paraclete being the same was not.³⁰⁷

The Spirit

As to the person and nature of the Spirit, Pauline teaching states that,

Christ is the Lord of the spirit, and each baptized and converted person also possesses the Spirit. Being in Christ and being in the Spirit are two almost identical descriptions of Christian existence and of the Christian experience of salvation.³⁰⁸

Additionally, concerning John 14:26, Lindars states that the Holy Spirit whom God will send is a representative for us in times of persecution and will teach the persecuted what to say during those times.³⁰⁹ In this respect, the Spirit of Truth is said to be another title of the Paraclete and that, “Jesus is promising the assistance of the Spirit, to inspire disciples to defend the faith in time of persecution.”³¹⁰ With this statement, then, there is the notion that the one being sent after Jesus is to be immediate since it applies to the living disciples whom Jesus is departing. This is seen in John 16:7,

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

³⁰⁷ Stephen Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” 75.

³⁰⁸ Hans Windisch, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968) 27.

³⁰⁹ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 484.

John 14:26 (NASB)

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

³¹⁰ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 496.

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you

and Lindars asserts that Jesus and the Spirit cannot be present to the disciples at the same time.³¹¹ Yet, if Jesus must be absent for the Paraclete to come, and if his disciple audience is the main focus of his discourse, then the Paraclete, under Christian views, must be imparted to the present generation of disciples (and appear successive and continual). Varying slightly from Lindars upon analysis of John 16: 16-24, Hartdegen states that,

The disciples' puzzlement over the 'short time' mentioned by Jesus, between his departure from their sight and his reappearance to them, introduces an elaboration on the believer's tension with the world (16:16-24). Does the 'short time' refer to the few days between the crucifixion and the postresurrection [sic] appearances? Or does it refer to the time between the ascension and the second coming? Likely, it implies both, according to the realized eschatology of the fourth Gospel.³¹²

With the departure and arrival being both immediate and eschatological, we can then see Lindars' connection of the Spirit to the church—that in the absence of Jesus, the presence of the Spirit dwells in the Church—is a promise to the disciples of the union with Christ.³¹³ This is both now and in the time to come. Thus, overall, the Gospel of John demonstrates the main purpose of the Spirit is to continue the works Jesus did while incarnate and that the death of Jesus must be accepted by the disciples, “...as an essential element of their response of faith, if they are to be capable of receiving the Spirit.”³¹⁴

³¹¹ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 500.

³¹² Stephen Hartdegen, *Themes from the Gospel of John: November 17-24*. (Washington, D.C: National Bible Week, 1985) 36.

³¹³ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 500.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 500.

Is the Paraclete for the Church / Disciples or the World?

In the following quote from Hans Windisch, we have the claim that,

John holds the view of a power of God working independently in and with the disciples, almost a divine person—to be compared with Jesus and replacing him—who appears on earth and has, above all, a particular ‘mission’ over against the world...The disciples are to know exactly who the Spirit is, what his function is in the history of salvation, and what his relationship is to Jesus (Jesus on earth and Jesus in heaven). For John, too, then the chief function of the Spirit is teaching and witnessing, the vindication of Jesus, and the chastening of the world which remained unbelieving and sinful and fallen under judgment.³¹⁵

With this view, we find a point upon which Christians in the Recensions take. If the Spirit works within the Church and the disciples know the Spirit, it cannot then be someone else later in history in the form of Muḥammad if the Paraclete is already known. In this view, Carson asserts that the Paraclete comes for the disciples since Jesus states that it is for their good that he departs and that the Paraclete will then guide the perplexed and lost disciples in all truth by revealing the full significance of God’s revelation through Jesus.³¹⁶ Additionally, Carson asks,

...if the Paraclete is in some sense the replacement of Jesus, would it not be surprising if he were to exercise no direct ministry towards the world, in light of the fact that Jesus did exercise such a ministry?³¹⁷

suggesting that the Paraclete functions through the Church and for the benefit of the disciples, but can also work directly.³¹⁸ Viewing the Paraclete passage in John 15:26,³¹⁹

³¹⁵ Hans Windisch, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968) 34.

³¹⁶ D.A Carson, “The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 563-564.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 563.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 563.

Lindars says that the world's hatred of Jesus, and consequently of the Father because He sent Jesus, leads to the disciples being charged with carrying the Gospel to everyone and needing help with the "Counsellor."³²⁰ So in John 16:6, "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart," Carson claims that these things are

...the warnings that the world will persecute the disciples, as presented in 16:1-4. In other words, because grief swamps the disciples who must face the world alone, Jesus tells them that the Paraclete will come and convince them of the world's error, and thus sustain them. It is in this sense that Jesus says, 'It is for your good that I am going away' (16:7).³²¹

Carson then asserts that this interpretation is not convincing and that instead of referring to the threat of suffering, Carson says it is more about assurance of not being abandoned. The disciples must bear witness to the world, but that is also the role of the Paraclete, so instead of John 16:6 being just an advisement of ill treatment to come, it is encouragement that when Jesus departs, one will come to them individually in their lifetime to help them and work through them.³²²

In agreement with Carson and Lindars above, George Johnston states that John allocates the Spirit within the Church and states that the apostles and those after them become divine instruments with Christ-like power.³²³ Johnston elaborates when he states that John proclaims that the Church is called to continue Jesus' work, and that, "Without the spirit-sayings all this would be evacuated of meaning."³²⁴ Of the same

³¹⁹ John 15:26 (NASB)

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me

³²⁰ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 495-496.

³²¹ D.A Carson, "The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11," 551-552.

³²² Ibid., 552.

³²³ George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1970) 38.

³²⁴ Ibid., 79.

belief as Johnston, Carson puts forward that when the Paraclete comes to the disciples, he will replace Jesus and operate on Earth in place of Jesus since Jesus has now ascended. The Paraclete will thus be with them and in them and will assist them, and Carson states that this is a “...a point forcefully made in an earlier Paraclete passage (14:16-19).”³²⁵ So, as before the ascension, the main worker was Jesus, now among them it will be the Paraclete.

Summarizing quite clearly the core of the intended recipients and time frame of the Paraclete, Maurice Wiles espouses a view from Theodore of Mopsuestia³²⁶ saying that,

When Jesus declares that he must go away before the Paraclete can come, he is implying that the Spirit must first complete the work of leading him to glory and can then be given to the disciples in prospect of the same goal. The climactic moment in this process of raising mortal human nature to the realm of immortality was the resurrection. It was the Spirit who effected the resurrection of the ‘Christus in carne’, and it is the Spirit who will effect the same for us.³²⁷

This is quite a distinction from the role of Muḥammad in Islam. There is no divinity ascribed to Jesus or by proxy to the Paraclete in Islam. So, when Muḥammad came as a mercy to the unbelievers in Arabia, he in no way came with divinity, yet the writer of John ascribes divine nature to the Paraclete and lays out that the Paraclete is for the believers to then go out as an instrument in the world. Thus, a traditional Christian view (as from the Church Fathers) is that the Paraclete is shown to be for the believers. What follows will be an outline of the many aspects the Paraclete is seen to take. Many

³²⁵ D.A Carson, “The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11,” 564.

³²⁶ He was bishop of Mopsuestia from 392 to 428 AD and is also known as Theodore of Antioch. He is a representative of the middle School of Antioch of hermeneutics.

³²⁷ Maurice Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1960) 149.

of these characteristics are found in the refutations of the Islamic beliefs within the Recensions.

Christian Qualities of the Paraclete

In the discussion of the Paraclete among Christian beliefs, it was noted that among the Church Fathers and subsequent generations, the idea of the Spirit and the Paraclete being the same was not questioned, but rather the nature and function of the Spirit was up for debate.³²⁸ Looking again at the Greek for Paraclete, the Egyptian Church Father Origen (185-254 CE) understood *paraklētos* in John to mean consoler or comforter. In *First Principles*, Origen is reported as saying,

‘the Paraclete, who is also called the Holy Spirit, is so called from his work of consolation (*paraklesis* being termed in Latin *consolatio*); for anyone who has been deemed worthy to partake of the Holy Spirit....’³²⁹

and understood the Paraclete to possess two characteristics in Greek: “intercessor” and “comforter.” The former used when applied to Jesus and the latter for the Holy Spirit in that the Holy Spirit provides comfort for the believer and opens their awareness and reveals spiritual knowledge.³³⁰ In agreement with the views of Origen, Tertullian (160-225 CE) and Augustine (354-430 CE) believed *paraklētos* to mean “advocate” or to give advice and help.³³¹

Following in this line of thought, Lindars states that the Spirit takes on the function of the absent Jesus and enables the disciples to continue Jesus’ work. Thus, he

³²⁸ Stephen Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” 75.

³²⁹ Ibid., 71.

³³⁰ Ibid., 72.

³³¹ Ibid., 72.

sees *paraklētos* to translate as “Counselor” and that *paraklētos* was specifically chosen because it can be applied to “comforter,” “intercessor,” “advocate” and other translations elaborated subsequently.³³² In his determination of what *paraklētos* meant, he found it necessary to find a word that was capable of being applied to several facets and was not exclusively associated with one over another.³³³

In his pursuit to find a multi-term meaning, Lindars proposes the following for the Paraclete:

- a) Advocate: Defending counsel in a legal case
- b) Intercessor: Regarding the Spirit, it stays with the disciples to help them and is seen in relation to I John 2:1 with Jesus standing before the Father on our behalf.
- c) Helper: Corresponds with one version of the Greek in its verbal meaning (*parakalein*, which means to call to one’s side). However, Lindars says this definition is too weak if the function of the Paraclete is to be a substitute for Jesus on earth.
- d) Comforter or Consoler: This definition, though applicable and fitting, is not equally applicable to both Jesus and the Spirit since consolation is for Jesus’ departure. Lindars says consolation is a minor role of the Spirit, but comfort/consolation is a working role in salvation and a guide for the disciples in spreading the Gospel.
- e) Counselor: Essentially a combination of many of the other definitions.³³⁴

After discussing the multiple layers and meanings of Paraclete, its uses appear to be intentionally vague if it is describing the relation between Jesus and the Paraclete. As a descriptor of the Spirit, the term would be functional and as connected with “another,” it would mean “helper,” thus Lindars comes to the conclusion that “counselor” or “helper” seems to be the most correct translation.³³⁵

³³² Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 478.

³³³ Ibid., 478.

³³⁴ Ibid., 478-479.

³³⁵ Ibid., 479.

In view of these distinctions, Carson submits that in addition to what appears to be agreement with the functions mentioned above (including the holistic term “Counselor”), there is another role of the Paraclete which is in relation to the world and not the disciples, and this is in the area of judgment and of taking away the world’s excuse for its denial of Jesus.³³⁶ He states that the Paraclete convicts the world of its sin, righteousness, and judgment and reminds his audience that his interpretation “...accords remarkably well with the only other place in the fourth gospel where...Jesus asks the question, ‘Which of you convicts me of sin?’”³³⁷

Concerning the world’s righteousness, Carson suggests that this is an ironic or negative meaning and essentially the Paraclete convicts the world of its false righteousness.³³⁸ The world is reported to misconstrue righteousness because it denies Jesus’ redemptive work and vindication and “...it misconstrues the nature of the judgment which took place at the cross, because, contrary to the world’s opinion, the prince of this world was then condemned, not Jesus.”³³⁹ As the Spirit convicts the world of its judgment, Carson believes that it does not refer just to a severe rebuking of the world that rejects Jesus, but all false judgment. The false judgment and crucifixion are just the epitome example.³⁴⁰ Thus, Carson believes that, based on the Gospel of John, “...failure to believe in Jesus not only entails condemnation (3:18, 36) but brings with it sustained ignorance of personal need.”³⁴¹

³³⁶ D.A Carson, “The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11,” 553.

³³⁷ Ibid., 558.

³³⁸ Ibid., 558-559.

³³⁹ Ibid., 549.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 561. Carson refers to John 7:24, John 3:18, and John 3:36 for this thought.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 561.

Going further in this line of thought, sustained ignorance of personal need leads into the border region with Islamic beliefs on the Paraclete. When Carson speaks of the Paraclete convicting the world and showing its need for life while in its present death and ignorance, it is for the purpose of grace. The Paraclete works to bring the world to see its need (and to turn to Jesus) because in its present state it cannot do so alone.³⁴² In removing the aspect of redemption through Jesus from the text and focusing on the need of convicting the world and saving it from its ignorance, it is possible to see how the polemic surrounding Muḥammad as the Paraclete could form since he was sent as a mercy.

Responding within this context to the above exposition, Christians and the writers of the Recensions refute this position because they believe the Paraclete is the Holy Spirit sent down upon Jesus' glorification for the benefit of those whom he left and for the purpose of building up the Church. The Holy Spirit descends upon believers so that they can be instruments of change and for sanctification.³⁴³

Imports from Converts to Islam

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the adoption by Muslim biographers and exegetes, such as Ibn Ishāq, of portions of the Gospel of John into their *sīras* created a polemic that the Recensions responded to with foundational beliefs of what the Paraclete was as described above. Yet, there is also the matter to address of Christians who converted to Islam (like Ibn Ishāq) and their imports concerning the

³⁴² D.A Carson, "The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11," 561.

³⁴³ Ibid., 549.

Paraclete and its importance to this discussion with the overarching idea that Biblical scriptures were being used to account for Muḥammad's annunciation in the Baḥīrā account.³⁴⁴

In his article dealing with prophecy in the Gospel of John, Lambden states that "another" Paraclete mentioned in John 14:16 did not lead the generality of Christians to expect another prophet to come after Jesus, but that, however, "...the possibility of Paracletehood was early utilized by Christian schismatics and later used to support the reality of continuing prophethood."³⁴⁵ L. Bevan Jones states that Jews and Christians who believed in Muḥammad's message went to their traditional scriptures to find a prophet to come. However, Jones says many resented the assertion that their books contained references to the Prophet.³⁴⁶ Yet, for a Christian convert to Islam looking at *Sūra* 61:6, this might have been attractive. Watt says,

...it is tempting to suppose—and by no means impossible—that it was reflection on *Sūrah* lxi, 6 that first set a convert from Christianity, with a slight knowledge of Greek, on the track of the argument about similarity of meaning.³⁴⁷

This, among others, could be the case with Waraqah who knew the scriptures well and assented to Muḥammad's prophethood. Consequently, Lambden believes that the link of the Paraclete passages in John, or with *Aḥmad*, with *Qur'ān* 61:6 among Muslim exegetes and apologists developed probably as a result of Christian converts to Islam, which led to *Aḥmad* being viewed as an Arabic equivalent of Paraclete.³⁴⁸ This can be seen in this narration from Ibn Sa'd's *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*:

³⁴⁴ Montgomery Watt, "His Name is Aḥmad", 115.

³⁴⁵ Stephen Lambden, "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse," 74-75.

³⁴⁶ L. Bevan Jones, "The Paraclete or Mohammed," 115.

³⁴⁷ Montgomery Watt, "His Name is Aḥmad," 115.

³⁴⁸ Stephen Lambden, "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse," 78.

He (Ibn Sa'd) said: Muḥammad Ibn Ismā'īl Ibn Abū Fudayk al-Madanī informed us on the authority of Mūsa Ibn Ya'qūb al-Zam'ī, he on the authority of Sahl the *mawlā* of 'Uthaymah; (he said): Verily there was a Christian of Marīs³⁴⁹ who recited the Gospel; he said that the description of the Prophet in the Gospel purported to mean that he would be in the progeny of Ismā'īl and his name would be Aḥmad.³⁵⁰

In light of this report and others like it, there is the possibility that prophecies of Muḥammad may have come from Christians who had access to variant Biblical texts and from their oral interpretations, which led Ibn Ishāq and others to state references to scriptures based on their informants and used the term *balaghanī*, “it has reached me” since no book was presented to them physically with proof, but was an oral transmission fitting with the goal of creating sacred history.³⁵¹ Lambden even states that a number of Western scholars and missionaries propose that the belief that Muḥammad was the Paraclete may possibly be related to a continuing expectation of the Paraclete among Syriac-speaking Monophysites and many hold that Baḥīrā was of this sect.³⁵²

In closing on the Paraclete in Christian belief systems, there is the firm idea that Muḥammad is not the “one to come” or “another” to be sent after Jesus. Followers of Johannine and Pauline doctrines contra-indicate Muḥammad as the Paraclete and of which forms the basis for its refutation in the Recensions and the tension with Muslim beliefs in part based on *sīra* literature claiming the converse of this idea.

³⁴⁹ More than likely referring to Baḥīrā

³⁵⁰ Ibn Sa'd, *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*, 113.

³⁵¹ Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” 296.

³⁵² Stephen Lambden, “Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse,” 76.

The Recensions and the Paraclete

The above passage by Ibn Sa'd indicates more evidence for an original source and suggests the interconnectedness of the Baḥīrā /Muḥammad encounter with the Paraclete. If Ibn Ishāq employs the Paraclete so emphatically in his portrayal of Muḥammad in the Bible, and cites scriptures foretelling his arrival, why would the encounter story not also be from a Biblical reference in his *sīra*? In other sections of the *sīra* (outside of the foundational account) Ibn Hishām introduces a passage as found John 15:23-27 with the Paraclete being Muḥammad.³⁵³ Again, the redactor states that the comforter is *Menahemānā* in Syriac and the Paraclete in Greek, but instead of Jesus speaking of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of truth, the author asserts him to be speaking of the Apostle of God (Muḥammad).³⁵⁴

Roggema asserts that the Christian recensions portray the concept of the Paraclete as having been a gross fabrication by a Jewish rabbi and scribe named Ka'b al-Aḥbār³⁵⁵ (a convert to Islam) who also revises Baḥīrā's writings after Baḥīrā dies.³⁵⁶ In the Syriac recensions, Ka'b's actions are displayed below:

The Muslim legends surrounding his conversion deal primarily with *tahrīf*, the falsification of the Bible. In one version Ka'b defends his belated conversion by

³⁵³ John 15:23-27 (NASB)

23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.' 26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, 27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

³⁵⁴ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 104. Translation throughout has been by Alfred Guillaume.

³⁵⁵ Ka'b al-Aḥbār is a well-known source of *Isra'iliyat*

³⁵⁶ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 199.

describing how he was searching for predictions of Muḥammad's appearance in the Bible. The rabbis showed him only corrupted texts. Only when he discovered some verses crossed out in a Bible manuscript did he go to a monk named Bulukhyā—which is perhaps a vague reference to Baḥīrā, —to inquire about these verses. The monk proceeds to reveal the true Biblical verses which foretold Muḥammad's coming, but only after having made Ka'b promise that he will not convert to Islam after reading them. Ka'b however breaks his promise and becomes a Muslim. After that a heavenly fire comes down upon the monk, who then accepts Islam, together with a number of rabbis.³⁵⁷

As this excerpt suggests, Christians were responding to argumentation centered on the Biblical references Muslims were inferring from the scriptures. By creating a story where Ka'b had to defend his assumptions on prophecy of Muḥammad in the scriptures through apocryphal verses supposedly held secret, there must be a scriptural referent in the initial story. This referent is the ancient manuscript Ibn Ishāq cites as validation and for continuity in the biography of Muḥammad. Citing the Christian apologist Timothy of the 'Abbāsid period, Sidney Griffith states that,

...regarding the identity of the Paraclete, Timothy argues that it is the spirit of God, even God himself, and therefore, it can in no way be identified with Muḥammad. To this argument the caliph answers with the charge that the Christians are guilty of alteration (*at-taḥrīf*) of the text of the scriptures...³⁵⁸

Barbara Roggema likewise states that the *Qur'ān* contains verses that accuse Christians and Jews of hiding or removing God's word from their scriptures.³⁵⁹ Thus, Roggema says that the *Qur'ān* passes "...authoritative judgment regarding Christians and this only emphasized the fact that Islam had come to supplant their [Christians] sacred history."³⁶⁰ When this was made explicitly clear with the rapid rise and spread of Islam

³⁵⁷ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 199.

³⁵⁸ Sidney H. Griffith, "The Prophet Muḥammad," 386.

³⁵⁹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 12-13.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

in the seventh century CE that Muḥammad's message was one of universal doctrine, Christians began to formulate and proliferate responses to it.³⁶¹

It is within this milieu that the Christian recensions were written as an address to Islam as a whole and can be seen through the Muslim encounter between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad. By even addressing the concerns of scriptures being used to affirm Muḥammad as the Paraclete, it affirms scriptures *were* being used and that the reference in the Baḥīrā/Muḥammad story could be one of those references since a large section of each of the Recensions is dedicated to refuting Ka'b's assertion that Muḥammad was the Paraclete.

Ka'b's assertion is a direct response to the assertion that the Paraclete in the Gospel of John refers to Muḥammad. In the recensions, which make up the *Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, the Jewish scribe Ka'b is accused of corrupting Baḥīrā's teachings and is held responsible for introducing the idea of Muḥammad being the Paraclete.³⁶²

Roggema states that

...after Sergius- Baḥīrā's death a Jew called Kaleb appeared among the Arabs. This Jew corrupted the monk's teaching and falsely predicted that Muḥammad would rise on the third day after his death. Only after this do we get to read about the encounters between Sergius- Baḥīrā and Muḥammad...³⁶³

³⁶¹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 12-13.

³⁶² The notion of the Paraclete concerns *Qur'ān* 61:6, John 15:23 and Ibn Ishāq's reference in his *Sīra* on page 104 in Ibn Hishām's, *The Life of Muḥammad*.

³⁶³ Barbara Roggema, "The Legend of Sergius-Baḥīrā: Some Remarks on Its Origins in the East and Its Traces in the West" in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations II : acta of the congress held at Hernen Castle in May 1997* ed. Krijnie Ciggaar and Herman Teule (Belgium: Peeters Press, 1997) 109.

This corruption by Ka'b, according to the accounts, continues into the present-day.³⁶⁴

The question then to ask regarding the Paraclete is this: is the prophet to come in the Baḥīrā/Muḥammad account the same as the Paraclete?

In answering this question, Gordon Newby states that, in the environment of Arabia, there is Islamic literature “filled with descriptions of Jewish sages who ‘knew’ of Muḥammad’s advent or were aware of the miraculous portents that were said to have surrounded his birth” and this carries over into the Christian dealings as well.³⁶⁵ Citing Ibn Ishāq, Uri Rubin states that

Jewish and Christian scholars knew better than the Arabs about the imminent emergence of Muḥammad, because they had found his description in their scriptures. They used to pray in his name for victory over the Arab idolaters, and told them that a prophet holding the religion of Abraham, whose name was ‘Aḥmad’, was about to come. This was the description which they had found in their books.³⁶⁶

What this quotation implies is that there must have been an original source and suggests the interconnectedness of the Baḥīrā /Muḥammad encounter with the Paraclete. If Ibn Ishāq employs the Paraclete so emphatically in his portrayal of Muḥammad and cites scriptures foretelling his arrival, why would there not be a Biblical reference in his *Sīra*? In the Paraclete section of Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*, Ibn Hishām introduces John 15:23-27 with the Paraclete being Muḥammad.³⁶⁷ Stated above, neither

³⁶⁴ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 382 and K. Szilágyi, “Muḥammad and the Monk,” 171-173.

³⁶⁵ Gordon Darnell Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia*, 78.

³⁶⁶ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 28-29.

³⁶⁷ John 15:23-27 (NASB)

23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated me without a cause.' 26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father,

Ibn Ishāq nor Ibn Hishām cite *Qur'ān* 61:6 for justification, but it could be assumed that *Qur'ān* 61:6 is being used in its interpretation as Phipps says that Ibn Ishāq “attempts to relate the New Testament Jesus’ alleged forecast of Muḥammad in the *Qur'ān*.”³⁶⁸

Thus one of the fundamental aspects in the Recensions is a refutation of Islam and an affirmation of Christianity as being distinct from Islam and its lineage to Abraham. By addressing the concerns about scriptures being used to affirm Muḥammad as the Paraclete, it affirms scriptures were being used in some capacity and that the reference in the Baḥīrā/Muḥammad story could be one of those references since a large section of each of the Recensions is dedicated to refuting Kaʿb’s assertion that Muḥammad was the Paraclete.

The Paraclete in the East-Syrian (ES) and West-Syrian (WS) Recensions

Within the East-Syrian and West-Syrian recensions, the source of the Islamic view of the Paraclete and false interpretations of the Bible come from the Jewish scribe and rabbi Kaʿb (or Kalb). After Baḥīrā dies, Kaʿb is stated to have misunderstood everything Sargīs (Baḥīrā) taught and deliberately manipulates Baḥīrā’s works and teachings to say that Muḥammad is the Paraclete.³⁶⁹ Going even further in the vehement condemnation of Kaʿb, these recensions also have Kaʿb equating Muḥammad with Jesus and his resurrection by proclaiming that Muḥammad would rise after three

He will testify about Me, 27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

³⁶⁸ William E. Phipps, *Muḥammad and Jesus: A Comparison of the Prophets and Their Teachings*. (New York, NY: Continuum, 1996) 93.

³⁶⁹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 254-309.

days. Despite Ka'b being wrong about Muḥammad rising in three days, the notion of Muḥammad being the Paraclete persists according to the recensions because of the Arabs' irrationality.³⁷⁰

Specific to the ES Recension, after Baḥīrā (also called Mar Sergius) dies, a Jewish scribe named Ka'b, who historically is reported to have converted to Islam, rises up in Baḥīrā's absence and corrupts his teachings. Refuting what can be interpreted as *Qur'ān* 61:6 and its narration of Jesus foretelling of Muḥammad, is the following from the ES:

{9} Then, after Mar Sergius died, a man rose up from the Jews whose name was known as Ka'b the Scribe, {9.2} and he was a teacher, a scribe, and a prophet for them. {9.4} He corrupted the teaching of Mar Sergius, {9.5} since he told them that the one about whom Christ said: 'Behold, after me the Paraclete will come to you' that [that] is Muḥammad. {9.6} And lo, until our day they adhere to and follow this tradition that Muḥammad is the Paraclete.³⁷¹

In further describing the heretical actions of Ka'b, the ES Recension purports Ka'b declaring that not only is Muḥammad the Paraclete, but, with vivid details, that Muḥammad would rise three days after death. Below is the account:

{21} If a person asks some of them about his [Muḥammad] grave they do not know it, because they adhere to the tradition which, as they say, Ka'b the Jewish scribe handed down to them, who said to them that Muḥammad is the Paraclete, whom Christ has promised, and [that] after him no other prophet would rise, because he is the Seal of Prophets. And because of this, Ka'b is held in great honor. When Muḥammad died he was highly esteemed in the eyes of all of his people. They embalmed him with myrrh and aloe and they put him on a bier and brought him [to] a big house and closed the door. And they sealed the door of that house, saying that on the third day he would go up to heaven, to Christ, who sent him. And after three days they all came together and opened the door of the house to see what had happened to the Prophet of God, and they could not enter due to the smell of the body of the Prophet. And it is not necessary to explain anything about his grave that the listeners do not comprehend. And lo,

³⁷⁰ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 313-373.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 269.

until this day they hold on to this tradition that Muḥammad is the Paraclete who would come after Christ.³⁷²

This language is clearly meant to show the humanness of Muḥammad in contrast to Christ, but with vitriolic language to emphatically state that Muḥammad is not the Paraclete. The underlying Christian beliefs for this defense have been described above and center on the redemption of Christ that was final and for mankind and that the Paraclete would be one to come immediately and continually for the disciples through the Holy Spirit.

In the WS Recension, there are approximately the same charges leveled against Ka'b, but with slightly different language seen here:

{9} After the death of Sergius another man stood up, who was called Kalb the Scribe. {9.1} He was from the race of Abraham. He was a bastard of the Jews from there {9.2} and he was a scribe. This Kalb the Scribe became a teacher for them and a scribe after Sergius and a false prophet. {9.3} He taught falsehood and proclaimed untruth {9.4} and he changed what Sergius had written and taught. {9.5} He said to them 'the one about whom Christ son of Mary, has said, 'behold I will come and send you the Paraclete', that is Muḥammad.' And 'there will be a sign to you: when Muḥammad has died he will go up to heaven like 'Īsā son of Maryam, and he will rise after three days.' And it happened that when Muḥammad died the people of his community came together and they embalmed him and put him in a house with great reverence.³⁷³

The story then concludes the same as in the ES Recension.

The reason for including this second account is to show the link between the ES and WS recensions, but with the added feature of borrowed language saying that Muḥammad is the "Seal of the Prophets." What this seems to indicate is greater finality of the implication of Ka'b's role in the attribution of Muḥammad and his mission and

³⁷² Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 303.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 333-335.

the WS Recensions' dehumanizing language towards Ka'b in this account versus the ES account.

The Paraclete in the Short Arabic (A1) Recension

The Short Arabic Recension (A1) is close to the Syriac recensions in terms of the Paraclete, but with the use of *Qur'ānic* verses and the monk's own exegesis of them. Ka'b is responsible for altering Baḥīrā's teachings using Jesus' sayings from his interpretations of scripture. The A1 is in many ways more similar to the ES and WS in the labeling or address of the Paraclete. What separates the A1 from the Long Arabic Recension (A2) is the extent to which the *Qur'ān* is used in addressing the Paraclete. The short version makes use of the *Qur'ān*, but the Long Arabic Recension employs it extensively.³⁷⁴

In this version, Ka'b is told to have done the following:

{9} After that [the burial of Sergius] a man appeared who is known as [Ka'b] al-Aḥbār, {9.1} from the progeny of Abraham. He began to teach the Sons of Ishmael {9.4} and to invalidate the word of Sergius. {9.5} And he said to them: 'The one who will appear from amongst you, he is the Paraclete whom Christ mentioned as coming after him' {9.7} and he taught them many things from the Torah and the Prophets and also some of the stories of theirs.³⁷⁵

What this passage shows about Ka'b and the Paraclete is in line with the above recensions, but is, however, unique in its wording. Ka'b is identified to be from the line of Abraham instead of being called a Jew and is teaching the Sons of Ishmael from the Torah and the Gospels and from their own stories. However, these teachings are based

³⁷⁴ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 376-431.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 391.

on corruptions of teachings Baḥīrā has already relayed to the Arabs. Additionally, specific corruptions also come from the Torah and the Gospels, and the account even goes on to relate that Muḥammad is spoken of in Arab stories; all in an effort to raise Muḥammad as the Paraclete. In this respect, the A1 Recension relates heavily to the Christian scriptures and possibly the underlying text upon which it is refuting.

The Paraclete in the Long Arabic (A2) Recension

Unlike the ES, WS, and A1 recensions, the A2 makes no mention of Sergius-Baḥīrā's death or of a corrupting Jew. In contrast to blaming a Jew for the corruptions seen in the A1 Recension and the Syriac versions, the A2 Recension blames the Arabs for being too simple-minded. In this Arabic version, the limited or incapable capacity of the Arabs to understand the Trinity is the main cause for the false attribution of Baḥīrā's teachings.³⁷⁶ Additionally, the A2 contains approximately forty quotes from the *Qur'ān* and Baḥīrā confesses to having written them for Muḥammad.³⁷⁷ In the other versions, Baḥīrā dies before this confession and all is told by another monk.³⁷⁸

What is even more unique about the A2 is that there is no mention of the Paraclete per se, but to *Aḥmad* in the form of an adjective. In the recounting of his deeds and actions, there is the monk Marhab listening to Baḥīrā's confession, stating

³⁷⁶ Barbara Roggema, "The Legend of Sergius-Baḥīrā: Some Remarks on Its Origins in the East and Its Traces in the West," 110.

³⁷⁷ Some verses are combined.

³⁷⁸ Barbara Roggema, *A Christian Reading of the Qur'ān: The Legend of Sergius-Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur'ān and Sīra in Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years* (Boston: Leiden; Brill, 2001) 58.

the following, which, with this apocalyptic message, shows Muḥammad as being a great person who will be powerful and not the Paraclete:

And I told them [sons of Ishmael] about what I had read from the prophet Daniel when he said 'Ishmael's people will come and stay in the holy place.' And I informed them about what I read from the sayings of Methodius, who mentioned the rule of the Sons of Ishmael, their spreading over the earth and their dominion over it, and that no one will be able to stand before them, and that they will have a mighty powerful rule: {11.5} 'And God will raise up from among them a great man, {11.6} and a number of kings will come forth from his loins and they will be many on the earth, and his name will be Muḥammad, and he will be praised and mentioned in the corners of the earth'.³⁷⁹

With this said, Samir K. Samir states that Arab-Christian writers could not assent to Muḥammad being a prophet in the way Muslims viewed Muḥammad because by assenting to this first idea, Christians would believe not only that Muḥammad was a prophet, but also must believe him to be *the* prophet or *khātam al-nabiyyīn* (the seal of the prophets).³⁸⁰ It is upon this point that there is a great rift in beliefs between Muslims and Christians. Acknowledging this rift, the Recensions possess many aims and one of them is the global refutation of Islam.

Conclusions

The polemic framed within the Paraclete concept composes a sizable discourse between Christians and Muslims within the greater traditions that make up the textual traditions of Baḥīrā. The endeavor here was to connect the discourse on the unspecified source in the Baḥīrā narrative with known concepts of the Paraclete. This

³⁷⁹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*: 447-449.

³⁸⁰ Samir K. Samir, *The Prophet Muḥammad As Seen By Timothy I and Other Arab Christian Authors in Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years* (Boston: Leiden; Brill, 2001) 106.

is because the probable source of the unspecified scripture is from the Gospel of John in Medina from a Semitic source of the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary as it is the only Syriac version where the word *Menahhemānā* occurs.³⁸¹ Additionally, it is the only version used by Christians around Syria around Muḥammad's time.³⁸² This connection to the Syriac also has another foundation through the citation of Ibn Kathīr's *Sīra* with the light of prophethood being received first by Syria.³⁸³

Thus, with the probable source or influence on Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām in the Paraclete passage established, the source of the unspecified scripture is still to be clarified. As Burkitt states, the passage of the Paraclete has a Syriac influence and an oral influence. The considerable implication of this assertion is that if the Paraclete passage were oral, could the Baḥīrā source be as well? Referencing again al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on *Sūra* 61:6, it appears to allude to the claim of the Paraclete being Muḥammad as not coming from a reputable exegete.³⁸⁴ Would this then mean that the sources are coming solely from oral accounts? Additionally, al-Ṭabarī is not convinced if *Aḥmad* is drawing on the New Testament for its interpretation, indicating that the *Qur'ān* and the Bible may have an interplay that could effect the foundational scriptures.³⁸⁵ Thus, if there is a possibility that the Bible influenced the interpretation of *Sūra* 61:6, could not then the Baḥīrā account rest on a physical manuscript in addition to oral transmissions?

³⁸¹ A. Guthrie and E.F.F. Bishop, "The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad," 251.

³⁸² L. Bevan Jones, "The Paraclete or Mohammed," 119.

³⁸³ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 232.

³⁸⁴ Montgomery Watt, "His Name is Aḥmad," 113.

³⁸⁵ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 22.

As Watt indicated earlier in this chapter, Christian criticisms of Muslims for having no textual promise of Muḥammad spurred Muslims to seek such a basis with annunciation. Part of that undertaking was through predictions of Muḥammad in the Bible.³⁸⁶ The adoption of the Gospel of John by these exegetes (reputable or not) for the purpose of annunciation sparked a polemic which the Recensions spend a considerable time refuting through Ka'b since argumentation and apologetics became centered on Biblical passages.³⁸⁷ By creating a story in which Ka'b had to defend his assumptions on prophecy of Muḥammad in the scriptures through apocryphal verses supposedly held secret, there must be a scriptural referent in the initial story for the refutations of the Muslim Paraclete.

There is also the effect of Christian converts on Islam and their import of Biblical scriptures into Islam for prophecies and annunciation of Muḥammad that relate directly to the overarching idea that Biblical scriptures were being used to account for Muḥammad's annunciation in the Baḥīrā account.³⁸⁸ This application of scriptures could, among others, be from Baḥīrā or from Waraqaḥ who knew the scriptures well and assented to Muḥammad's prophethood. Consequently, the attachment of *Aḥmad* with the Paraclete is most likely a result of Christian converts to Islam, which led to *Aḥmad* being viewed as an Arabic equivalent of Paraclete. Thus, this application by converts of the Paraclete and their oral reports led Ibn Ishāq and others to state references to scriptures based on their informants and used the term *balaghani*,

³⁸⁶ Montgomery Watt, "His Name is Aḥmad," 114-115.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 115.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 115.

“it has reached me” since no book was presented to them physically with proof, but was an oral transmission fitting with his goal of creating sacred history.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁹ Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.,” 296.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FOREKNOWLEDGE AND THE SOURCES

The previous chapters discussed the concept of foreknowledge related to an unspecified original book or scripture concerning prophethood, warnings to protect Muḥammad, and the attributions of Muḥammad as being the Paraclete. Underpinning these Muslim accounts and biographies is the theme of foreknowledge. These writings are all taken from Muslim sources and maintain that—whether from Christian, Jewish, or pre-Islamic informants— the book that Baḥīrā uses to designate Muḥammad as the next prophet is one piece of the larger body of foreknowledge announcing the advent of the Prophet. However, what has not yet been explicitly examined is the origin for this idea of foreknowledge. Ibn Ishāq asserts that people of Arabia were expecting a prophet to come, but how did they know whom to look for and why from Arabia?

According to Sir William Muir, narrations composed of anticipations or expectations and declarations of prophecies of Muḥammad may have arisen out of some remark or incidental declaration from the Prophet. These declarations may have then led believers to seek out and prove them.³⁹⁰ Muir goes on to state that tradition also imparts an assortment of Jewish and Christian monks who,

...found it written in their books that the last of the Prophets was at this time about to arise at Mecca, and asserted that not only his name, but appearance, manners, and character were therein depicted to the life, so that recognition could not but be certain and instantaneous; and among other particulars, that

³⁹⁰ Sir William Muir, *The life of Mohammad from original sources*, lxi.

the very city of Medina was named as the place where he would take refuge from the persecution of his people.³⁹¹

Additionally, later examples will show that there are stories in the *sīra* of Jews, other Christians, and pre-Islamic Arabs who not only knew that a Prophet would come, but where he would be born and where he would eventually migrate. What is still not clear, however, is how one at this time (before revelation began) knew that Muḥammad was coming as a prophet and that he would be the *last* prophet?

Uri Rubin states that the writers of the *Ḥijāz* (western Arabia), such as al-Zuhri (d. 124 AH/741 CE) and Ibn Ishāq, believed that Arabian sanctuaries had been neglected for those outside of Arabia and were able to regain prestige through a messianic link that Arabia did not previously have.³⁹² It is within this light that Rubin suggests that the early biographies of Muḥammad should be read as their works appear to be constructed to “...secure the status of Arabia in the collective historical memory as the birthplace of Islam.”³⁹³ In securing this status, Rubin asserts that Islamic historical writings progressed, at least initially, through the Islamization of extant Jewish and Christian historical narratives found in Biblical and post-Biblical sources.³⁹⁴ Rubin elaborates on this idea stating that,

All phases of biblical history, from the antediluvian age to the Israelite one, were turned into stages of sacred history culminating in Muḥammad. The biblical Adam, Noah and Abraham became Muslims in the retold biblical history, and the Jewish and Christian prophets, too, became links in a chain of successive revelations that was preordained to terminate in Muḥammad, the ‘Seal’ of the Prophets.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ Sir William Muir, *The life of Mohammad from original sources*, lxi.

³⁹² Uri Rubin. *Between Bible and Qur’ān* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1999) 36-37.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 300.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

The above quote is reflective of the *Qur'ānic* view, so when looking at this method of historical writing, the Muslim biographer Ibn Ishāq, and also in what will be presented from Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Kathīr, is the maintained assertion that Baḥīrā and others were awaiting a prophet during their lifetimes because of foreknowledge they obtained mainly from scriptures.³⁹⁶ In this way, Rubin states that the initial stories about Muḥammad's life and first revelations were designed for apologetic purposes and match up with Biblical rather than *Qur'ānic* conventions,³⁹⁷ holding that "the scene of the beginning of prophetic revelations was of vital importance to the *vita* with which Muḥammad had to be endowed in order to match the prophets of the 'People of the Book.'"³⁹⁸

With this potential motive addressed, this chapter will examine the origin and role of foreknowledge surrounding Muḥammad based on Muslim assertions as it relates to the source on which Baḥīrā recognizes Muḥammad as the next prophet. This will be done through the lens of *Qur'ānic* Abrahamic foreknowledge by looking at the following areas reported within the *sīra* literature of Muḥammad on foreknowledge:

- 1) Pre-Islamic Arabian and Yemenī foreknowledge
- 2) Jewish foreknowledge
- 3) Christian foreknowledge
- 4) Physical descriptions of Muḥammad's "Seal"

³⁹⁶ Martin Lings, *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, 29.

³⁹⁷ Muḥammad is referred to in the *Qur'ān*, but not in quite the same the biographical way as in Biblical conventions.

³⁹⁸ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 109.

Accounts of Pre-Islamic Arabian and Yemenī Foreknowledge

In the time before Muḥammad's advent, according to Rubin, there are reported to be stories about pre-Islamic Arabian figures that announce the coming of the Prophet. Ibn Ishāq speaks of such people belonging to a class or group called the *Ḥanīfiyya*, or pre-Islamic Arabian monotheists, who followed the religion of Abraham.³⁹⁹ Such people alive during Muḥammad's time were given the special role of being Muḥammad's Companions since they proclaimed his prophethood and his name prior to his emergence. Their unique knowledge of the Prophet's advent is reported by Muslim biographers to derive from Jewish and Christian scriptures and this knowledge results in their eventual conversion to Islam.⁴⁰⁰ Ibn Sa'd relates the following two narrations because of the influence of these Arabian figures:

ʿĀlī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Abī Sayf informed us on the authority of Salamah Ibn ʿUthmān, he on the authority of ʿĀlī Ibn Zayd, he on the authority of Saʿīd Ibn al-Musayyib; he said: The Arabs knew from the men of scriptures and soothsayers that a Prophet named Muḥammad, would be raised. So anyone of the Arabs who came to know of it, named his son, Muḥammad, in the hope of receiving prophethood.⁴⁰¹

and

ʿĀlī Ibn Muḥammad informed us on the authority of Maslamah Ibn ʿAlqamah, he on the authority of Qatādah Ibn al-Sakn al-ʿUranī; he said: In the Banū Tamīm there was Muḥammad Ibn Sufyān Ibn Mujāshʿ. He was an *usquf* (monk); his father had been told that in Arabia there would be a Prophet bearing the name, Muḥammad; so he had named him Muḥammad. There were Muḥammad al-

³⁹⁹ Martin Lings in *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* elaborates on this idea by stating the Islamic belief that Abraham rebuilt the Kabʿah and that the initial religion in Arabia before the time of ignorance was the true religion of God, which Abraham and Ishmael worshipped.

⁴⁰⁰ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 47.

⁴⁰¹ Ibn Sa'd. *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*, 194.

Jushamī in Banū Suwā'ah, Muḥammad al-Usayyid, and Muḥammad al-Fuqaym; they were all so named in the hope of receiving prophethood.⁴⁰²

Such examples from Ibn Sa'd seem to shape Arabia in a much different light than the *jahiliyya* ("Days of Ignorance")⁴⁰³ one reads elsewhere in the *sīra* about Arabian polytheism. The true extent of fathers attempting to bring prophethood to their families is not known. However, it does show that, at least in the minds of the *sīra* writers, the idea of foreknowledge was common in Arabia partly from previous scriptures. Watt adds that it may be that "...the men of Medina had learned something of the Messianic hopes of the Jews and thought Muḥammad was the expected Messiah"⁴⁰⁴ and this foreknowledge may be because the "...Jewish expectation of a prophet was familiar to many Arabs, for it is alleged that a number of men in the 'times of ignorance' gave the name Muḥammad to a son in the hope that he would be the expected prophet,"⁴⁰⁵ as just outlined above by Ibn Sa'd.

In addition to these Arab men of Medina and others that looked to the Christian and Jewish sources, there is also the unique account of two Yemenī kings (*tubba'*) who report foreknowledge up to a thousand years before Muḥammad is born. From one Yemenī ruler, there is the account of an unnamed *tubba'* who, Rubin reports, was alive a millennium before Muḥammad was born and traveled in the *Ḥijāz* and to Medina. While in Medina, he was told by Jewish scholars about the Prophet to come and the *tubba'* believed in the Prophet and left a letter for him. This letter was saved and eventually given to Muḥammad by the Medinan Companion Abū Ayyūb. Rubin also

⁴⁰² Ibn Sa'd. *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*, 194.

⁴⁰³ Refers to the condition of Arabs in pre-Islamic Arabia.

⁴⁰⁴ W. Montgomery Watt, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible," *Glasgow University Oriental Society* 16 (1955-56): 51.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

states that the Jews whom the *tubba'* conversed with were in Arabia—specifically Medina—in anticipation of the Prophet and that these Jewish rabbis were the ancestors of the *Anṣār* (the Helpers).⁴⁰⁶

The second account regards the Yemenī king Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan (d. 574 CE).

Rubin states that this

...tradition, attributed to the Companion Ibn 'Abbās, revolves around the king of Yemen, Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan, who is said to have obtained his knowledge about Muḥammad from a *secret book* [emphasis added] he inherited from his forefathers. He communicates his knowledge to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (Muḥammad's grandfather), who has come to Yemen to congratulate the king on his recent ascension to the throne. Sayf is able to tell 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib the name of the Prophet and describe his external appearance. The king stresses, obviously, that the new religion of the Prophet will establish itself in Yathrib (=Medina), where Muḥammad will enjoy the support of the *Anṣār*.⁴⁰⁷

What is most interesting about these two accounts is when they are read in

combination with this third account found in the *Sīra* of Ibn Kathīr and narrated by al-Bayhaqī. It goes as follows:

Al-Bayhaqī related that 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥakam b. Rāfi' b. Sinān said, 'Some of my older male relatives told me that they had in their possession a document they had inherited before Islam and still had when God brought Islam. When the messenger of God (ṢAAS) came to Medina they told him of it and brought it to him. In it is written, 'In the name of God, His words are truth while those of evil-doers shall perish. This statement is for a nation that will come at the end of time who will wash their extremities and wear a loincloth around their waists. They will plunge into the seas after their enemies. They will perform prayers that would have saved Noah's people from the flood if spoken then, and 'Ād's people would not have been destroyed by the wind and Thamūd's would not have been destroyed by shouting. In the name of God, His words are truth while those of evil-doers shall perish.' The document then recounted another story. The Messenger of God was astonished at what was read to him from it.'⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁶ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 45.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 239-240.

Not only is there mention of ancient manuscripts filled with descriptions of the Prophet, but also the probable mentioning of the Bible in Medina.⁴⁰⁹ In opposition to what Barbara Roggema states that the unspecified book upon which Baḥīrā consults could not be from the Bible, this evidence tends to lend more credibility to the fact that the book, whether it existed in actuality or not, was based upon Biblical passages.⁴¹⁰

Doubly interesting is the continuity between the above three accounts and the Baḥīrā story. The continuity is found in the formulation of a book or letter from learned individuals who knew how to glean information on coming prophets. In the above accounts, it is from Jewish rabbis, whereas from Christian monks in Ibn Ishāq's account. The similarities with Baḥīrā are in the unnamed/secret book that a) is inherited from previous generations, b) describes physical attributions as signs of recognizing Muḥammad, and c) has an apocalyptic ending. This connection with Baḥīrā is further solidified with the following narration from Ibn Kathīr:

Imām Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Yasār stated that Thawr b. Yazīd related to him from Khālīd b. Ma'dān, from the Companions of the Messenger of God (ṢAAS), that they, the Companions, asked, 'O Messenger of God, tell us about yourself.' He replied, 'The prayer of my father Abraham, the glad tidings of Jesus, and (the fact that) my mother saw, when she was pregnant, that a light came from inside her that illuminated Buṣrā in Syria.'

The chain of authorities for this tradition is also excellent.

It contains good news for the people of our community in the lands of Buṣrā. It is the first place in Syria to receive the light of prophethood; and to God all praise and favor are due. That is why it was the first city of Syria to be conquered. It was taken peacefully during the caliphate of Abū Bakr, God be pleased with him. The Messenger of God (ṢAAS) traveled there twice in the

⁴⁰⁹ This relates to an earlier assertion that the text Ibn Ishāq uses for the Paraclete is from the Bible.

⁴¹⁰ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 38.

company of his uncle Abu Ṭālib when he was a boy of 12. It was there the story of Baḥīrā the monk was set, as we have related above.⁴¹¹

In this narration we see that the light emitted from Muḥammad's mother shone upon Buṣrā where Baḥīrā would confirm Muḥammad's prophethood, thus tying from conception to Muḥammad's eventual journey to the monk's cell, the thread of foreknowledge and preordained prophethood.

Accounts of Jewish Foreknowledge

Before discussing Christian foreknowledge, it is necessary to discuss Muslim views that Jews of Arabia—within their concepts of Messianism—expected a prophet to come from Arabia. This imputation is narrated and affirmed in the biographies of the Prophet and Ibn Ishāq asserts that Jewish and Christian scholars knew more so than the Arabs that a new prophet was imminent in Arabia as they had descriptions of Muḥammad in their scriptures.⁴¹² Ibn Ishāq maintains that Jews would "...pray in his name for victory over the Arab idolaters, and told them that a prophet holding the religion of Abraham, whose name was 'Aḥmad', was about to come," because of what was found in their books.⁴¹³ Rubin relates that *Qur'ān* 2:89⁴¹⁴ is implicit in Ibn Ishāq's assertions because 2:89

⁴¹¹ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 232.

⁴¹² Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 28-29.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ *Qur'ān* 2:89

When there came to them a Book from God, confirming what was with them—and they aforesometimes prayed for victory over the unbelievers -- when there came to them that they recognized, they disbelieved in it; and the curse of God is on the unbelievers.

...is alluded to in other traditions about the Jews' anticipation of a messianic savior. In these traditions they warn their Arab neighbors in Medina of the coming prophet, telling them that under his leadership they would defeat them (i.e. the Arabs).⁴¹⁵

Accordingly, Muslim biographers such as Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Ishāq, and Ibn Sa'd focus Jewish foreknowledge on the Prophet as derived from holy scriptures and this foreknowledge can be categorized into the following areas:

- 1) Muḥammad's descriptions found in the Torah
- 2) Threat of a prophet to come with messianic hopes
- 3) Jewish pre-Islamic knowledge of Muḥammad's birth and migration

Muḥammad's Descriptions Found in the Torah

Concerning the descriptions of Muḥammad found in the Torah, Rubin states that,

Jewish rabbis, Christian monks, and Arab soothsayers had spoken of the apostle of God before his mission when his time drew near. As to the rabbis and monks, it was about the description of his time which they found in their scriptures and what their prophets had enjoined upon them.⁴¹⁶

This may be one reason for why, in the following account, Muḥammad goes to the Jews and states that he is the Prophet they are awaiting.

In this report, Muḥammad lists his names thereby indicating he is from the long line of prophets found in other scriptures and that this,

...specific list is recorded as part of a story about the refusal of the Jews of Medina to recognize Muḥammad as their messianic deliverer. The Prophet makes this statement in their synagogue, where he is said to have come on a Jewish holiday and asked the Jews to produce twelve people who would testify that he is God's messenger, so that He would forgive them their sins. When they refuse, Muḥammad announces his four names. As he is about to leave the

⁴¹⁵ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 29.

⁴¹⁶ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 90.

synagogue, one of the Jews calls him back. This Jew, who proves to be ‘Abdallāh ibn Salām, swears by God that Muḥammad is indeed the prophet whose description the Jews have found in the Torah.⁴¹⁷

From this last sentence about ‘Abdallāh ibn Salām, the account implies that the Jews knew that Muḥammad was the next Prophet but chose, willfully, to deny this. Thus, they have foreknowledge of Muḥammad, but in spite of the facts made apparent to them, only ‘Abdallāh ibn Salām is willing to recognize it.

Another reference to such an occasion is also found in Ibn Sa’d’s *sīra* with the following narration:

‘Alī Ibn Muḥammad informed us on the authority of Abū Ma’shar, he on the authority of Yazīd Ibn Rūmān and ‘Āṣim Ibn ‘Umar and others; he said: Verily Ka’b Ibn Asad said to Banū Qurayṣah when the Prophet, may peace be on him, entered their castle. O people of Judaism! Follow this man, by Allāh, he is the Prophet who has been described as commissioned Prophet and whom you will find mentioned in the Scriptures, and verily he is the person relating whom Īsā (Jesus) gave tidings, and verily you recognize his attributes. They said: He is the same person, but we will not give up the Torah.⁴¹⁸

There is, however, a difference between the first and second account in that this second announcement comes from outside the Jews pointing out that Muḥammad fits the descriptions found in the Torah, versus the first account where the Jews appear to know in advance of both the description and the person of Muḥammad and choose to ignore it. In spite of this difference, the two accounts appear to show the commonality that, regardless of if the Jews recognized that it was Muḥammad they were awaiting or not, they were indeed looking for one to come based on scriptural referents and the threats of one to come found in Ibn Ishāq’s *sīra*.

⁴¹⁷ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 39. This narration is reported from Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, VI, 25 and Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XVIII, no. 83.

⁴¹⁸ Ibn Sa’d. *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*, 188.

Threat of a Prophet to Come

The threats against the Arabs discussed here will be centered around the account Ibn Ishāq gives for why tribes in Medina considered accepting Islam at first. Through the report by ‘Āṣim b. ‘Umar b. Qatāda, comes the explanation that there was enmity between the Jews and Arab polytheists and the Jews would threaten the Arabs with the coming of another prophet with a messianic hope of victory over the idolaters. In heated arguments, the tribesmen threatened the Jews and the Jews at one time replied that when the prophet came they would rally to him, stating:

‘The time of a prophet who is to be sent has now come. We will kill you with his aid as ‘Ād and Iram perished.’

The contents of this victory, Rubin states, can be found in the tradition of Sa‘īd Ibn Jubayr (Kūfan d. AH 95) related through Ibn ‘Abbās, which states that

...Jews of Khaybar used to fight against the Arabs at Ghaṭafān. Whenever the Jews were defeated, they asked God to give them victory in the name of *al-nabī al-ummī*, whom God had promised to send to them at the end of days. When they uttered this prayer, the Arabs of Ghaṭafān were defeated. However, when Muḥammad appeared, the Jews did not believe in him.⁴¹⁹

In this way, the Arab tribes understood the Jewish threat and initially sought to follow Muḥammad when he came because they remembered the Jewish warnings and their former defeats. However, the *sīra* reports that, unlike the Arabs, the Jews denied Muḥammad and Rubin claims that *Qur’ān* verse 2:83 came on this matter stating:

‘And when a book from God came to them confirming what they already had (and they were formerly asking for victory over the unbelievers), when what they knew came to them, they disbelieved it. The curse of God is on the unbelievers.’⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 29.

⁴²⁰ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 93.

Thus, foreknowledge the Muslim biographers claim the Jews held is not acted upon correctly and the threat of victory is lost and placed in the hands of the Arab followers of Muḥammad.

Jewish Knowledge of Muḥammad's Birth and Migration

The denial of Muḥammad by the Jews is further emphasized when viewing the *Qur'ān* and the *sīras* of Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī, and Ibn Kathīr on their assertions and elaborations of the extensive foreknowledge the Jews are reported to have of Muḥammad's birth and migration. Montgomery Watt claims that many scholars suggest that Arabs knew that a prophet would come and what his name would be, as described previously. Yet, citing from the redaction of Ibn Ishāq's work by Ibn Hishām, Watt suggests that, if it were not for the conversion of Zurayr, Tammām and Darīs who were claimed to be Jews, "...the advent of a prophet would have been unknown to these Medinan Jews but for the coming of a coreligionist, Ibn al-Hayyabān, from Syria."⁴²¹ The import of Ibn al-Hayyabān is important, but it is not clear how Ibn al-Hayyabān came across his foreknowledge.⁴²² As a result, the suggested widespread expectation of a new prophet may be a relative issue.

What can be inferred based on Watt's sentiments is that the formation of sacred history involved Jewish converts to Islam. This can be understood further through the

⁴²¹ W. Montgomery Watt, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible," 55. Cited from Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 104-105.

⁴²² His account will be discussed subsequently.

account of the learned rabbi ‘Abdullah b. Salām as related by his family that goes as follows:

‘When I heard about the apostle I knew by his description, name, and the time at which he appeared that he was the one we were waiting for, and I rejoiced greatly thereat, though I kept silent about it until the apostle came to Medina. When he stayed in Qubā’ among the B. ‘Amr b. ‘Auf, a man came with news while I was working at the top of a palm-tree and my aunt Khālida d. al-Ḥārith was sitting below. When I heard the news I cried Allah Akbar and my aunt said, ‘Good gracious, if you had heard that Moses b. ‘Imrān had come you could not have made more fuss!’ ‘Indeed aunt,’ I said, ‘he is the brother of Moses and follows his religion, being sent with the same mission.’ She asked, *‘Is he really the prophet who we have been told will be sent at this very time?’* [emphasis added] and she accepted my assurances that he was.⁴²³

In what has been italicized, we see that not only were scriptures used to deduce a prophet, but it would seem that there was an oral tradition in Arabia of a prophet to come. This could have a direct corollary with what Watt suggests is the influence of these three early Medinan converts.

Unfortunately, within the timeline given for the life of Muḥammad in the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Kathīr, it would seem that Zurayr, Tammām and Darīs (at least in relation to Baḥīrā) come after Muḥammad’s birth. The rationale for this comes via Ibn Hishām’s account that Baḥīrā tells others knowledgeable to the sacred scriptures to stay away from Muḥammad, indicating that they wished to do him harm. Baḥīrā reminds them that Muḥammad’s description is in their sacred books and makes the three acknowledge this claim before allowing them to leave his presence.⁴²⁴ This narration goes as follows:

People allege that Zurayr and Tammām and Darīs, who were people of the scriptures, had noticed in the apostle of God what Baḥīrā had seen during that journey which he took with his uncle, and they tried to get at him, but Baḥīrā

⁴²³ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 240-241.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 81.

kept them away and reminded them of God and the mention of the description of him which they would find in the sacred books, and that if they tried to get at him they would not succeed. He gave them no peace until they recognized the truth of what he said and left him and went away.⁴²⁵

Moreover, Ibn Kathīr also reports that Ibn Ishāq says that

‘They claim, according to what people said, that Zurayr, Tammām, and Darīs—all believers in the Scriptures—had also seen what Baḥīrā noticed in the Messenger of God (ṢAAS) on that trip with his uncle Abū Ṭālib. They tried to get to him, but Baḥīrā kept them away from him, making reference to God and to the description of him and mention of him they would find in the Holy Scripture, as well as the statement that they would not succeed in getting him. They recognized the reference he was making to them, and since they believed what he said they let the boy alone and went away.’⁴²⁶

In the light of these additional accounts, there comes a problem with associating so much of the prophetic expectations of the Prophet solely with these Medinan figures.

Two examples will illustrate this point.

The first example involves the night that Muḥammad was born. Ibn Kathīr reports this narration from Hishām b. ‘Urwa via ‘Ā’isha:

There was a Jew who resided in Mecca and did business there. On the night when the Messenger of God (ṢAAS) was born, the man addressed a gathering of Quraysh with the words, ‘O Quraysh, did a birth occur among you this night?’ They replied that they did not know. He then explained, ‘Well, God is very great; if that should have missed you, then no matter. Do look, and remember what I am telling you. This night a prophet has been born to this last nation; between his shoulders there is a mark consisting of successive lines of hair looking like a horse’s mane. He will not suckle for two nights and this is because a spirit will have put his finger into his mouth and prevented him from suckling.’⁴²⁷

Not only does this Jew have knowledge of a birth taking place that the Meccans were unaware of, but also of intricate details of what the “seal” of the Prophet looked like.

This is quite unique as descriptions of this seal are often times very vague.

⁴²⁵ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 81.

⁴²⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 176.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

Additionally, this Jew has supernatural insight as to why the child would not suckle upon birth. This addition may serve to connect an even deeper bond between the Prophet and his later revelatory experiences with the strengthening spirit. However, what is never explicitly or implicitly applied is how, outside of an unidentified scriptural referent, this Jew knew such vivid details.

The second example takes place when Muḥammad is six years old and taken to Medina with his mother and Umm Ayman to visit his uncles. Al- Wāqidī states:

Umm Ayman said, ‘One day two Jews of Medina came to me and said, ‘Bring out *Aḥmad* [emphasis added] for us to see.’ They then looked at him and turned him around in their hands. Then one of them said to the other, ‘This is the Prophet of this nation. And this shall be the abode of his refuge, where very many will be taken prisoner and many will be killed.’⁴²⁸

In this passage, there are a couple of interesting points to address. Firstly, this report also happens after the Baḥīrā encounter, so the effect of the three Medinan Jews may not be of consequence, yet these Jews of Medina not only claim he is the Prophet of Arabia, but a) they called him Aḥmad and b) they referenced his victories through war and bloodshed.

As explored in the previous chapter on the Paraclete, the importance of having those with foreknowledge addressing the new prophet as “Aḥmad” may be a way of tying the mission of the Prophet with prophets who came before him. What is odd is that “Aḥmad” was so closely tied with the words of Jesus, yet Jews are using this appellation. Secondly, this account also shows that, though they claim Muḥammad is the prophet of Arabia, there appears to be an indication of the threats they made

⁴²⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 169.

against their polytheist neighbors as a harbinger of what will later be directed at themselves.

This last point can be elaborated on by examining a report from Ibn Kathīr that chronicles King *Tubba*⁴²⁹ who sought to destroy Medina in retribution for an attack on one of his followers. His followers had stolen dates from a tree of some Jews and the owners responded by killing the king's men. War broke out and when two learned Jews heard of *Tubba*'s plans, they told him that his plan would fail, stating:

‘O king, do not do this. Unless you adopt a different course from that you intend, you will be prevented from accomplishing it, and we will not be able to save you from swift retribution.’ *Tubba* asked why this was so, and they replied, ‘This is where a prophet will migrate; he will go forth from this holy sanctuary from Quraysh in times to come and this will be his home and his abode.’⁴³⁰

This relates to the previous narration in that the Jews who examined the young Muḥammad stated that he would be a formidable man who would shed blood, be prophet to the nation, and would call Medina his refuge. Believing these events to be preordained, the learned Jews believed that *Tubba* would fail and bring undue hardship on both the attackers and the attacked. This second account also intensifies the assertion of the *sīra* writers that the Jews knew extensively and quite vividly the coming of the Prophet and even foretold that he would come from the south of Arabia.⁴³¹

All of the previous accounts have been mainly centered on Muḥammad's birth. The last two accounts to be addressed in this section concern Muḥammad's migration

⁴²⁹ This is his name rather than his title in this case.

⁴³⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 13.

⁴³¹ W. Montgomery Watt, “The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible,” 54.

“A man of Medina who fought at Badr is reported to have said that he remembered a Jewish neighbor speaking of a prophet that was expected from the south....”

Watt cites this from Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 135.

and the Jew Ibn al-Hayyabān. Ibn al-Hayyabān is reported by Ibn Ishāq in the narration from ‘Āṣim b. ‘Umar b. Qatāda who reports that a Jew (Ibn al-Hayyabān) of the Banū Qurayṣa, while on his deathbed, says that he came from Syria to Arabia during the time of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*) in order to see the coming prophet. Ibn al-Hayyabān asks,

‘O Jews, what do you think made me leave a land of bread and wine to a land of hardship and hunger?’ When we said that we could not think why, he said that he had come to this country expecting to see the emergence of a prophet whose time was at hand.⁴³²

Ibn al-Hayyabān believed that he resided in the town Muḥammad would migrate to and hoped to see him before passing away. He further states to those around him that,

‘His [Muḥammad’s] time has come,’ he said, “and don’t let anyone get to him before you, O Jews; for he will be sent to shed blood and to take captive the women and children of those who oppose him. Let not that keep you back from him.”⁴³³

Ibn al-Hayyabān appears to impart the messianic hope through his warnings to his co-religionists as seen above with other Jews of Arabia who threatened the Arab polytheists with a deliverer that would give them victory over their enemies.

Drawing to a close the discussion on Jewish foreknowledge, the narrations reported by the Muslim biographers mentioned above demonstrate within their respective *sīras* that the Jews had extensive foreknowledge of the coming of the Prophet; ranging from physical descriptions gleaned from the Torah to esoteric references that pinpointed Muḥammad’s birth in Mecca and his migration to Medina. Yet, while showing the knowledge possessed by the Medinan Jews, there is always the implied caveat that knowledge does not equate belief. This is substantiated with a report from Ibn Ishāq by Salama b. Salāma who was present at the Battle of Badr.

⁴³² Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 94.

⁴³³ Ibid.

Salāma relates how his Jewish neighbor was discussing monotheism, the afterlife, and judgment, but with no one believing him. The Jew is asked for a sign concerning the truths he espouses, so the Jew points towards Mecca and states that a prophet will come from that land and during the lifetime of those with whom he is conversing. Muḥammad soon comes, but the Jew denies that Muḥammad is the coming prophet.⁴³⁴ The reason for this unbelief, however, is never explicitly explained.

Accounts of Christian Foreknowledge

In addition to the Jews, Barbara Roggema states that Muslim sources speak of some true and uncorrupted Christians who were left in Arabia during Muḥammad's time and who were also expecting a prophet to come out of Arabia. These uncorrupted Christians were the first ones to recognize and affirm that Muḥammad was the expected messenger from God.⁴³⁵ Roggema defines the meaning of "true Christian" in this context as being one,

...whose faith was unaffected by the tainted scripture and the manmade doctrines of the Church. They had a special role to fulfill in the era leading up to the beginning of Muḥammad's mission. These Christians knew that a prophet was to appear in Arabia, and when he came in actual fact, they were among the first to recognize him and confirm that he was the expected messenger of God.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 94.

⁴³⁵ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 37.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

Moreover, Watt states that among the Meccans, there was a familiarity with Biblical conceptions, feasibly from these “true Christians,” and that the environment of Mecca was permeated by Biblical conceptions.⁴³⁷ Watt goes on to say that,

A little before the time of Muḥammad there are said to have been some Arabs who set out to discover true religion, which was assumed to be some form of monotheism; and the early passages of the *Qur’ān* assume that the Lord of the Ka’bah, worshipped as such, is identical with God, the creator of all things.⁴³⁸

Roggema asserts that Baḥīrā was one of these “true” Christians in Islamic tradition, as well as Waraqah.⁴³⁹ It is significant that Waraqah falls into this category, as Ibn Ishāq groups Waraqah with the party who broke with polytheism and left Mecca in search of true monotheism.⁴⁴⁰ Thus, this section will examine Muslim *sīra* assertions of Christian foreknowledge of Muḥammad in the following areas:

- 1) Foreknowledge of Baḥīrā and Christian monks
- 2) The account of Zayd b. ‘Amr b. Nufayl
- 3) The account of Waraqah
- 4) The account of Salmān of Ispahān

Foreknowledge Among Christians

Rubin states that there are many stories dating from pre-Islamic times reported in the *sīra* of Christian scholars and hermits with knowledge from their scriptures who met with soon-to-be Companions. These encounters spoke mainly of signs and where the prophet would emerge. Of note within these encounters is the extensive use of the

⁴³⁷ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1961) 41.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 37.

⁴⁴⁰ This will be discussed after Baḥīrā.

superlative of Muḥammad as described in the chapter on the Paraclete through the word “Aḥmad,” rather than the name Muḥammad for the emerging prophet.

One such encounter of mention where the name “Aḥmad” is used involves the Qurayshī companion Ṭalḥa Ibn ‘Ubaydallāh (d. 656 CE/ 36 AH) who reports a meeting he had with a Christian hermit in the Syrian market of Buṣrā. While in the market, Ṭalḥa says that the hermit was inquiring into whether anyone was present from Mecca. Ṭalḥa answers the hermit that he is from Mecca. The hermit then asks if “Aḥmad” had emerged. Ṭalḥa replies that he does not know who “Aḥmad” is and the hermit responds by saying that “Aḥmad” was the son of ‘Abdallāh and was expected in Mecca in the same month.⁴⁴¹ This report comes via Ibn Sa’d and explicitly states that this hermit not only gleaned his knowledge of “Aḥmad” from his scriptures, but by stating that he was the son of ‘Abdallāh, the account implies deeper foreknowledge by knowing that Muḥammad was orphaned as a child.

This form of foreknowledge in knowing where and what time Muḥammad would emerge is also described by Ibn Kathīr when he describes another monk called ‘Āyṣā who lived above Mecca. Ibn Kathīr states that ‘Āyṣā was under the protection of al-‘Āṣ b. Wā’il and would come down every year to inquire among the Meccans if any new births had occurred that year as he believed and foretold of the imminent coming of a Prophet from the town.⁴⁴² Ibn Kathīr does not describe the nature of ‘Āyṣā’s protection, but by including this information, it appears to be a way of relating ‘Āyṣā’s connection to Mecca. However, the main point of the narration seems to be for the

⁴⁴¹ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 48. Rubin references this from Ibn Sa’d III, 214-215.

⁴⁴² Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 158-159.

purpose of fortifying what was foretold by the people learned in the scriptures that Muḥammad would emerge from Mecca.

In contrast with the affirming accounts from Christians mentioned above, Montgomery Watt also uses the following narration from Ibn Saʿd to suggest that there are also other currents surrounding the advent of the Prophet. Watt describes that,

...a Christian orphan, being brought up by an uncle, was one day reading in his uncle's copy of the Evangel [the Gospel] when he came across a thick page, which proved to be two pasted together; he separated them and discovered a description of Muḥammad, which mentioned such points as that he was of medium height, of a fair complexion, of the seed of Ishmael, and called Aḥmad. The uncle found the boy and beat him, and when the boy said, 'This has the description of the prophet Aḥmad,' he replied, 'He has not yet come.' A similar story is told of a learned Jew, az-Zubayr b. Bāṭā; he found a book which his father had kept hidden in which there was a description of a prophet Aḥmad, but when Muḥammad began to proclaim his message at Mecca, az-Zubayr obliterated this passage and denied its existence.⁴⁴³

Unlike any other description of foreknowledge proclaimed to be from Christian scriptures, this account from Ibn Saʿd is unequivocal in stating that descriptions of Muḥammad are in the Bible and that Christians and Jews purposely corrupted the text by hiding or destroying Muḥammad's mention. What is also unique to this passage is the very distinct and negative undertone. Not only do the Christians and Jews deny Muḥammad as a prophet in this narration, but they also destroy his mention and—in the example of the orphan—beat those who discover their deeds.

⁴⁴³ W. Montgomery Watt, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible," 53-54. This passage can be found on page 426 of Ibn Saʿd's *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*. English trans. by S. Moinul Haq, assisted by H.K. Ghazanfar, vol. I.

The Account of Zayd b. ‘Amr b. Nufayl

In contrast to the Christians and Jews whom Ibn Ishāq reported on but who still denied Muḥammad’s prophethood, there is the account of Zayd b. ‘Amr b. Nufayl. Zayd was not a Christian, but was heavily influenced by one. Zayd’s story is found along with those of Waraqah b. Naufal, ‘Ubaydullah b. Jaḥsh, and ‘Uthmān al-Ḥuwayrith who all recognized the idolatry of Mecca and how the Ka’bah they circumambulated and worshipped was of no account because of the idols it contained. Thus, these men broke with polytheism and sought out true uncorrupted religion.⁴⁴⁴ Waraqah found it in Christianity and studied and mastered the scriptures.⁴⁴⁵ ‘Ubaydullah b. Jaḥsh searched until he found Islam and migrated to Abyssinia, but then became a Christian and died in Abyssinia. ‘Uthmān al-Ḥuwayrith went to the Byzantine emperor, became a Christian, and received a high office.⁴⁴⁶ However, Rubin states that “Zayd b. ‘Amr is said to have been the only one who did not adopt Judaism or Christianity but rather insisted that he worshipped the Lord of Abraham.”⁴⁴⁷

In his search for true religion, Zayd abstained from the traditions of the polytheists and publicly rebuked his people for their practices. For these actions, he was persecuted and decided to leave Mecca for al-Mauṣil in search of the Ḥanīfiya (pre-Islamic Arabian monotheists). When his wife Ṣafīya learned of his plans, she told Zayd’s uncle (al-Khaṭṭāb) who was hostile to Zayd and had already forced him to the outskirts

⁴⁴⁴ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 99.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid. Waraqah’s account will be described subsequently.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 99.

⁴⁴⁷ Uri Rubin, “Ḥanifiya and Ka’ba—An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of Din Ibrahim.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 99-100.

of Mecca in order to foil his plans. Zayd was eventually able to leave Mecca and questioned monks and rabbis for the truth during his journey.⁴⁴⁸

However, according to al-Wāqidi, Zayd had a substantial amount of foreknowledge even before leaving Mecca, which begs the question of what Zayd was searching for. Via Ibn Kathīr, there is this narration from al-Wāqidi:

“Alī b. ʿĪsā al-Ḥakamī related to me, from his father, from ʿĀmir b. Rabīʿa as follows, ‘I heard Zayd b. ʿAmr b. Nufayl say, ‘I await the coming of a prophet from the progeny of Ishmael, then from the tribe of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. I do not see myself living to his time. But I have faith in him, assert his truthfulness, and testify that he is a prophet. If you live on a long time and see him, then tell him of my greetings to him. I will inform you of his qualities so that he will not be unknown to you.’ I replied, ‘Do so then.’

‘He continued, ‘He will be a man neither tall nor short with neither much nor little hair. Redness is never absent from his eye. He bears the mark of prophethood between his shoulders. His name is to be Aḥmad and this country will be the place of his birth and his mission. Then his people will expel him from it and disapprove of his message until he will emigrate to Yathrib; and so his authority will appear.’⁴⁴⁹

It is with this elaborate array of foreknowledge already obtained that Zayd leaves Mecca.

During his search, Zayd traveled into Mesopotamia and in time came to the high ground of Balqā in Syria to a Christian monk who confirmed what Zayd had already garnered before leaving Mecca, and the monk tells him:

‘You are seeking a religion to which no one today can guide you, but the time of a prophet who will come forth from your own country which you have just left has drawn near. He will be sent with the *Ḥanīfiya*, the religion of Abraham, so stick to it, for he is just about to be sent now and this is his time.’⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 103.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 114.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 103.

What continues to be perplexing in this account is what has been described above concerning Zayd's foreknowledge even before leaving Mecca and also the directions the monk of Balqā gives to this seeker of religion. Instead of guiding the Meccan to Christianity, he instead bids him to wait for another to come and possesses prophetic knowledge of Muḥammad down to the seal between his shoulders; though without a scriptural referent. Unfortunately, after Zayd leaves Balqā for Mecca, he is killed on the way home.

The Account of Waraqah

In Chapter Two, the Muslim account of the Muḥammad/ Baḥīrā encounter was discussed. As stated therein, Martin Lings gives a very succinct recap of Baḥīrā that ties directly to Waraqah b. Naufal. Lings states that,

At Bostra [Buṣrā], near one of the halts where the Meccan caravan always stopped, there was a cell that had been lived in by a Christian monk for generation after generation. When one died, another took his place and inherited all that was in the cell including some old manuscripts. Amongst these was one that contained the predictions of the coming of a Prophet to the Arabs; Baḥīrā, the monk who now lived in the cell, was well versed in the contents of this book, which interested him all the more because, like Waraqah, he too felt that the coming of the prophet would be in his lifetime.⁴⁵¹

Thus, Lings, in recounting the various *sīra* traditions, points out that the *sīra* pointedly states that Waraqah is like Baḥīrā in knowing that a prophet was coming to Arabia, thereby making the tie between Waraqah, Baḥīrā, and other monks closely linked.

⁴⁵¹ Martin Lings, *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, 29.

As mentioned previously, Waraqah, along with three others living in Mecca, recognized the idolatry of Mecca and sought out true religion like the *Ḥanīfs*.⁴⁵² Waraqah found true religion in Christianity and studied and mastered the Biblical scriptures, yet still awaited another prophet to come from Arabia.⁴⁵³ Ibn Kathīr elaborates on Waraqah, stating,

He [Waraqah] had earlier become a Christian [this is being said during the onset of Muḥammad's revelation], and used to write the Hebrew script, copying out from the Bible in Hebrew whatever God inspired him to write. He was an old man by then, and he was blind.⁴⁵⁴

Sir William Muir speculates that Muḥammad may have even gained insights into Jesus from fragments of the Gospels copied by Waraqah since he knew Hebrew and Arabic.⁴⁵⁵

In looking at another narration from Ibn Kathīr regarding Muḥammad's onset of revelation, there is a description not readily found in Ibn Ishāq's *sīra* of when Muḥammad conveyed to Khadījah his new visions and dreams. Ibn Kathīr relates:

Khadījah said, 'Rejoice! For, by God, I well know that God will not do you anything but good. I bear witness that you are the prophet of this nation whom the Jews await. My servant Nāsiḥ and the monk Baḥīrā both told me this and advised me more than 20 years ago to marry you.' And she stayed with the Messenger of God (ṢAAS) until he had eaten, drunk, and laughed. She then went off to see the monk, who lived close by to Mecca. When she drew near and he recognized her, he said, 'What is wrong, O mistress of all the women of Quraysh?' She replied, 'I have come to you for you to tell me about Gabriel.' He replied, 'Glory be to God, our most holy Lord! How is it that Gabriel is mentioned here, in this land whose people worship idols? Gabriel is the trusted servant of God, and his envoy to His prophets and to His messengers. It is he who was the companion of Moses and Jesus.'⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵² Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 99.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 279.

⁴⁵⁵ Sir William Muir, *The life of Mohammad from original sources*, 36 & 123.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 296.

The uncanny resemblance of this encounter to interactions with Baḥīrā cannot but be noticed, but the proximity of this monk to Mecca indicates that either a) there is more than one monk that Khadījah was in close contact with or b) that Baḥīrā moved to Mecca in the years following his initial encounter with Muḥammad in Syria. Regardless of this detail, this narration shows that Khadījah was in contact and openly consulted with Christian scholars and monks and her own cousin Waraqah was one of these Christian scholars.

In this way, Khadījah's open contact with Christian scholars enabled her to be the link between Muḥammad and Waraqah at the onset of revelation. This link allowed Muḥammad to understand what was happening to him via a Christian who had studied the scriptures and believed him to be firmly experiencing divine revelation.⁴⁵⁷ Moreover, Khadījah and Waraqah are linked to Muḥammad's new experience even before Muḥammad begins having revelations from God. Ibn Ishāq states that while Muḥammad was working for Khadījah on a caravan journey,

The apostle stopped in the shade of a tree near a monk's cell, when the monk came up to Maysara [Khadījah's servant who was with him] and asked who the man was who was resting beneath the tree. He told him that he was of Quraysh, the people who held the sanctuary; and the monk exclaimed: 'None but a prophet ever sat beneath this tree.'⁴⁵⁸

Khadījah had told Waraqa b. Naufal b. Asad b. 'Abdu'l-'Uzzā, who was her cousin and a Christian who had studied the scriptures and was a scholar, what her slave Maysara had told her that the monk had said and how he had seen two angels shading him. He said, 'If this is true, Khadījah, verily Muḥammad is the prophet of this people. I knew that a prophet of this people was to be expected. His time has come,' or words to that effect.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 104.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 82.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

Thus, when Muḥammad begins having his revelatory experiences and tells Khadījah about them, she goes back to Waraqah to relate what occurred. When she told him what transpired, he states,

‘Holy! Holy! Verily by Him in whose hand is Waraqah’s soul, if thou hast spoken to me the truth, O Khadījah, there hath come unto him the greatest *Nāmūs* (Ṭ. meaning Gabriel) who came to Moses aforetime, and lo, he is the prophet of this people.’⁴⁶⁰

Upon these proclamations, there is—in addition to Baḥīrā—a preeminent Christian of the *sīra* literature affirming that Muḥammad is the next prophet. However, unlike Baḥīrā who is said to base his knowledge on scriptures passed down from monks before him, Waraqah makes his affirmation directly upon his knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. Waraqah even identifies Muḥammad with the *Nāmūs*, which as seen before, can be translated as Gabriel or the Spirit of the Law.

An interesting point that Ibn Kathīr follows up with after this pronouncement is in the literal response Waraqah gives to Khadījah in the previous narration. Ibn Kathīr states that Waraqah

...did not mention Jesus, though he came later, after Moses, because the system of religion of Muḥammad (ṢAAS) was to be a completion and fulfillment of that sent to Moses, upon both whom be peace. The valid opinion of the scholars, in what they say on this point, is that the *sharīʿa* complemented, and also abrogated, certain things in the system of Moses. As God said, ‘And so what I may make permissible to you some of what was forbidden to you’ (*sūrat Āl-ʿImrān*, II, v. 49).⁴⁶¹

Ibn Kathīr’s reference to Moses and abrogation appears to indicate a shift in belief between the perception of Baḥīrā’s pronouncement and Waraqah’s pronouncement. Though the scope of the overall polemic is focused more on Baḥīrā and his scriptural

⁴⁶⁰ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 107.

⁴⁶¹ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 287.

referent, the affirmation through Waraqah apart from Jesus, in the end, gives the impression of a significant religious shift from Christianity to the religion of Islam. This shift is different from the treatment of Baḥīrā in the Recensions as the Recensions maintain, at least nominally, that Baḥīrā remained a Christian.

The Account of Salmān of Ispahān

In the last Christian account to be addressed, there is the story of Salmān recorded in Ibn Ishāq's *sīra*. Salmān is stated to have been a Persian Zoroastrian from Ispahān. In this story, Salmān's father was so in love with Salmān that he locked him up for fear that something should happen to him. One day, Salmān's father needed him to take care of some of his farmland and, while out to do so, Salmān heard Christians praying in a church. This intrigued him. Salmān thought the Christians to have a better religion and stayed with them until nightfall before returning to his father with the knowledge that they came from Syria. His father imprisoned him for abandoning his responsibilities and forsaking Zoroastrianism for Christianity.

To escape this punishment, Salmān sent word to the Christians he met and was able to leave with them via a caravan for Syria. In Syria, he came to study under a learned Christian man, but unfortunately, Salmān saw that the man was evil and one who embezzled alms. It is at this point that the story gets unusual. Instead of shedding his mentor, Salmān is reported to have still respected and followed him and, upon the teacher's death, the Christian refers Salmān to other learned men. First, Salmān traveled to Mauṣil until that man died, then to Naṣībīn, and then to 'Ammuriya.

However, when Salmān asked for another Christian to learn from in ‘Ammuriya, the teacher stated that he knew of no other, but that a prophet would come up from Arabia in the religion of Abraham and,⁴⁶²

...would migrate to a country between two lava belts, between which were palms. He has unmistakable marks. He will eat what is given to him but not things given as alms. Between his shoulders is the seal of prophecy. ‘If you are able to go to that country, do so.’⁴⁶³

This is an interesting interaction. Between Salmān’s first and second master, the issue of taking alms is addressed and sets up the test that later occurs with Muḥammad.

After his last teacher’s death, and in light of the teacher’s proclamation, Salmān sells all his possessions and travels by caravan to Arabia to find this prophet.

Regrettably, Salmān is taken as a slave while en route and is eventually sold to a Jew in Medina. Ibn Ishāq relates that this event, however, in due course, puts Salmān in close proximity to the Prophet. This is because the house where Salmān was imprisoned and worked was close to where the prophet later migrated and enabled Salmān to sneak out one night to visit with the Prophet. During his visit, Salmān tested the Prophet based on what his last teacher instructed him to ask about the religion he sought. Salmān found all the descriptions to be true.⁴⁶⁴

This account is then followed by another report by Ibn Ishāq, which states that Salmān’s master in ‘Ammuriya tells Salmān to go to Syria, but with a different indicator other than the lava belts, sending him rather to “where there was a man who lived between two thickets.” The man who resided between the thickets healed the sick

⁴⁶² Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 95-96.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 96-98.

there every year.⁴⁶⁵ ‘Āsim b. ‘Umar b. Qatāda provides further details on this man through a reported narration from Muḥammad. This narration speaks of Salmān meeting Jesus and Jesus sending Salmān to Muḥammad. The exchange is reported as follows:

‘God have mercy on you, tell me about the *Ḥanīfiya*, the religion of Abraham.’ He replied, ‘You are asking about something men do not inquire of today; the time has come near when a prophet will be sent with this religion from the people of the *ḥaram*.⁴⁶⁶ Go to him, for he will bring you to it.’ The apostle said to Salmān, ‘If you have told me the truth, you met Jesus the son of Mary.’⁴⁶⁷

With this final statement coming from the lips of Jesus himself, Salmān is then unequivocally convinced that he has found the true religion he has sought and leaves the sphere of the Christians whom prophesied to him their foreknowledge.

Physical Descriptions of Muḥammad’s “Seal”

In light of the Jewish and Christian views of foreknowledge discussed above, Uri Rubin states that the Islamization of the Biblical descriptions claimed of Muḥammad led to the downgrading of the Bible as a means of attestation. Consequently, the “...Prophet’s description has been entirely detached from the Biblical sphere, being incorporated instead into existing literary portraits displaying Muḥammad’s outer appearance and morals.”⁴⁶⁸ The literary portrait of concern for this section regards the descriptions of Muḥammad as having a physical “seal” of prophethood on his back.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 98.

⁴⁶⁶ According to Gordon, the *ḥaram* means a boundary line marking the distinction between essentially sacred and profane territory or an inviolable place and is the boundary line to protect the sanctuary of Mecca.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 98.

⁴⁶⁸ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 34.

These descriptions are largely vague, and possibly intentionally so. However, within the Muslim accounts regarding Baḥīrā (and in other Jewish and Christian interactions), this “seal” appears to be an important function in showing the ordination of Muḥammad as a prophet and is cited when a Jew or Christian assents to Muḥammad’s prophethood. Consequently, it is profitable to examine what this seal may have looked liked.

Among biographers Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Ishāq, and Ibn Sa’d, the largest body of descriptors for Muḥammad’s “seal” comes through Christian narrations and mainly from Baḥīrā. Though the majority of the descriptions concern Baḥīrā or his counterparts, it is worthwhile to also look at an important passage from a Jewish source in the *sīra* surrounding the birth of Muḥammad. This account from Ibn Kathīr chronicles the Jew who stated exactly what the seal looked like without ever actually seeing it. The Jew professes,

‘This night a prophet has been born to this last nation; between his shoulders there is a mark consisting of successive lines of hair looking like a horse’s mane.’⁴⁶⁹

The only other description this precise comes from the modern Muslim scholar Kais al-Kalby when he presents a succinct account of Muḥammad and Baḥīrā with the added information that when Baḥīrā saw Muḥammad, he inspected him and found the seal to be the shape of a fist between his shoulders. Al-Kalby then cites Isaiah 9:6 for what Baḥīrā uses to determine that Muḥammad is the next prophet.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 152.

⁴⁷⁰ Kais al-Kalby, *Prophet Muḥammad The Last Messenger in the Bible*, 515.
Isaiah 9:6 (NASB)

However, in general, the references from which such descriptions stem (as with the Baḥīrā/ Muḥammad encounter) are vague and refer to originating from sacred scripture, yet the *sīra* attributes no explicit verse or attribution to the Bible.

Concerning the referent in this encounter, Ibn Saʿd states that Naṣṭūr (Baḥīrā) examines Muḥammad for the physical attributes that the prophet should have. Upon quizzing the Prophet and examining his body, Naṣṭūr exclaims, “By Allāh! He is a Prophet whose attributes, our scholars have noted in our scriptures,” which does, however, in some way, imply that Biblical accounts are being used.⁴⁷¹

Looking further into this account with Ibn Ishāq’s narration between Baḥīrā and Muḥammad, there is an even more sizable portion that deals with the “seal of prophethood.” For instance, upon inviting the caravan party into his cave to see the man he thought to be a prophet, Baḥīrā at once scanned the caravan members’ faces. Yet, Baḥīrā,

...could see nothing which corresponded to the description in his book, nor did there seem to be any man amongst them who was adequate to the greatness of the two miracles [a cloud that followed Muḥammad to shade him and a tree that lowered its branches to give him additional shade].⁴⁷²

However, once Muḥammad was brought in to join the group in the cell, Baḥīrā was able to examine Muḥammad closely, inspected the boy’s body, and reportedly found the traces of Muḥammad he knew from his Christian books.⁴⁷³ Martin Lings elaborate that,

One glance at the boy’s face was enough to explain the miracles to Baḥīrā; and looking at him attentively throughout the meal he noticed many features of both

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

⁴⁷¹ Ibn Saʿd. *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*, 146.

⁴⁷² Martin Lings, *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, 30.

⁴⁷³ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 80.

face and body that corresponded to what was in his book. After the meal, Baḥīrā asked to see Muḥammad's back for between his shoulders, was the very mark he expected to see, the seal of prophethood even as it was described in his book, in the selfsame place.⁴⁷⁴

Thus, the physical attribute Baḥīrā finds, Ibn Ishāq reports, is the “seal of prophethood” in the form of a mark located on his back.⁴⁷⁵

The origins of this attribute appear to not be defined in work by Uri Rubin or Gordon Newby or by the biographers who include these descriptions. What may be inferred, according to Rubin, is that within the process of Islamization of Biblical attestations, physical attributes were left to the Christian and Jewish scriptures. Using these attributes strengthened Muslim proclamations by having other people of scripture attest to Muḥammad with physical signs that could not be refuted. However, where the concept of the “seal” originated appears unknown at present, but within the scope of this chapter, it is more important to identify that those with foreknowledge, according to the *sīra* writers, used this “seal” as a strong indicator of Muḥammad's prophethood.

Conclusions

In the opening to this chapter, the questions of how individuals in Arabia knew that a prophet was coming to them and would come from within Arabia were asked. According to Watt, the origin appears to lie primarily with the infusion of Jewish messianic expectations that permeated Arabian society. This infusion was a cause for

⁴⁷⁴ Martin Lings, *Muḥammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, 30.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 80.

such expectations to seep into Arabian consciousness; especially among those of Medina, which was home to the major Jewish tribes of the Banū Qaynuqā', Qurayza, and Naḍīr. However, the influence of and imports from the *Ḥanīfiya* and Christians are also quite significant to the overall origination of foreknowledge directed towards Muḥammad's announced advent.

Addressing first the Jewish imports of a promised messiah from these tribes, their foreknowledge is explicitly asserted to be from scriptural referents in the Torah. As Ibn Ishāq asserts, these Jews appear to have gained their extensive knowledge from the Torah, albeit rather esoterically. In the accounts from Ibn Ishāq, he states that the Jews obtained from their scriptures the description of the "seal" and even gleaned supernatural insight into the behavior of the newborn Muḥammad. However, as discussed above and in previous chapters, the major vehicle for the import into Arabian thought appears to be from oral influences from Jewish converts to Islam. As a whole, the *sīra* literature portrays Jewish foreknowledge as having its origins within the Torah via messianic expectations and centers such foreknowledge within the birth, migration, and power of the Prophet.

Christian foreknowledge, as with Jewish foreknowledge, is emphatically asserted by the *sīra* writers to have the origins for their affirmations reside in their scriptures. Though it is within the Jewish account that we have the esoterically acquired and detailed description of the "seal," Christian foreknowledge reported by Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Ishāq, and Ibn Sa'd deals more so with the signs and seals of the prophet. The prime example of this is in the Muḥammad/Baḥīrā story, yet can also be seen in Waraqah's account. Ibn Kathīr related that Waraqah had mastered the Biblical

scriptures and knew both Hebrew and Arabic⁴⁷⁶ and copied from the Bible what God willed him to extract while awaiting another prophet.⁴⁷⁷ The overall importance of this exegetical exercise for the *sīra* writers is possibly to shore up the affirmation accounts by having Baḥīrā base his knowledge off of scriptures passed down from monks before him and Warāqah obtaining his knowledge explicitly from the Hebrew scriptures.

Whether actually derived from the Bible or not, the references and assertions made by Muslim biographers are indeed based on their interpretations of what the Bible proclaims of Muḥammad. As for the arrival of the biographers to this concept, it could possibly be from the confluence of Medinan Jewish Messianism and Biblical imports from Christians; i.e. a copy of John found in Medina.⁴⁷⁸ As for pre-Islamic Arab ideas, the concept is most probable to be from the *Ḥanīfiya* and from Jewish messianic hopes. Overall, the importance of relating the foreknowledge of Jews and Christians to Muḥammad was in apologetically solidifying his prophethood by combining scriptural referents with extra-Biblical accounts. For this endeavor, all of the *sīra* references to foreknowledge, whether on signs or the designation of Aḥmad, include some reference to scriptures; for the Jew it is the Torah and for the Christian, the Gospel.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, vol. I, 279.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 99.

⁴⁷⁸ Alfred Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.”

CHAPTER SIX:

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The textual traditions involving the encounter between Baḥīrā the Monk and Muḥammad testify to the existence of an inter-religious polemic dating from the eighth to ninth century CE and is found in the Christian Recensions of Baḥīrā and Muslim/Christian commentaries.⁴⁷⁹ One aspect of the polemic is centered on the Paraclete in the Gospel of John and in the *Qur'ānic* verse 61:6. Though the polemic is addressed profoundly in both the Christian Recensions and the Muslim accounts in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*, the textual source of the monk's knowledge, referred to by Ibn Ishāq as a "book passed down from generation to generation of monks," in the desert cave seems to be lost to us today. Moreover, Roggema has conclusively shown that the Recensions were formed in response to the Muslim account that cites this book. However, an issue surrounding the textual traditions of Baḥīrā is the lack of adequate scholarly discourse on the actual book Baḥīrā consults. Work on the origin and title of the book does not seem present, though extensive work has been conducted on the actual Baḥīrā/Muḥammad narrative and its Christian polemical counterparts.

Within the five key facets of the Muslim narrative, and in the biographical influences upon Ibn Ishāq and his redactor Ibn Hishām, it is evident that the narrative labeled Baḥīrā as a person knowledgeable in the scriptures and then states that the book Baḥīrā possessed was passed down from monks before him. This foreknowledge

⁴⁷⁹ Barbara Roggema, "A Christian Reading of the Qur'ān: The Legend of Sergius- Baḥīrā and Its Use of Qur'ān and *Sīra*," 58.

inherited from previous generations of monks compelled Baḥīrā to break his normal habits of ignoring the Arab caravans. Thus, we see that the scriptures Baḥīrā references for the signs and descriptions of Muḥammad form the basis for the encounter. Yet, when looking at the influences of Ibn Ishāq and his redactor Ibn Hishām on the formation of the biographical texts recording the meeting between Muḥammad and Baḥīrā, there is the possibility that the identity of the original source (that prompted Baḥīrā to engage the Arab travelers) was omitted.⁴⁸⁰ The result of present research suggests the name of the original source was included and later rejected as *Isra'īliyat* as a source fell out of favor. This may explain why the name of the book was not in Ibn Hishām's account since it would be assumed to have had a Christian origin, thereby making it an unacceptable textual source.

Ultimately, in response to the Muslim narrative of Baḥīrā, the Recensions responded to Islam in three distinct ways. The first was by developing a counter-history that rewrote the crucial events in Islamic history surrounding divine revelation and intervention and removing any claims of divine sources of revelation. The second response allowed a Christian worldview that included and allowed for the Arabs to be rulers over Christians and neutralized Islamic triumphalism. The last response enabled Christians to deal with doctrinal claims held by Muslim theologians by making the doctrines of Islam come from the distorted teachings of a Christian monk who wrote the *Qur'ān* for the Arabs.⁴⁸¹

Consequently, though the work of this heretical monk makes Christianity look unfavorable in the account, it gives the overall impression that Islam is a false religion

⁴⁸⁰ Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet*, 11

⁴⁸¹ Krisztina Szilágyi, "Muḥammad and the Monk," 175.

and the result of yet another heretic coming out of the Christian church with unorthodox doctrines. The monk confirms that Islam is temporary, and by using astrology, he also condemns himself.⁴⁸² In this way, the *Legends* utilize the apocalyptic visions and questionable methods of divination to downplay the role of Islam. The result of this action enabled the Recensions to categorize both Islam and the monk in the area of heresy and compartmentalize Islam as yet another errant ideology that was then applied *carte blanche* to all subsequent issues such as that of the Paraclete.

As for the Paraclete and the text that Ibn Ishāq cites, one can draw the conclusion that the polemic framed within the conception of the Paraclete composed a sizable portion within the greater tradition of the textual traditions of Baḥīrā. The probable source for the totality of Ibn Ishāq's reference to an unspecified textual source in the cave is asserted in this thesis to be a derivative of the Gospel of John in Medina. This is partly based on work by L. Bevan Jones, Guthrie, Bishop and F.C. Burkitt who say that the Paraclete passage in Ibn Ishāq's *sīra* comes from a Semitic source of the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary, as this lectionary was the only Syriac version where the word *Menahhemānā* occurred. Additionally, it was the only version used by Christians in Syria around Muḥammad's time. This connection to Syriac also had another foundation through the citation of Ibn Kathīr's *Sīra* with the light of prophethood being received first by Syria.

As stated above, the larger goal of this thesis is to determine the unspecified book Baḥīrā possessed from monks before him which previous scholarship has not fully addressed. Given the above findings, they indicate that Ibn Ishāq's Paraclete had its

⁴⁸² Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā*, 509.

origins in a Syriac gospel alongside an oral tradition. With this determined, if the Paraclete passage was oral, then the Baḥīrā source could be oral as well. However, in addition to a possible oral transmission, the responses within the Recensions to exegetical works by Muslims seem to indicate some form of a physical manuscript, meaning that by creating a story where Ka'b had to defend his assumptions on the prophecy of Muḥammad in the scriptures through apocryphal verses supposedly held secret, there must have been a scriptural referent in the initial story for the refutations of the Muslim view of who the Paraclete was.

A key facet to this dialogue on the Paraclete is in the effects Christian converts had upon Islam and their import of Biblical scriptures into Islam dealing with prophecies and annunciations of Muḥammad.⁴⁸³ This directly relates to the overarching idea that Biblical scriptures were being used to account for Muḥammad's annunciation in the Baḥīrā account and that the interpretation of Aḥmad as the Paraclete was most likely a result of Christian converts to Islam. As such, this interpretation of the Paraclete by converts with their oral reports led Ibn Ishāq and others to understand references in *Qur'ānic* scriptures based on their informants and used the term *balaghanī*, "it has reached me," since no book was presented to them physically with proof, but was an oral transmission fitting with their goal of creating sacred history.⁴⁸⁴

In the realm of creating sacred history, the theme of foreknowledge arises, asking how individuals in Arabia knew that a prophet was coming from within Arabia. The origin of how individuals in Arabia knew that a prophet was coming derived

⁴⁸³ Montgomery Watt, "His Name is Aḥmad," 115.

⁴⁸⁴ Alfred Guillaume, "The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina Circa 700 A.D.," 296.

primarily from the infusion of Jewish messianic expectations that permeated Arabian society.⁴⁸⁵ This infusion caused expectations to seep into the Arabian consciousness; especially among the people of Medina. The influence and imports from the *Ḥanīfiya* and Christians were significant as well to the overall origination of foreknowledge directed towards Muḥammad's announced advent. Moreover, the references and assertions made by Muslim biographers are indeed based on their conceptions of what the Bible proclaimed of Muḥammad.

Consequently, scholars like Newby, Rubin, and Watt conclude that the origins of this foreknowledge for Muslim biographers was derived from the confluence of Medinan-Jewish Messianism and Biblical imports from Christians; i.e. a copy of John found in Medina. As for pre-Islamic Arab ideas, it most probably came from the *Ḥanīfiya* and from Jewish messianic hopes. Overall, the importance of relating the foreknowledge of Jews and Christians to Muḥammad was in apologetically solidifying his prophethood by combining scriptural referents with extra-Biblical accounts. For this thesis, all of the *sīra* references to foreknowledge after those derived from the *Qur'ān*, whether on signs or the designation of Aḥmad, included some reference to scriptures.

Though the mystery of the original book in the narrative does not appear to be unraveled by previous work by other scholars, by combining what is known about the Gospel of John and of Ibn Ishāq's method of source collection, the ancient manuscript that Baḥīrā is reported to have used and of which announced the forthcoming of a prophet is most likely the result of a particular translation of the Syriac Lectionary of

⁴⁸⁵ W. Montgomery Watt, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible," 51.

the Gospel of John along with Ibn Ishāq's personal vision of sacred history that was influenced by oral traditions and the permeation of foreknowledge in Arabian society.

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