

Jesus in Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Dermot A. Lane

The following is a Jewish-Christian Muslim dialogue on Jesus in the form of three brief review articles on a book and a response by the book's author. The book is by a Christian, and the reviews are by a

Jew, another Christian, and a Muslim. The book at the basis of this dialogue is Dermot A. Lane's *The Reality of Jesus* (Dublin: Veritas Press, 1975), 180 pp., fl.80, paper; American edition: (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 180 pp.

INTRODUCTION

There are many important potential topics of dialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but one of the most key is the significance of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is central to Christianity, and is both the central bridge and barrier between Christianity and Judaism, and Christianity and Islam. Obviously the three-way dialogue on Jesus here is only the most modest of beginnings. However, the longest of journeys must start with a first step.

Leonard Swidler

Fathi Osman

The current renewal taking place in theology could be summed up in terms of a return to the origins of Christianity. This going back to the beginnings brings us into direct contact with the person of Jesus Christ.... [T]he full mystery of Jesus Christ can be broken down into two parts.... (a) the Christ-Event, and (b) the universal significance of that event for understanding life itself.... The historical side of the Christ-Event consists in the given fact that a man called Jesus of Nazareth appeared two thousand years ago within the history of Judaism. The theological significance of this fact is to be found in the confession that this Jesus of Nazareth is the definitive visitation of God to mankind in history.... The Jesus part of [the simple formula "Jesus Christ"] refers to the historical side of the Christ-Event, whereas the Christ part embraces the theological significance of this given fact. Unfortunately popular usage has tended to employ the word "Christ" as a proper name for Jesus of Nazareth whereas in primitive Christianity the word "Christ" was a title designating a specific function within the socioreligious traditions of Judaism. A more accurate way therefore of using this formula would be to talk to Jesus who is called the Christ....¹

This introduction by Dr. Dermot A. Lane to his book *The Reality of Jesus* is so attractive to a Muslim reader. According to the Muslim faith, the Muslim accepts the historical fact of Jesus, and so can meet with such a Christian analysis about Jesus Christ half way. A matter of "significance" can naturally tolerate different points of views, and thus Muslims would not feel so far from Christians if the gap between them has been simply identified as a difference in understanding the theological significance of a certain fact which is admitted by both, however serious this difference of understanding may be. This approach to the "mystery of Jesus" is fruitful in addressing non-Christian readers of this interesting book, especially Muslims.

The author does not like to introduce "Christology from above," a way which "tends to take for granted the divinity of Jesus Christ."² He points out that another choice would be "to begin Christology from the other end, concentrating on the man Jesus giving rise to what is called a 'low Christology' which starts 'from below'."³ However, Dr. Lane makes it clear that one can adopt such a low Christology as a starting point "and then proceed to allow this starting point to be drawn in whatever direction one's study of the Christian sources dictates."⁴ A third possibility "would seem to present itself here that would steer a middle course between the two extremes of a closed low Christology and a rigidly high Christology."⁵ An instruction from Rome in 1964 points out that there are "'three stages of tradition' behind the gospels as we know them today. These are first of all the original words and deeds of the historical Jesus which were delivered according to 'the methods of reasoning and exposition which were in common use at the time'. The second layer... is made up of the oral proclamation by the apostles of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus"⁶ and their fuller understanding "of the words and deeds of the historical Jesus in the light of the Resurrection and Pentecostal experiences."⁷ At last the compilation of this apostolic preaching into the written form of the gospels as known today comes as a third layer. The Instruction indicated "the importance of taking into consideration the origin and composition of the gospels as well as making due use of 'the legitimate findings of recent research'"⁸ so as to ensure a full understanding of the texts.

In this way, a Muslim can see that the differences between the Muslim faith in Jesus and the Christian faith may be put as a problem of understanding and interpreting "the words and deeds of a historical Jesus," a layer which came after the historical facts. At most, it would be a problem of misunderstanding on the side of any of the two parts, more than a problem of an intentional forging or deluding. The Qur'an refers clearly to a special place of Jesus in his relation to God, which is different from the place of any other prophet, even if the Qur'an rejects the notion that Jesus may be called "Son of God": "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that he committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not 'three'...God is only one God. Glory be to Him-that He should have a son" (4/171). According to the Qur'anic terminology "a Messenger of God" may not be an ordinary man: "Praise belongs to God ... who appointed the angels to be Messengers" (35/1). A special relation between Jesus and the "Holy Spirit"-the "Spirit of the Holiness" as expressed in the Qur'an-is also mentioned: "And we gave Jesus son of Mary the clear signs, and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit" (2/253): "When God said, 'Jesus son of Mary, remember my blessing upon thee and upon thy mother, when I confirmed thee with the Holy Spirit, to speak to men in the cradle and of age; and when I taught thee the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, the Gospel; and when thou created out of clay by my leave as the likeness of a bird and thou breathest into it and it is a bird by My leave, and thou healest the blind and the leper by My leave, and thou bringest the dead forth by My leave..." (5/110). A Muslim scholar from India-probably a Shi'i as his name shows, Dr. Hasan Askari-has referred to such significant verses in an interesting article in this Journal before.⁹

In regard to the end of Jesus' life, the Qur'an states: "When God said, 'Jesus, I will bring thee to death, and I will raise thee to Me, and I will purify thee of those who believe not. I will set thy followers above the unbelievers till the Resurrection Day'" (3/55). The other Qur'anic statement about the event may not be seen as really contradictory, if it is not interpreted literally as dealing with the historical event or the physiological death: "...and for their-the Jews'-saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God-yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them ... and they slew him not of a certainty-no indeed; God raised him up to Him" (4/157-8).

On the other hand, through dealing with "a historical minimum in the life of Jesus,"¹⁰ Dr. Lane states that "Jesus appears first and foremost as a man among men... He experienced fatigue, hunger, disappointment, loneliness and the usual limitations in knowledge that belong to the human condition... Jesus is seen as a Rabbi... Jesus is understood as a prophet within the long line of prophets that had gone before him."¹¹ In his introduction, the author mentions that "a low-ascending Christology reinstates the mystery of Jesus Christ in its original biblical context where it properly belongs. Within this original context biblical research would seem to suggest that the New Testament Christology itself began with the man Jesus."¹² In this light, a Christian may see the Muslim's faith in Jesus as preliminary, but not false or intentionally depreciating. It is true that the author mentions also that "Jesus emerges as one speaking with great authority ... In particular his claim to forgive sins highlights this authority... Most of all Jesus appears as one who dares to assume a unique personal closeness to... God ... This allows him to address Yahweh as Abba-Father."¹³

However, Dr. Lane indicates that the details of the arrest, the trial, and the execution "are extremely difficult to disentangle from a critical point of view."¹⁴ The interpretation of these events was also difficult, even for the disciples of Jesus themselves who understood the death of Jesus on the cross as a failure, and so "The cross was indeed both a stumbling block and a sheer scandal."¹⁵ The author reminds us more than once that "...the mystery of Jesus Christ is a reality that took hundreds of years to fully unfold itself into a clearly defined framework."¹⁶

He points out that "the formulation of [the] relationship between Jesus and the monotheistic God of Judaism took place in various stages ... He is identified as the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant, the Son of God, the Lord, the Son of David, and eventually as the Word. These titles initially at least were functional ... Gradually these titles, through the experience of prayer and worship, took on a confessional dimension ... Eventually with the expansion of Christianity into the Hellenistic world the ontological implications of both function and confession were spelled out."¹⁷ Dr. Lane gives a significant clarification of the difficulties which surround the interpretation of the Christ-Event as a result of the historical environment. He says, "Because the earliest formulation of the Christ-Event in the Palestinian community was centered around Jesus as the Christ who is to come in the Parousia, it would seem that the particular question of the precise relationship between Jesus and God did not arise explicitly at this early stage."¹⁸ "Jesus is never called God in the Synoptics or in the early preaching of the Acts of the Apostles. Instead most of the evidence ... is concentrated in the latter half of the first century.... [The destruction of the temple necessitated a clear break for Christianity away from the confines of Judaism with its strict Monotheism."¹⁹ Whenever these historical circumstances are admitted, the climate for an inter-religious dialogue becomes so convenient for all the concerned parts. As Dr. Lane puts it, "The initial foundations in the New Testament of the universal significance of the Christ-Event that we have been exposing ... were to become the object of theological reflection and heated debate in subsequent centuries. Within the cross-fire of ideas it was to take another four hundred years to iron out clearly the full universal significance of the Christ-Event."²⁰

Dr. Lane's deep treatise of *The Reality of Jesus* allots three chapters after the introduction-46 pages-to the historical part of "the Christ-Event," while the approximately 100 remaining pages are devoted to the theological interpretation. The reader-especially the non-Christian-will perhaps be eager to delve further into the historical research than does the author in this book, but the Irish publisher reminds us on the cover that the book, "integrates the findings of biblical research with the developments of dogmatic theology. It brings together the 'old' and the 'new' into a fresh synthesis. In particular the book has been written for preachers, teachers, and students of the good news of Jesus Christ." These particular readers of course will be more interested in the theological interpretation. However, it is very promising for inter-religious dialogue that a Catholic theologian provides such historical and critical background of the "Christ-Event" for the present and coming generations of Christian theologians. Dr. Lane explains precisely how different interpretations of the Christ-Event can rise: "Obviously the mode of existence belonging to the risen Christ of faith is radically different and therefore discontinuous with the mode of historical existence which attached to the earthly life of Jesus. It is in this sense that there is a distinct dimension of discontinuity, a discontinuity which is specifically historical. The reality of the risen Christ of faith is unhistorical or better, trans-historical, and is therefore to that extent discontinuous with the Jesus of history."²¹

A Muslim reader would appreciate such statements of the Irish Catholic theologian about the relation of Jesus Christ to God as the following:

It is important to distinguish here between the revelation of a reality and the reality itself. The expression of a reality especially through the historical revelation of that reality is not equivalent to the reality itself. If this were not so there would be no expression or revelation but rather pure naked reality. The mystery of Jesus Christ is the expression or revelation of God to man in historical form. The mystery of God however is not exhausted in Jesus. There can never be a total expression of God on the level of creation. The finite can never contain the totality of the infinite. The mystery of

Jesus Christ is the key to the mystery of God. It must not, however, take away the mystery of God. In the light of these observations it is much more desirable to talk therefore about Jesus as the image of the invisible God than to talk simply about Jesus as God.²²

The Incarnation... is not an isolated exception but rather the definitive culmination of a process already set in motion through the gift of creation. To this extent creation is the basis of Incarnation and Incarnation is the fullness of creation. In a certain sense creation is itself a form of "incarnation" in that it mediates however obscurely traces of the divine power and presence which become formalized in the Christ-Event.²³

[The] suggestion that the Incarnation is a mystery continually taking place around us in the light of the mystery of Jesus Christ is acknowledged by the Second Vatican Council when it points out that "by his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man." Here the Council clearly recognizes the equality, the dignity, and the sacredness of each and every individual as the vehicle of God's incarnate grace.²⁴

[This] reintroduces the mystery of Jesus Christ into the mystery of God. For too long Christology has been divorced from theology... Indeed at times Christology tended to become an end in itself. This can be seen in certain forms of myopic christocentricism which can be misleading.²⁵

More recently another Catholic theologian, the German Hans Küng, in his latest work, *On Being a Christian*, "doubts that Christ pre-existed in the Godhead before his human birth and believes the early church's definitions of the deity of Christ to be Hellenistic. To him the point is simply that God was present in Jesus revealing himself and making known his claims on man and his offer of forgiveness. The test of being a Christian 'is not to this or that dogma... but the acceptance of faith in Christ and imitation of Christ'" (Time, January 3, 1977). In regard to "salvation," the author of *The Reality of Jesus* emphasizes "the Catholic tradition which acknowledges the necessary role that man must play in the coming to be of faith... [and which] is summarized in the doctrine of 'justification by faith and good works'." ²⁶ This doctrine implies without prejudice to the priority of God's invitation that man must cooperate actively in the reception of the divine gift of faith."²⁷

The writer of this review, being a Muslim, finds in such a statement a solid ground for a fruitful dialogue between Muslims and Christians, and hopes that more parallel efforts would be made by Muslim theologians in understanding and expressing a Qur'an Christology.

Zalman M. Schachter

Treat this discussion as an exercise in hope. I would for this moment only suspend past pains and disappointments and suspend also my conviction that where we are now as Jews and Christians is better than any other place-better because it is our reality. Further, I also believe that the separate voices of our official religions will ultimately contribute more in the

unanimous peace in praise of G-d than a plain chant in which all blend...

There is little that a Jew can say upon reading Lane. This book puzzles me. Here is a man who documents how all of present-day Christology hangs on a hair. The farther he returns to the past the more traces of the unique, special, the second person of the Trinity vanish and what remains is a teacher of Aggadic Pharisaism who differed from the other teachers of Halakhic Pharisaism.

Lane's method is a sort of last-ditch stand when a person encounters the conflicting claims of historic material and of creedal dogma. The two are not compatible and the means of the low-ascending theology are just not able to sway the historian while the believer is threatened by the historic stuff which makes his or her lush creedal significance to his or her Christ who pales into one of the many teachers in the Sitz im Legen which the historian gives, then why bother believing? I cannot believe that just another rabbi teaching Aggadah to fisher-folk would excite the regular Christian to participate in a Mass done in Jesus' memory. So who is Christ?

Call him by his Hebrew term, the Mashiah, anointed one, and claim his descent from David in order that there will be fulfilled that "a sprout come forth from Jesse..." and you run into the trouble of. (a) The job description given to that messiah has not been fulfilled by him. The irenic order of universal Shalom has not yet arrived. As we are told of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk who, when he lived in Jerusalem, once heard a madman blow the ram's horn on the holy Temple mount. When people came to him and said "The Messiah has arrived; he blew the ram's horn." R. Mendel opened the window, looked out, and said, "No. He has not come. Everything is still as it was before." The state of exile continues unrelieved and for us Jews aggravated by inquisitions, expulsions, pogroms, and extermination camps. One might cry out: "If it is as you say that you are saved-how come you make us suffer so much?" No, the seat of the Davidic Messiah has not yet been occupied by his rightful descendant, and that is that. And (b) What sense is there in the genealogy which traces Joseph's descent from David if Joseph had nothing to do with the biological event of Jesus' birth? So, even if the Shalom order had arrived, Jesus could not be billed as the Davidic Prince of Peace. Both on the fact of exile and on the theory of Davidic descent, we have no Messiah as yet. To some extent I feel ashamed to raise those old disputed issues, but somehow the Christologist is not ashamed to lay the heavy claims on Jesus and there is after all this tradition which we Jews experience in countless ways as leaning on us and urging us to accept this Christ as the Messiah we expect, and we can only push back by retorting: We will accept a biological descendant of David as the Messiah when through him the Shalom order is established.

But wait, is there only one messiah spot for Jesus to occupy? Ever since the break between Judah and Joseph, the Kingdom of Israel from the Kingdom of Judah, there has been a claim for the coming of a Messiah, son of Joseph. This Messiah comes not to redeem sinners-this belongs to the Davidic Messiah-but to redeem the righteous and to teach them that they too need to come to Teshuvah (turning-metanoia). Being a descendant of Joseph the Zaddik he, as the Midrash (Vayosha 24) has it, will, after having served as a leader of the Jewish troops, be killed by a warrior from the West named Armilus (Romulus). He is, as the Jewish tradition places him, the righteous suffering servant of Isaiah 53 who is to be martyred. Let's put this together. An Ephraimite, a descendant of Joseph who comes from Galilee (no need for the census story at all), who lives an exemplary holy life (perhaps there is an underplaying of other companions he may have had in favor of fisherfolk, publicans, and sinners which may have helped in making converts among the Gentiles of the Roman empire, but not in Jerusalem where Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea become more important), and is martyred by "Romulus" could very well have become the Mashiah ben Joseph for Jews. If Christians would have so spoken of Jesus then the chances are that Jews would have been able to join Christians in the Good Friday lament al count Jesus as one of the ten Martyrs of the State and included his death with that of Rabbi Aqiba in the dirges of the Yom Kippur martyrology. Jews could have even added the extra bite of bread at the conclusion of the meal as a memorial and have had a cup of thanksgiving-Eucharist-for the same intention and prayed in the daily liturgy for the resurrection of the Josephite Messiah that he might lead us to meet the Messiah ben David. But ... the Gospel writers were prisoners of hope. Too impatient to postpone their hopes for the salvation of this world, they pushed it up to heaven, and as soon as the temporal order was in their hands Christians became triumphalists in an unredeemed world.

Not content to assign the dignity of Messiah Ben Joseph to Jesus, claims were made for the New Adam that the world's condition refused to substantiate and all the transubstantiations subsequently did not change the accidents of wine, bread, death, and martyrdom.

But why identify the second person of the Trinity with the Messiah and come with inflated claims when we can, instead of turning to the synoptics, turn to John? His formulation of Jesus as the Memra, the Logos, the Word that was G-d, was with G-d, was made flesh creates the more significant Christology. Of the three tasks so well described by Rosenzweig in his Star of Redemption, Creation, Revelation, and Redemption, the real claim was made that Jesus is the Revelation. That equates Jesus with Torah, not with Mashiah. If there be a being who so lives as the Creator in Heaven wishes the being to live that he or she becomes a living Torah, at least Jews of a mystical, aggadic, Kabbalistic-Hassidic persuasion seem to have a stronger theological warrant for dialogue. The Zaddik is G-d's possibility for humanity in a physical body. The Zaddik is Torah, who decrees and G-d agrees; for the Zaddik's sake the all was created. "G-d does not need a world," the Maggid of Mezerich teaches, but since Zaddikirn like to lead worlds, he creates worlds for them. Zaddikim can heal and help, but most of those who see them utter the blessing. "Blessed art Thou L-rd our G-d King of the Universe who has apportioned of thy wisdom to them who fear thee." The Zaddik, at once an archetypal model for behavior, is also an accessible model and anyone who will follow the Zaddik-in the older sense of imitatio-can also become a zaddik. There are tractates of all other commandments in the Talmud, but for Love, Faith, Awe, and devotion only a living Zaddik can serve a generation as the tractate of the duties of the heart.

The Zaddik is the Sinai event for all those who stand in a positive relationship to the Zaddik. The Zaddik serves the souls of the disciples and devotees as a general soul which is for the disciple the interface to G-d's grace, light, and love on this plane. Now all those teachings are more compatible to the soteric claim of Christianity. The Paraclete, the mediator, the WAY to the Creator, all these are what the Zaddik is for mystical Jews and the Torah is for all Jews in general. The Christian can say that, fulfilling the Torah, Jesus became the Torah now immanent in his heart and soul without making at the same time the extravagant claim for Jesus to be the fulfillment of the redemption. For, although the Torah was given at Sinai, no Jew expected that this would so transform the whole world that it would usher in the irenic realm of G-d's kingdom. It is on the contrary a revelation-a survival guide and handbook of how to manage in a world that is not yet redeemed.

Having stated the above from a Jewish position, is this not also close to the Christian one? The final redemption still awaits another COMING. In the meantime, there is the word made flesh, the paradigm of the fullest G-d in the fullest human, the sotor, reconciler, connector to the Creator. On the Jewish side such an open and clear statement gives possibility to the notion that Jesus is for Christians who follow in his footsteps, pray in his name to the Creator, love one another as he had loved his disciples, and await the redemption with the light of the world having poured itself-kenosis-into the souls of his followers. He is the word that the Christian hears spoken of the Creator in the tongue of the man, the rebbe from Nazareth. His followers once named Nazarenes can now be seen by Jews as Nazarener Hassidim. in the same way as Jews who follow the Satmarer Rebbe as Satmarer Hassidim and those who follow the Belzer are Belzer Hassidim.

There is yet a deeper aspect of Christology worth considering from the principle of dialogue. There is the experience of the Christ (I do not mean the Messiah aspect, but the Son of G-d aspect) which is the confidant, the compassionate, the Holy, the one who is all sacred heart, who is the love of G-d which is also the G-d is love and he who abides in love abides in G-d and G-d in him. True, this aspect is far from the ken of the exoteric Jew but close to the esoteric one who is a hassid or follows the kabbalah. I remember a conversation I once had visiting the late Thomas Merton at Gethsemani. Merton responded to my question what the Trinity meant to him by quoting the Greek fathers who said that G-d is awesome might and creative power is the Father, G-d as loving and compassionate and working to bring all souls to their reconciliation and salvation in the Son. G-d as this love is revealed to the human mind and gives human being the revelation of G-d's will and wisdom is the Holy Spirit. I responded to this that I believe that G-d creates, and, if this dimension of an infinite number of dimensions is talked about under the name "Father," this has not only enough biblical

and theological warrant for Jews but is no point of quarrel. That God loves and in this capacity is called the Son also makes a certain amount of sense to a kabbalist. For in the Zohar the Tetragrammaton is interpreted to mean YHVH as follows: Y is the Father-Hokhmah, wisdom. H is the Mother-Binah, understanding. V is the Son-Ziyr Anpin, the heart and the compassion, the one really pointed to in the YHVH; and H at the end is the Daughter-the Shekhinnah, the sabbath, the divine presence and, yes, the Ruah Haqodesh-the Holy Spirit. As long as we do not exclude the other manifestations by declaring that there are only three, we have further room for dialogue and understanding. Now it is also true that the Kingdom of the YHVH has not yet begun on this earth and, as Zechariah foretold, that will happen on "THAT DAY on which YHVH will be one and His name ONE."

What this calls for is a willingness to admit that all our formulations about G-d are nothing but tentative stammerings of blind and exiled children of Eve responding to the light deeply hidden in the recesses of their nostalgic longing for the untainted origin in which one needed not to look through the glass darkly but could see. This can even make us proud of our traditions and heritage as the storehouse of those stammerings of the souls that were filled by G-d with the grace of that holy moment that defied definition and that was forced by ecclesiastical lawyers to be encapsulated in a stateable wording. The mistake that was made was to take the ecstatic exclamations of the overwhelmed souls and to make them numbered articles of creeds instead of acts of faith made in fear and trembling.

It is this move which, for all the balance in Lane's book, he did not make. It is indeed difficult to say that the magisterium of the church-that the Torah and all its commentaries-are deo gratis what we do have and treasure, but only as the human snapshots of moments of G-d's nearness; that, although we cannot improve on the divine which flows into our vessels, we can and must take responsibility for keeping these vessels clean and transparent and not at all as essential as the light they contain. Perhaps we are as dogmatists, small souls of small faith who do not dare trust that G-d will be with us as G-d was with our forbears and that G-d will not abandon us nor forsake us.

It then behoves the poor of the spirit of all creeds and denominations to support each other in the desperate acts of faith which we make in the face of the exile and the holocausts and enter into a dialogue among fellow servants and children of one Creator.

Gerard S. Sloyan

It is not often that a scholar interested in the reality of Jesus masters modern critical study of his message and by indirection his person, as well as what Christian tradition has made of him doctrinally as the Christ of God, in the interests of a modern synthesis of the two. Protestant scholarship tends to take a giant step from modern criticism, either historically skeptical in a Bultmann-to-Conzelmann line or admitting more historical validity to the gospels over a Käsemann-to-Jeremias spectrum, to a presentation of Jesus Christ as the object of the church's faith. Even those such as Pannenberg and Moule or J. A. T. Robinson who try to keep a foot in the other camp, biblical in the first case and systematic in the other two, are not greatly troubled by the inhibitions imposed by the christological councils on the results of critical-historical method. Roman Catholic expositors of the mystery of Jesus Christ, for their part, tend to be at ease in systematic categories (e.g., Rahner, Kasper) of biblical (e.g., Vawter, Brown), but not to take on the complex task of viewing Christ through second-, fifth-, and twentieth-century eyes.

The Irish Catholic scholar whose work is here under review reports creditably on work in progress in the several disciplines. What emerges is a Jesus Christ in whom the learned and those acquainted with the problems which the learned face can believe. Missing from the treatment is any attempt to cope with faith in Christ on mythical terms apart from the historical, such as characterizes numerous contributors to John Hick's recent symposium, *The Myth of God Incarnate*. Dermot Lane means to be historically grounded throughout. A problem that necessarily arises from this choice is his insufficient attention to religious myth in the period of the formation of the gospels and, on new terms, of the Church Fathers and the early councils. The determined attempts of the latter at clear speech about the ineffable, which included some philosophical language, do not eliminate the mythic component from the formulas arrived at. The terms of myth (even "Father," "Son," and "Spirit") are poetic and dramatic, and no attempts to speak of its historical or ontological correlate can dispel the questions it raises.

The overall report submitted by Dr. Lane on the present state of biblical, historical, and systematic scholarship in Christology is so well done that to cavil at certain small matters could seem ungenerous. A resume of his achievement should therefore precede attention to a few points of criticism. He holds throughout for the continuity between the creation, defined as God's continued support of finite being, and the work of human salvation achieved through the Incarnation. The manifestation of God "perfectly" through the man Jesus is the high point of God's self-disclosure through creatures. The latter can be called an incarnation of God with a lower-case "i." Consequently, the enfleshing or en-manning of God's Logos is not to be thought of as a sharp break with all that went before, least of all as the correction of an initial blunder on God's part or failure to create humanity in grace. The Christology of this book is Scotist in its contention that God was fittingly revealed in a man at a certain point in history, apart from the need to redeem humanity from sin. Dr. Lane draws on Teilhard's exposition of the cosmic Christ, which in turn derives from the hymnic developments found in Col. 1 and Eph. 1. His modern theological mentor is Karl Rahner, whose evolutionary Christology holds that the universal human capacity for self-transcendence, to which God's reaching out to every human being corresponds, achieves its peak in Jesus of Nazareth. That Incarnation is unique because of both God's unique choice of Jesus and the latter's unique obedience. The matter is put this way: "Jesus different in kind in his relationship with God but not to the extent that he becomes isolated from the rest of mankind with whom he has [is?] fully identified. This difference in kind is based on his difference in degree from the rest of mankind."²⁸ As is frequently the case in *The Reality of Jesus*, this statement does not receive the metaphysical justification it requires. Rather, reference is provided to two other authors who make the same affirmation. This is not said in criticism so much as in illustration of the limits of a sketch as brief as the present one. Rahner's extended treatment, found in several dense essays, goes on to hold that the personal union of God's Logos with each risen saint will constitute no less than a multitude of personal Incarnations, that of the one Mediator Jesus preserving its unique character from his earthly days. The Lane thesis does not explore his hypothetical question.

It is essential to the author's argument that the historical character of the Incarnation claimed for Jesus (a dogma which gradually unfolded itself upon the infant church, as the divinity of Jesus became clear²⁹) be maintained. He is convinced that the "only mode of access we have to the divine Sonship of Jesus is in and through his humanity."³⁰ Elsewhere, he states that the "perfection of humanity mediates divinity so that by being true Man Jesus is true God... [He] realizes in the fullest possible way the graced capacities of man and thereby incarnates a real (hypostatic) unity between God and man."³¹ Since the pre- and post-resurrection continuity of the man Jesus is essential to belief in a historical and not merely a mythical figure-though faith in him as risen to life in the final age necessarily mythicizes him-the gospels must record a discernible historical figure, or they provide no basis for the kind of faith the church professes. "As a general rule we can say that the 'higher' Christology tends to become [viz, maintaining the descent of the Logos into humanity], the greater the need to return to the historical Jesus as a source and check."³² Historical research into the gospels must be seen as a permanent and necessary feature of contemporary Christology, safeguarding our understanding of the full mystery of Jesus Christ.

In Chapter 3, "Rediscovering the Historical Jesus," Dr. Lane explores the first layer of gospel material which discloses him as an "eschatological prophet" whose "words and deeds ... brought him into direct conflict with the official leaders of Judaism."³³ This chapter is perhaps the least rigorous of all for, while giving evidence of the complexity of the problem of discovering Jesus' authentic sayings, it largely sets the problem aside and posits a quite arguable authentic core. The statement in a later chapter is more guarded, which holds for the "eschatological suggestiveness of the words and deeds of Jesus such as the announcement of the Kingdom of God, the critical call to repentance, the setting up of a new table

fellowship, and the promise of salvation."³⁴ There is a very subtle distinction to be made here which the Irish scholar fails to make, namely between the traditional materials, already theologically developed, which are the first stratum of the gospels, and undeveloped historical reminiscences of which the present gospels provide no examples. In failing to make the distinction he gives the impression that the words and deeds of Jesus, leading to the teaching which he lists above, are fairly readily available as history. This is simply not true. It is compounded by the attribution to Jesus of various phrases that are clearly examples of Matthean or Johannine thought. This practice is strange in its omission of a caution which the author could easily have issued. In brief, the important claim for the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth is weakened by being insufficiently minimal and even by the false insinuations, through inadvertence, of its wider extent. Throughout, there is a mild insensitivity to the Jews when gospel statements about them are paraphrased.

An observation needs to be made about Dr. Lane's suggestion that, "What was formerly called person now approximates to what we call nature and what was known as nature in the past is understood today as person."³⁵ Three modern authors are cited in support of this contention which, if it were widely thought to be true, would cut several Gordian knots. In fact, however, Nestorius in proposing his "person of the union" in the spirit of Dr. Lane's suggestion could not convince his contemporaries at Ephesus that he did not have in mind a second principle of unity in Christ. Moreover, reference to "the impression given by Apollinarius and continued by Cyril to some extent that the human nature had no hypostasis thus implying that it was an impersonal an-hypostatic human nature," is not only a considerable understatement, but also the very reason why neither Cyril nor III Constantinople (A.D. 680-681)-which specified the Logos as the one hypostasis in Christ-would let the Lane position stand.

If he is right about the exact reverse understanding of person and nature then and now, he must be referring to the situation before and possibly at Nicaea (325) which successively faded through the period of Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), and II Constantinople (553). In any case, forgetting his own counsel, he writes: "This union of God and man in Jesus is an absolute and complete union so that we can say Jesus is the Word Incarnate and mean by this that Jesus is the divine person (hypostasis) of the Logos, who is the perfect self-expression of God, made flesh."³⁶ That is perfectly good Cyrillian doctrine, whereas consistency on the author's part would have required the statement that Jesus possesses the divine nature (hypostasis) of the Logos, which is the perfect expression of God, and in him is made flesh. That consistency might have made the ecclesiastical censor read the sentence twice. It would also have drawn a Cyrillian thunderbolt. The present reviewer happens to think it a better expression of the mystery.

These observations are minor in light of the overall excellence of the author's achievement. He has provided a Christology well suited to those determined to hold fast to the historical character of the gospels and the traditions of the church. If at times his irenic spirit has led him to reconcile opposites out of the Christian past, correction can be made in future editions.

Dermot A. Lane

Much progress has been made over the last ten years in the area of interfaith discussions among the major religions of the world. The emergence of the "global village" through easy travel facilities and instant tele-communications has opened up fundamental questions about religious differences. More explicitly, from the Catholic side, the Second Vatican council, especially through its Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate), 1965, created a new climate of openness toward and dialogue with the major religions of the world. Within this situation the Catholic Church singled out the unique position of the Judaic and Muslim religions (N.A.a.4; N.A. a.3; L.G. a.5). In 1974, the Holy See set up two new commissions; one for Islam, and the other for Judaism. In January, 1975, "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate" were issued. These initiatives by the Catholic

Church have done a lot to break down prejudices and misunderstandings on all sides.

One of the problems of interfaith dialogue and dialogue at the international level is that it tends to become bogged down by questions of procedure, protocol, and diplomacy. In addition when dialogue does take place it often addresses issues which by-pass fundamental questions. For instance discussions about the relationship between the church and Israel or the Bible and the Qur'an must sooner or later return to the fundamental questions of Jesus. To this extent the editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies is to be commended for initiating an interfaith discussion around the foundational reality of Jesus.

Though *The Reality of Jesus* was primarily written with a view to working out the significance of Jesus within a Christian perspective, it is all the more interesting to have an inspection of one's work from the outside by a Jew and a Muslim as well as by a fellow Christian. I, therefore, welcome and value the observations of all three participants in this discussion.

In the short space allotted to me I can only briefly comment on the more significant suggestions of my reviewers and then go on to indicate some of the key areas of development in Christology that might be of interest to a Jewish-Christian-Muslim-trialogue.

Fathi Osman's reading *The Reality of Jesus* as a Muslim is most interesting and encouraging. He has clearly grasped the general thesis of the book. He keenly appreciates the value of a low-ascending-Christology from a Muslim point of view. His acknowledgement of the fact that as a Muslim he can go along "half way" with the christological analysis outlined in *The Reality of Jesus* is a clear indication of the progress taking place in the Muslim-Christian encounter as well as an invitation to future dialogue. Osman's response is a vindication of the importance of the historical approach in theology when dealing with interfaith questions.

I must confess to finding the reaction of Zalman Schachter puzzling. He begins by adopting a highly literalistic critique of *The Reality of Jesus* and of Christianity in general. He objects that he will only "accept a biological descendant of David as the Messiah when through him the Shalom order is established." He then proceeds to outline from a Kabbalistic point of view a series of most interesting and suggestive ideas about Jesus that might be explored in dialogue. These include Jesus as "the word made flesh, paradigm of the fullest G-d in the fullest human, the soter, reconciler, connector to the Creator ... the compassionate, the Holy, the one who is all sacred heart, who is the love of G-d..." In fact, Prof. Schachter will find on pp. 117-146 of *The Reality of Jesus* bases other than mystical for a discussion of these very suggestive points.

From a Christian point of view, Gerard Sloyan has many helpful and constructive observations to make. He put his finger on a christological nerve-center when he asks about the use of the terms "person" and "nature." There is the patristic period whose usage is the least clearly defined in spite of conciliar statements; then there is the later received interpretation of these terms through Aristotelian-Thomistic ontology; and finally there is the twentieth-century psychological understanding of the terms. When I claim there has been a reversal in the meaning of these terms, I am referring to the second and third phases. It might be argued, as Walter Kasper does, that these two are complementary and that taken together they reflect what the first phase was about. This is an attractive solution, but it raises serious questions as to the meaning of pre-twentieth-century traditional Christology. Does it necessarily follow that several

Gordian knots would have to be cut if one holds that "person" and "nature" have come to mean something quite different today from what they meant, say in the last two centuries? Surely our contact with the living tradition of Christianity does not depend simply on verbal continuity.

If progress is to be made in the Jewish-Christian encounter, then it is essential that we take a more extensive look at the relationship that exists between Jesus and Judaism. For too long it has been said that Jesus makes sense only "over and against" Judaism. This simplistic point of view has been a source of much Antisemitism in Christian circles. However, critical studies in recent times by Jews and Christians clearly bring out the Jewishness of Jesus and his teaching (G. Vermes, D. Flusser, R. Aron, B. Z. Bokser). Not only that, but it can be argued convincingly that Christianity grew out of an "intra-Jewish critique of Israel and that the early Christian interpretation is truly a Jewish interpretation of Jesus" (E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesuz Het Verhaal van een Levende* [Bloemendaal: Nelisson, 1974], p. 25). In other words Christianity is an extension of a particular form of Judaism. One of the central issues in Palestine during the time of Jesus was the question about what constituted the Torah. It is within this context that Jesus criticizes what he regarded as the human-made elements of the Law which get in the way of the close relationship between God and the individual that is intended by the Torah. In order to bring about a return to the Torah, Jesus preached repentance and metanoia. This in turn would prepare the people for the coming Reign of God. For Jesus the really important thing in life was adherence to the Torah which consisted in doing God's will. Thus, far from diminishing the center-piece of Judaism, Jesus is the champion of the Torah as a particular way of life that unites the individual with God, This dimension of the Jewishness of Jesus and his teaching must surely figure prominently in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. The Jewishness of early Christianity and Christianness of first-century Judaism has much to contribute to the understanding of both traditions.

Another important consideration that should affect interfaith dialogue, especially at the level of Christian-Muslim discussion, is the current widening of christological horizons. At present there is a definite shift taking place from an exclusive Christology to an inclusivist Christology. Once the religious value of the other major world religions is recognized, as do the documents of the Second Vatican Council, then one is moved implicitly to an inclusivist Christology. This means, in effect, that the starting point of future Christology must be an acceptance of God's universal activity in and through other religious peoples and communities. It is against this background that Christology will work out its unique understanding of God as active in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This inclusivist Christology will show how Jesus personifies and crystalizes the universal presence of God in other world religions. From there this Christology will move on to indicate how something radically new took place in the life of Jesus and how this something new is normative for the Christian understanding of God in the world.

In conclusion it should be remembered that all religious peoples are united in their common search for God. The Jew, the Christian, and the Muslim are all concerned to promote a personal appreciation of the mystery of God. There are many ways to the one true God. This diversity should not be divisive, but rather enriching. The Christian way is one that is centered around Jesus Christ as the personal embodiment and expression of God's presence in the world. For the Christian, Jesus' cause is God's cause. To say this, however, is by no means to remove or destroy the mystery of God. Instead, it is to deepen our awareness of the one basic, incomprehensible mystery that encircles and envelopes our lives. If The Reality of Jesus helps in any way to open up that mystery, then it will have achieved its primary purpose.