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New Testament Theology?

Essays in Conversation with Heikki Räisänen

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Lukan and Johannine Tradition in the Qur'an: A Story of (and Program for) *Auslegungsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte*

In the context of the two editions of *Beyond New Testament Theology* (1990, 2000) and many other publications, Heikki Räisänen has written a book entitled *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma* (1997). This latter book has gained even greater importance since September 11, 2001, as the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, the attack on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., the plane crash in Pennsylvania, and President George W. Bush's subsequent wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, have raised especially serious issues about the relation of Christians, Jews, and Muslims throughout the world. As the challenges of the twenty-first century stand before inhabitants of the world, New Testament interpreters need to embrace Räisänen's movement beyond traditional Christian theological boundaries into the multiple worlds and cultures not only of Eastern and Southern Christianity, but also Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. As I have pushed against obstacles that resist the movement of programmatic exegetical interpretation into these new regions, Räisänen's sections in the second edition of *Beyond New Testament Theology* on "A Semiotic Cathedral: G. Theissen," "Historical Interpretation: A Model," and "Contemporizing Interpretation" continually have provided new angles of thought and energy for my work.¹

After the tragedy of September 11, 2001, my familiarity with Räisänen's work helped to persuade me, by December of 2001, to begin a programmatic investigation of biblical tradition in the Qur'an. It was serendipitous that my two colleagues, Professors Gordon D. Newby and Laurie L. Patton, and I had used Räisänen's *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma* in a doctoral seminar called "Comparative

¹ See Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and a Programme* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 2000), 142–46, 189–202, and 203–9, respectively.

Sacred Texts" during the spring of 2000. Later on, while I was meeting weekly with colleagues in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies at Emory University during Spring 2002 to read the Qur'an in relation to the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and Jewish and Christian literature down to the emergence of Islam, Räisänen's work became increasingly more important for me. This present essay exhibits the manner in which his challenges to traditional interpretations of Luke-Acts, Marcion, the portrait of Jesus in the Qur'an, and ongoing biblical tradition through Europe, North America, and India have influenced my approach.²

During the last three years in particular, Räisänen's courageous research and publications have emboldened me to take interpretation of the New Testament beyond the religious landscape of antiquity into the world of the Qur'an and Islamic tradition. For this new venture, it has been essential to seek specialists in other fields, co-authoring essays with them in order to ensure that I do not make serious scholarly mistakes.³ The following essay focuses on a special story about New Testament tradition that began to emerge during my early investigations of biblical tradition in the Qur'an. Little by little, I began to see that the Jesus tradition in the Qur'an emerges from the modification and elaboration of the Gospel of Luke from the second through the sixth centuries in the world east of Palestine and western Syria. This observation caused me to reflect more deeply on Räisänen's section on "Comparing

² See the chapters in Heikki Räisänen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma: Exegetical Perspectives on the Encounter of Cultures and Faiths* (London: SCM, 1997), on Luke-Acts (49–63), Marcion (64–80), Jesus in the Qur'an (81–97), Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon (153–69), and Mahatma Ghandi (170–88). Also see Räisänen, *Koranische Jesusbild: Das koranische Jesusbild: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Korans* (Schriften der Finnischen Gesellschaft für Missiologie und Ökumenik 20; Helsinki: Finnischen Gesellschaft, 1971).

³ See an initial presentation of some of this work in Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby, "A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qur'an and the Bible," in *Bible and Qur'an: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality* (ed. J. C. Reeves; SBLSymS 24; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 23–42. Also see Gordon D. Newby, "Quranic Texture: A Review of Vernon Robbins's *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* and *Exploring the Texture of Texts*," *JSNT* 70 (1998): 93–100; and Gordon D. Newby, "Folded Time: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis of Qur'anic and Early Islamic Apocalyptic Discourse," in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (ed. D. B. Gowler, L. G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 333–54.

the Interpretive Processes" in the New Testament and the Qur'an⁴ and led me to somewhat different conclusions about the relation of Qur'anic traditions to the Gospels of Luke and John in particular. Having become familiar during the early 1980's with recitation, abbreviation, expansion, addition, and elaboration as techniques of composition, from which came *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* and my essay on "Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition,"⁵ I applied my knowledge of these techniques to the transmission of Lukan tradition into the context of Qur'anic materials. Then I began to deepen this analysis with strategies of socio-rhetorical interpretation as they appear in *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* and *Exploring the Texture of Texts*.⁶ I came to realise that it is necessary to expand the traditional concepts of *Auslegungsgeschichte* ("history of interpretation") and *Wirkungsgeschichte* ("history of influence")⁷ beyond explicitly Christian literature and into the Qur'anic and Islamic presentation of New Testament tradition. This essay offers an initial account of the results of my study of the presence of Lukan tradition in Christian and then Muslim traditions from the second through the sixth centuries.

It is prudent to begin with a discussion of the first three Gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. A reader of the New Testament may be surprised to discover there is no notable presence of Matthean or Markan content in the Qur'an. Rather, items in the Qur'an that may appear to be related to Matthean or Markan verses are there either because they are also present in Lukan tradition or because they are interwoven with Lukan tradition in Tatian's *Diatessaron*, which was a highly influential form of New Testament gospel tradition in the

⁴ Räsänen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma*, 91–95.

⁵ Vernon K. Robbins, "Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and Pre-Gospel Traditions: A New Approach," in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism* (ed. C. Focant; BETL 110; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 111–47; and Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1989).

⁶ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996); and idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996). Online at: <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRI/index.html>.

⁷ See further, Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary* (trans. W. C. Linss; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 95–99.

world east of Palestine and Western Syria.⁸ In other words, Qur'anic tradition about Jesus exhibits a special relation to Luke in the New Testament and to extra-canonical gospels (i.e., those outside the New Testament) containing a special relation to Luke. As this story unfolds, a special relation between the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John will also appear. The story regarding the transmission of the "Gospel of Luke tradition" in Christianity is, therefore, rather complex.

Marcion's Gospel of the Lord

As every careful reader of the New Testament knows, Luke is the only canonical Gospel that recounts the birth of John the Baptist, and, as a result, it is the only one that refers to Zechariah and Elizabeth, his father and mother (1:5–25, 57–80). An informed reader also knows that Luke is the only canonical Gospel that features Jesus in the Jerusalem Temple at twelve years of age (2:41–52), showing in public his special wisdom and relation to God. These stories, along with other phenomena like the sending out of the Seventy (10:1–22), give Luke a special place among the New Testament Gospels. In addition, the promise to Zechariah and the pregnancy of Elizabeth (1:5–25) in Luke generate events in the story that are earlier than the first events recorded in Mark or Matthew. All of these features in Luke become important as the Gospels traverse the centuries together after the emergence of Christianity as an identifiable tradition in the ancient world.

For this essay, the special drama of the travels of Lukan tradition into the world east of Palestine and Western Syria begins in the second century with Marcion.⁹ Marcion was a wealthy ship-owner and bishop's son born in Pontus at Sinope,¹⁰ a harbour city on the Black Sea where the coastline extends east to harbour cities directly north of the Tigris-Euphrates region. Marcion went to Rome in about 140 C.E. and joined the Christian congregation there, and was later excommunicated from the community in July 144 C.E. Separating himself from the

⁸ William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (VCSup 25; Leiden: Brill, 1994); and Tjitze Baarda, *Essays on the Diatessaron* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994).

⁹ See Räsänen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma*, 64–80.

¹⁰ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (4 vols; Westminster, Md: Christian Classics, 1992), 1:268.

church of Rome, Marcion founded his own community and established a hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons, with a result so successful that Justin could report ten years after Marcion's excommunication that "his church has spread, 'over the whole of mankind'."¹¹ There were many Marcionite communities, especially in Syria, through the fifth century, and some were still in existence at the beginning of the medieval period.

On the basis of his careful reading of the epistles of Paul, Marcion decided that Christians should have only two documents of faith, which he called the *Gospel* and the *Apostle*. The *Gospel* was a version of the Gospel of Luke with Old Testament passages eliminated from it. Marcion was convinced Luke was "my gospel" to which Paul referred in his letters.¹² The *Apostle* contained ten letters of Paul, excluding 1–2 Timothy, Titus (the pastoral letters), and the Epistle to the Hebrews. He placed Galatians first, changed Ephesians to the "Epistle to the Laodiceans" (cf. Col 4:16), and "purified" all of them by eliminating recitations of Old Testament verses or references to things written in the law and the prophets. Marcion supplemented the *Gospel* (Luke) and the *Apostle* (letters of Paul) with his own *Antitheses*, which gathered Old Testament passages that demonstrated "the bad character" of the God of the Jews and explained why it was necessary to exclude these verses from Scripture.¹³

Marcion's writing activity created the designation of "a written document called 'the gospel',"¹⁴ which it set alongside the *Apostle* (ten letters of Paul) and his *Antitheses*. The result created, for the first time, a distinction in Christianity between old Scriptures of Israel and new Scriptures of Christianity. Prior to this time, the "writings" (*graphai*) of Israel were the special "Scriptures" early Christians read, and these Scriptures intermingled in various ways with letters and "reminiscences" (*apomnēmoneumata*) of early Christian apostles. Viewing the writing activity of Marcion with a special eye on Lukan tradition demonstrates a privileging of the Gospel of Luke over the other New Tes-

¹¹ Quasten, *Patrology*, 1:268.

¹² "My gospel": Rom 2:16; 16:25; "our gospel": 2 Cor 4:3; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Thess 1:8; 2:14; Gal 1:11. See Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 35.

¹³ Quasten, *Patrology*, 1:271.

¹⁴ Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 36.

tament Gospels. In this context, Lukan tradition was first abbreviated in Marcion's *Gospel* itself, but then it was elaborated by means of ten letters of Paul and a treatise explaining the necessity for focusing on "new Scripture" rather than "old," which had the goal of providing a framework for the exclusion of "Israelite Scripture."

Immediately, of course, the story about Lukan tradition becomes more complex. Irenaeus (ca. 180 C.E.) tells us that Marcion's version of Luke "removes all that is written respecting the generation of the Lord, and sets aside a great deal of the teaching of the Lord's discourses in which the Lord is recorded as most clearly confessing that the creator of the universe is his Father."¹⁵ This alteration meant that Marcion wanted Jesus to descend from heaven in the form of a grown man, rather than to be generated as a human baby born on earth. In pursuit of this goal, Marcion did not want Luke to contain the stories of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus in Luke 1–2, or the preaching of John the Baptist (3:2–20), the baptism of Jesus (3:21–22), the genealogy of Jesus (3:23–38), or the testing of Jesus (4:1–13). Reconstructions of Marcion's version of Luke, therefore, begin with Luke 3:1/4:31: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Jesus descended [out of heaven] into Capernaum, a city in Galilee, and was teaching [in the synagogue] on the Sabbath days; and they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word had authority."¹⁶ Without being generated by humans, Jesus descends into the world (Capernaum) from the heaven of the Creator and begins to offer salvation to people (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.7). After first appearing in Capernaum, Jesus goes to Nazareth and confronts the people in the synagogue with his authority and power but he does *not* read from the prophet Isaiah (4:16ab, 21a, 23).¹⁷ Marcion's version of Luke therefore omitted all of Luke 1–2, most of Luke 3, and some of Luke 4; in other words, major portions of the beginning of the Lukan account of Jesus' life were deleted.

¹⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.25.1, as translated in Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 334.

¹⁶ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42 (Wilhelm Dindorf, ed., *Epiphanius episcopi Constantiae Opera* [5 vols.; Leipzig: Weigel, 1859–1862], 2:315); Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.7. Online at: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Ithaca/3827/Library.html>.

¹⁷ Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.7.

As mentioned above, Marcion's version of Luke regularly omitted portions of verses referring to Old Testament Scripture. Thus, Luke 24:44–46 appears to have omitted the text: "that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written'."¹⁸ With this omission, these verses read as follows: "(44a) And he said to them, 'These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, [omit 44b–46a] (46b) that thus it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day. . . ."¹⁹ According to early witnesses, Marcion also omitted references to Jesus' Father as the Creator of the earth, since the God of Israel was the Demiurge who created the physical world, while Jesus' Father was the God above all things. Thus, by omitting "Father" and "earth" from Luke 10:21, Marcion revised the verse to read: "I thank you Lord of Heaven, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants."²⁰ Marcion thus "abbreviated" the Gospel of Luke even though he gave it a place of privilege by selecting it alone as "the Gospel of the Lord." This privileged *Gospel* was the beginning point for the elaboration of its meaning through the Marcionite version of the Pauline letters that argue what the gospel *is* and his *Antitheses* that argue what the gospel *is not*. The gospel is a story about Jesus' descent in the form of a man into an authoritative ministry that ended in suffering, death, and ascension back into heaven. This gospel is not a story that continues the history of Israel's prophets, sages, and kings. Rather, it is a story that breaks into the created world from the highest heaven, where God, the unseen Father, dwells.

When the history of Lukan tradition is viewed "backwards" from Jesus tradition in the Qur'an, an interpreter sees Marcion's activity as the beginning of a process of subtracting from, adding to, interpreting, and reconfiguring Lukan tradition about Jesus. Viewed from the perspective of Marcion's version of the Gospel of Luke, "canonical" Luke contains a "backfilling" of the story in Marcion's *Gospel of the Lord* to

¹⁸ Biblical citations, with some modifications in light of the Greek text, are based on the NRSV.

¹⁹ Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.43.

²⁰ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42 (Dindorf); Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.25.

include the births, naming, blessing, and circumcising of John the Baptist and Jesus (1:5–2:40), Jesus' public session with teachers in the Jerusalem Temple at twelve years of age (2:41–52), the baptism of Jesus in the context of John's preaching (3:1–22), the genealogy of Jesus (3:23–38), Jesus' responses from Deuteronomy to the devil in the testing (4:1–13), and Jesus' reading of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth (4:16c–22). In other words, canonical Luke contains information that fills Marcion's *Gospel* "backwards" by telling about important births (namely the births of John the Baptist and Jesus) and events prior to Jesus' adult appearance in Capernaum and Nazareth. As we will see, this process of the "backfilling" of Lukan tradition continues in Christian writing in a manner that is important for understanding the content of the story of Jesus in the Qur'an.

The Infancy Gospel of Thomas

The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* was probably written during or shortly after Marcion's activity in the second century C.E. The earliest extant copy of this gospel is a sixth-century Syriac manuscript in the British Museum.²¹ The existence of this manuscript suggests the popularity of this gospel in eastern Christianity during the time of the emergence of Qur'anic traditions about Jesus. This gospel contains a "backfilling" from the Lukan story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 2:41–52; *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19:1–12) to Jesus playing on a Sabbath day at five years of age (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 2:1–3). In other words, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* begins with Jesus at five years of age and reaches its culmination in the Lukan story of Jesus in the temple at twelve years of age. Two items in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* are of especial importance for the story of the transmission of Lukan tradition being developed in this essay.

The initial insight of importance emerges with the special prominence of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the account of Jesus in the temple at twelve years of age at the end of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. When Jesus' parents return to Jerusalem and find Jesus in the temple, the gospel names "His mother Mary" as the major actor in the event

²¹ Stephen Gero, "The Infancy Gospel of Thomas: A Study of the Textual and Literary Problems," *NovT* 13 (1971): 46–80.

(*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19:6). In contrast, Luke 2:48 emphasises the “astonishment of his parents” and the entire Lukan account never names Jesus’ mother as “Mary.” In *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 19:6, Mary “comes to” Jesus and begins to interrogate him about his “coming back up” to Jerusalem after they had started home (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19:2).²² In *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 19:8–10, Mary’s action calls forth a three-step, public interchange that is an addition to Luke 2:48–49. First, the “scribes and Pharisees” (names never appearing in the Lukan account)²³ ask Mary if she is “the mother of this child” (19:8). Second, when Mary identifies herself as the mother of Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees say to her, “Blessed are you among women, because God has blessed the fruit of your womb! For we have never seen nor ever heard such glory and such virtue and wisdom.” The infancy gospel account thus transports language from Elizabeth in Luke 1:42 to scribes and Pharisees in the Jerusalem temple when Jesus is twelve years old. These scribal activities focus in a special way on Mary, placing her in a central position of action and attention as the mother of Jesus. The overall effect is to heighten the image of the mother of Jesus as blessed by God. In addition, Mary’s highlighted role emphasises God as the “true” Father of Jesus and the one in whose house (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19:7/Luke 2:49) Jesus has shown his amazing glory, virtue and wisdom (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19:10).

In addition to the emphasis on Mary at the end of the story, *topoi* central to the Gospel of John energise and “theologise” Lukan tradition throughout the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. This activity manifests itself in three basic ways. First, the infancy gospel opens with Jesus “playing creation” (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 2:1–7). While playing in a rushing stream, Jesus separates some of the flowing water into ponds and purifies it with a single command (2:1–2). Then he makes soft clay (*poiēsas*; 2:3) and shapes (*eplasen*) it into twelve sparrows (2:3, 4). When Jesus is confronted with violation of the Sabbath, he claps his hands and brings the sparrows to life and to flight through a command (2:4–6). Jesus’ separation of the water into ponds with a command is reminiscent of God’s separation of water in the creation account in Genesis 1:6–10.

²² Cf. Luke 2:43, where Jesus simply “remains in Jerusalem.”

²³ The Lukan account identifies those present with Jesus in the Temple as “teachers” (*didaskaloi*; Luke 2:46; cf. *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 19:4).

Likewise, Jesus’ “making” of soft clay is reminiscent of God’s making (*poiein*) of earth and other elements throughout creation.²⁴ In addition, God shapes (*eplasen*) the birds of the air out of mud in LXX Genesis 2:19. Moreover, God brings birds to life with a command in Genesis 1:20. The ability of Jesus to “play creation” thus represents an imitation of the Genesis account of creation. But it is not only mimicry on a microcosmic level. It is also an extension of John 1:1–4 into the childhood of Jesus. In John, Jesus, who is the Word (*logos*), caused all things to “become” (*egeneto*), because life (*zōē*) is in him. In the infancy gospel, Jesus can effect life by forming soft clay into birds, and making these birds “living” (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 2:6: *zōntes*). Jesus is able to do these things, because he is the Word through whom all things were made (John 1:4). While the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* ends with Lukan tradition, therefore, it begins with Johannine tradition.

Second, the miraculous acts that Jesus performs in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* are called “signs” (*sēmeia*; three times) in a manner similar to that found in the Johannine tradition,²⁵ rather than “powers” (*dynameis*) as is the common designation in the Synoptic Gospel tradition.²⁶ Thus, just as Jesus performs “signs” in the Gospel of John, so he performs “signs” in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. The language of “performing a sign” appears initially when the parents of Zeno, a boy whom Jesus just raised from death, praise God for the sign (*sēmeion*) that had happened and worship Jesus (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 9:6). It occurs again when Mary sees the “sign” (11:4: *sēmeion*) when the six-year-old Jesus brings water home in his cloak after the pitcher he took to get the water slips from his hand and breaks in the jostling of the crowd. Then, when Jesus sows one measure of grain and it grows into one hundred measures, the text explains that Jesus was eight years old when he “did the sign” (12:4: *epoiēse to sēmeion*). To refer to Jesus’ miracles as “signs” (*sēmeia*) is an “effect” (*Wirkung*) of the Johannine tradition on a gospel that reaches its conclusion in the Lukan story of Jesus in the temple at twelve years of age, and we thus see here already a complex interweaving and interaction of “canonical” materials in the later Christian period.

²⁴ LXX Genesis 1:1, 7, 16, 21, 25–27, 31; 2:2–4, 18.

²⁵ John 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14, 26; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30.

²⁶ Matthew 7:22; 11:20–21, 23; 13:54, 58; 14:2 par et passim.

Thomas, one can see that the effect of Marcion's reconfiguration of Luke was that it became more like the Gospel of John.²⁹ In other words, Marcion's Luke, which featured Jesus coming directly from heaven to begin his ministry in Capernaum, had salient features in line with the Gospel of John. In John, the Logos who was "with God" (1:1) becomes flesh and dwells among humans (1:14), goes to John the Baptist who identifies him as the "lamb of God" (1:29), and then goes to Galilee with disciples following him (1:37, 43). During the second century, then, both the editing of the Gospel of Luke by Marcion and the backfilling of the Gospel of Luke by the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* move Lukan tradition in the direction of the Johannine tradition.

Tatian's *Diatessaron*

The second century C.E. saw a significant increase in the production and transmission of gospel traditions, and correspondingly one can perceive an increased interaction between the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John in the context of these activities. In addition to Marcion and others, Tatian played an important role in these developments. Tatian describes himself as "born in the land of the Assyrians" (*Oration 42*).³⁰ A geographer named Claudius Ptolemaeus, who lived during the time of Tatian, described Assyria "as extending from the Tigris River in the West to Media in the East, from the Armenian mountains in the North to Ctesiphon in the South."³¹ This location is, of course, very important for the Qur'anic tradition that would emerge just south of this region during the seventh century C.E. Tatian became a traveling student and journeyed to Rome, where he met Justin Martyr, became one of his students, and converted to Christianity as a result.³² After an extended period with Justin in Rome, Tatian gathered students of his own, and even started his own school there. It appears that one of the influences of Justin on Tatian was to transmit to him a "harmony approach" to the study of the gospel traditions. Instead of reciting traditions about Jesus with reference to "different gospels," Justin recited sayings and traditions from "memoirs of the apostles" that interwove

²⁹ Cf. Räisänen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma*, 71.

³⁰ Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

³² *Ibid.*, 69–70.

gospel sayings and traditions in a manner that does not exhibit distinctive Matthean, Markan, Lukan, or Johannine wording.³³ After the death of Justin (between 163–67 C.E.), Christian leaders in Rome complained that Tatian "created 'his own peculiar type of doctrine'."³⁴

Tatian left Rome around 172/3 C.E., founded a school in Mesopotamia, and became highly influential "in the regions of Antioch of Daphne (Syria, on the Orontes), Cilicia, and Pisidia."³⁵ Victor of Capua, writing 2 May 546 C.E., states that, after Justin died, Tatian "embraced the heresy of Marcion, the error, rather than the truth of Justin, the philosopher of Christ."³⁶ In this context, one can well suppose that Tatian gained a special appreciation for the Gospel of Luke. Yet the overall project of Tatian was to create a "harmony of the four gospels" that came to be known as the *Diatessaron* (i.e., either "through four" or "fourfold"). Tatian interwove all four "canonical" Gospels into one "Gospel of our Saviour."³⁷ No complete text of Tatian's *Diatessaron* has survived, and only fragments of it can be reconstructed from specific instances of its recitation. Yet, as we will see below, the order of Tatian's *Diatessaron* can be reconstructed from three extant manuscripts of Ephrem of Syria's (d. 373 C.E.) commentary on it. Also, many early Christians note specific features about the text, and one point in which there is general agreement is that the *Diatessaron* began with John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word."³⁸ Thus, the opening verses from the Gospel of John begin the *Diatessaron* and set the tone for the recitation of the other three Gospels that come after it. If immediately after the opening of the Johannine verses Tatian gives a place of privilege to Luke rather than Matthew, this dispensation would suggest that the beginning of his *Diatessaron* bears an important relation to the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. In other words, both the infancy gospel and Tatian's *Diatessaron* would open with a Johannine focus on Jesus at creation and move forward from there to Lukan tradition about Jesus before his adult activity.

³³ See Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 360–402.

³⁴ Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 70.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁷ This title is the one Aphrahat of Persia (d. ca. 350) used for Tatian's *Diatessaron* in *Demonstrations* 1.10 (Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 45).

³⁸ Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 45.

Eusebius of Caesarea, writing in the early 300's C.E., notes that Tatian's copy was not the only *Diatessaron* in existence in early Christianity. A man known as Ammonius of Alexandria wrote a *Diatessaron* in which "he set running beside a section of [the Gospel] according to Matthew the same pericope of the other Gospels, so that of necessity happened that the order of the succession [of the pericopes and verses of the [other] three] was destroyed, as far as the reading-text was concerned."³⁹ This placement is important for our story about Lukan tradition, since Ammonius's *Diatessaron* put Luke's tradition in a context of primary interaction with the Gospel of Matthew rather than the Gospel of John. In the sixth century (546 C.E., just twenty-four years before the birth of Muhammad), Victor of Capua wrote the following in a context where he was looking at a *Diatessaron* that appeared to have followed Tatian's procedures:

For the following reason I think that the edition of the above mentioned volume was not by Ammonius but by him [Tatian], namely because Ammonius is said to have joined to Matthew's narrative the wordings [which had been] lifted out of the narrative of the remaining Evangelists. But here the principles of Saint Luke [presumably his sequence of material] have been adopted, although for the most part he joined the words of the remaining three [gospels] to the gospel of Saint Matthew. Hence it can be rightly disputed whether the discovery of the same work ought to be thought Ammonius' or Tatian's. Even if the author of this edition is the heresiarch Tatian, I recognise and embrace with pleasure the words of my Lord, for if the interpretation had been his [Tatian's] own, then I would cast it away.⁴⁰

Herein Victor makes a remarkable observation that "the principles of Saint Luke have been adopted" in Tatian's *Diatessaron*. He notes that Tatian had, in some way, privileged Luke over Matthew as he organized his *Diatessaron*! Another important piece of information stands alongside this one. Ephrem of Syria's commentary on Tatian's *Diatessaron*, which exists in one Syriac and two Armenian versions, follows "for its sequence of pericopes and variant readings . . . those of the Arabic Harmony quite closely."⁴¹ This Arabic Harmony exists in full, and in it we see a privileging of the Gospel of Luke at the beginning

³⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁴¹ Ibid., 44.

ning of the *Diatessaron*. After John 1:1-5, the Arabic Harmony recites Luke 1:5-80, which contains not only the opening scenes of promise related to the births of John and Jesus (1:5-56), but also the birth, circumcision, and blessing of John the Baptist (1:57-80), all before it inserts the story of the birth of Jesus from Matthew 1:18-25. After inserting the Matthew birth story in the Lukan context, it continues further with Luke 2:1-39 (the birth, circumcision, and purification of Jesus, plus the accounts of Simeon and Anna) before inserting Matthew 2:1-23. Immediately it returns again to Luke 2:40-3:6, then to John 1:7-28 and Matthew 2:4-6, which links to Matthew 2:7-10/Luke 3:7-9 before continuing with Luke 3:10-18.⁴² Clearly, then, the principle of organization in the opening parts of Tatian's *Diatessaron* privileges the Gospel of Luke over the Gospel of Matthew at the beginning, just as Victor of Capua observed. From the perspective of the present essay, therefore, not only Marcion's Luke and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* establish a dynamic relation between the opening chapters of the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John, but so does Tatian's *Diatessaron* as well, the opening chapter of which embeds the first chapter of Luke in a context established by the first five verses of the Gospel of John.

The Infancy Gospel of James

The next step in our investigation of Lukan tradition takes us to the *Infancy Gospel (Protevangelium) of James*, for which there are multiple manuscripts in Syriac, Ethiopic, Georgian, Sahidic, Old Church Slavonic, Armenian, and Arabic in Syriac script, as well as Greek and Latin.⁴³ While the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* "backfills" the Lukan miracle activity of Jesus, the *Infancy Gospel of James* "backfills" the Lukan birth stories by telling the birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The *Infancy Gospel of James*, then, provides Mary the mother of Jesus with an even more central role than the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. The *Infancy Gospel of James* "backfills" the Gospel of Luke by beginning the story with Joachim, soon to become the father of Mary, who is re-

⁴² Codex Fuldensis, by contrast, recites only Luke 1:5-15, breaking in the midst of Gabriel's promise to Zechariah regarding the birth of John before introducing verses from the Gospel of Matthew.

⁴³ James K. Elliott, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 48, 52-55.

jected from making his usual "double" offering to the Lord because he is childless (*Prot. Jas.* 1:1–5). Soon after this event, an angel of the Lord God visits Joachim's wife Anna while she is praying, mourning, and lamenting to tell her that she will give birth to a child (*Prot. Jas.* 2:1–4:2). When Anna gives birth to a girl and names her Mary, Anna changes her bedroom into a holy sanctuary to keep Mary from anything profane or unclean (6:4) and lets her play only with undefiled daughters of Hebrews until she is three years old (7:1–3). At age three, Joachim and Anna send Mary to live in the temple, where a priest looks over her and keeps her free from all impurity (7:4–8:2). When Mary is twelve years of age and must leave the temple so she does not pollute it with her menstrual cycle, Zechariah is the high priest who oversees her appointment to Joseph (8:3–9:12), soon after which Zechariah becomes mute (10:9).

The internal link between the *Infancy Gospel of James* and the Gospel of Luke is Zechariah, with whom the Lukan story begins (1:5–23). The infancy gospel precedes the event that left Zechariah mute (Luke 1:20–22; *Prot. Jas.* 10:9) with events surrounding the birth of Mary and her childhood in the Jerusalem temple (*Prot. Jas.* 1:1–10:8). The high priest thus becomes the special protector of Mary when she enters the temple at three years of age. Zechariah is the high priest when Mary turns twelve years of age, and he becomes responsible for finding her a guardian outside the temple (*Prot. Jas.* 8). After Mary's time in Joseph's household, where she becomes pregnant, and after she gives birth to Jesus in a cave while travelling to be enrolled in the census (*Prot. Jas.* 18–20), the *Infancy Gospel of James* ends in the context of Herod's attempt to kill all infants two years and younger (22:1). When Mary becomes aware of Herod's actions, she wraps Jesus in cloths and puts him in a feeding trough used by cattle (22:2; cf. Luke 2:7). When Elizabeth hears about Herod, she takes John into the hill country (22:5; *oreinē*; cf. Luke 1:39) and hides him in a mountain that splits open and lets them in (22:7–9). At this same time, Herod's executioners confront "Zechariah serving at the altar" (23:2; cf. Luke 1:8–11) regarding the location of his son John. When he will not tell them where his son is, they kill him (23:2–9); when his death is discovered

and appropriately mourned (24:1–11), they appoint Simeon as his successor (24:12–14; cf. Luke 2:25–35).⁴⁴

The *Infancy Gospel of James*, then, "backfills" the Gospel of Luke from the time of Zechariah's service in the temple (Luke 1:5–9) to the fasting, praying, and lamenting of both Joachim and Anna (*Prot. Jas.* 1:10–3:8) until an angel of the Lord appears to them (4:1, 4) to announce the birth of Mary. As with the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, so also the *Infancy Gospel of James* attests to an expansion and elaboration of Lukan tradition. In addition, the special focus on Mary at the end of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* bears a relation in Christian tradition to the extended focus on Mary in the *Infancy Gospel of James*. A major difference between the two gospels, however, relates to the people who praise Mary. In the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, scribes and Pharisees praise Mary with speech that in Luke is attributed to Elizabeth: "Blessed (*makaria*) are you among women, because God has blessed (*ēulogēsen*) the fruit of your womb" (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19:10; Luke 1:42). In the *Infancy Gospel of James*, in contrast, the priest in the temple, rather than scribes and Pharisees, praises Mary twice with language from Luke 1–2. When Joachim and Anna take Mary to the temple at three years of age, the priest greets her with: "The Lord God has exalted your name among all generations. In you the Lord God will disclose his redemption to the people of Israel during the last days" (7:7–8; cf. Luke 1:46, 68; 2:38). When, after she has turned twelve and been placed in the home of Joseph, Mary spins a purple and scarlet thread and takes it to the high priest, at which time the high priest says: "Mary, the Lord God has extolled your name and so you will be blessed by all the generations of the earth" (12:2; cf. Luke 1:46, 48). Thus, the *Infancy Gospel of James* emphasises the purity and holiness of the temple in relation to priests, just like the opening verses of Luke highlights the priestly lineage and holiness of both Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:5–9), rather than stressing teaching in the temple before elders and teachers, which is the focus when Jesus visits the temple at twelve years of age (Luke 1:46; *Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19:4–5). In the opening chapters of the Gospel of Luke, there is a transition from the temple

⁴⁴ Although space does not permit a discussion of the Matthean features that are inserted at certain points in the overall elaboration of Lukan tradition in the *Protevangelium of James*, they are worthy of further investigation.

as a place of priestly holiness to a place of teaching. The temple is a place of priestly holiness for the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:5–23), and for the purification and consecration of Jesus for his task of leadership in Israel (1:22–38). Throughout the *Infancy Gospel of James*, the temple remains a place run by priests, and its function is the maintenance of holiness in the centre of Israel. In contrast, the temple is a place of teaching in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, building on the emphasis that emerges in Luke 2:41–52. Jesus' teaching in the temple thus creates a context for scribes and Pharisees to praise Mary for the glory, virtue, and wisdom of her magnificent son (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 19:4–13). The *Infancy Gospel of James*, on the other hand, features the priest in the temple praising Mary for having a name that will be remembered by all generations (*Prot. Jas.* 7:7–8; 12:2) as the one “raised in the Holy of Holies and fed by the hand of angels” (*Prot. Jas.* 15:11; cf. 19:8). Both infancy gospels place Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the centre, and both elaborate tradition in the Gospel of Luke. The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, interacting with Johannine tradition, builds on the powerful signs of Jesus to present Mary as the mother of a wise, authoritative, glorious teacher in the temple. In contrast, the *Infancy Gospel of James* builds on the priestly lineage of Zechariah and Elizabeth to establish Mary as a “priestly” woman through the holiness of her birth, her childhood in the temple, and her bearing of a child who immediately heals the hand of the previously disbelieving midwife, Salome, when she worships him and picks him up (*Prot. Jas.* 20:10–11). The Gospel of Luke is, therefore, central to both of these infancy gospels.

“Lukan” Tradition in Al-‘Imran (Qur’an 3:33–51)

An initial glimpse of elaborated and reconfigured Lukan tradition emerges vividly from Qur’an 3:33–51. The surah is entitled Family of ‘Imran (Al-‘Imran), which is the name of Jesus’ extended family, and as such also includes the family of John the Baptist. The surah begins to narrate the story of Jesus in ayah 33: “Lo! God preferred Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of ‘Imran above (all

His) creatures” (Q 3:33).⁴⁵ It is immediately noticeable to a New Testament reader that this ayah reconfigures the genealogy of Jesus as it is found in Luke rather than in Matthew. The genealogy in Matthew begins with Abraham (Matt 1:2); thus, it does not include Adam and Noah. In contrast, the Lukan genealogy reaches back to “Adam, the son of God” (Luke 3:38) and includes Noah (Luke 3:36) and Abraham (Luke 3:34) on its way to the birth of Jesus through, “as it was supposed,” Joseph (Luke 3:23). Qur’an 3:33 thus reconfigures the Lukan genealogy by ending with “the family of ‘Imran,” which is the family of Zechariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Mary, and Jesus. This means, of course, that Mary is the essential person in the lineage rather than Joseph.

All of the people in Mary’s “family” result from assertions made in the Gospel of Luke that are not found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or John. When the angel Gabriel comes to Mary in Luke, he announces that her “relative” (*sungenis*: kinswoman) Elizabeth “has also conceived a son” (1:36). Qur’anic tradition accepts the assertion by the angel Gabriel that Mary and Elizabeth are part of the same extended family, and it follows the logic of Gabriel’s assertion. If Mary is part of the family of Elizabeth, then she shares in the priestly lineage of Elizabeth, who is “a daughter of Aaron” (Luke 1:5), whom Moses appointed, along with his family, as priests (Exod 28:1; 1 Chr 23:13;). The exact relation of Mary to Elizabeth is disputed in tradition. The most common view is the one held by Ibn Ishaq: Elizabeth was the sister of (H)anna(h), the mother of Mary, making Elizabeth the aunt of her young niece Mary.⁴⁶ For the Qur’an, this means that Mary is a “sister of Aaron” (Q 19:28), meaning that she is a member of the priestly “family of Aaron,”⁴⁷ alongside Elizabeth, who is also a “daughter of Aaron” (Luke 1:5).

Qur’an 3 moves from the ancestry of Jesus (Q 3:33–34; Luke 3:23–38) to the prayer of Anna (Hannah), where she vows to name the

⁴⁵ Quotations from the Qur’an are based on Muhammad M. Pickthall, ed. and trans., *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur’an: Text and Explanatory Translation* (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, 1999), with some variations.

⁴⁶ Brannon M. Wheeler, *Prophets in the Qur’an: An Introduction to the Qur’an and Muslim Exegesis* (London: Continuum, 2002), 297.

⁴⁷ Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 1991), 18.

child in her womb Mary and to consecrate her child as an offering to God to protect her from Satan (Q 3:35–36; *Prot. Jas.* 4:2). The Lord accepts Anna's gift of her child Mary and assigns Mary to the guardianship of Zechariah, the priest in the temple (Q 3:37; *Prot. Jas.* 7:7). When Zechariah comes to the temple and asks Mary from where the food that is continually before her comes, Mary answers: "It is from God. God gives without measure to whom He wills" (Q 3:37; *Prot. Jas.* 8:2). When Zechariah sees the generous goodness of God to Mary, he prays to his Lord, "the Hearer of Prayer," to give him a child out of his bounteous goodness (Q 3:38). The angels call to Zechariah as he is praying in the sanctuary and report to him the "good news" of a son to be named John (*Yahya*). It is emphasised that John will come as a "lordly, chaste, prophet of the righteous" (cf. Luke 1:15, 76) to "confirm a word from God." In Qur'an 3:38–39, one observes tradition related to the Lukan scene where the angel Gabriel comes to Zechariah in the Temple (1:8–20). The last part of Qur'an 3:39 is worded in such a manner, however, that it seems not only to refer to the birth of John the Baptist as confirmation of the word that Gabriel brings from God to Zechariah (Luke 1:19–20), but also to point toward the function of John the Baptist in John 1:6–15 as a witness who testifies that Jesus is the "Word" from God who comes as light that gives people life in the world. The last part of Qur'an 3:39 merges "Word," who was in the beginning with God in John 1:1, with the "word" that Gabriel brings to Mary in Luke 1:35–38, making her pregnant with Jesus.⁴⁸ The key verse here occurs in Luke 1:38, where Mary says, "Let it be according to your word." After Mary says this, the angel Gabriel departs from her and Mary is pregnant with Jesus in her womb (1:38–45).

I would thus suggest that this merger of "Word" in John with "word" in Luke has been encouraged in Christian and Muslim tradition both through Tatian's *Diatessaron* and the *Infancy Gospel of James*. The arrangement of Johannine and Lukan tradition in the opening verses of Tatian's *Diatessaron* placed John 1:1–5 thirty-three verses before Mary's assertion to Gabriel, "Let it be according to your word." A person reading from the beginning of the *Diatessaron* through its first section sees a continuous story from the presence of the "word" in

⁴⁸ Räsänen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma*, 86; and Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, 6–7, 11, 156–58.

the beginning with God to the presence of "God's word" in Mary's womb in the form of the child Jesus.⁴⁹ In addition, *Infancy Gospel of James* 11:5 portrays an angel telling Mary, "Do not fear, Mary, because you have found favor before the Lord of all. You will conceive of his word (*ek logou autou*)." This formulation of the speech of the angel encourages a dynamic correlation between the "word" (*logos*) with God in John 1:1 and the "word" (*logos*) from God, which makes Jesus present in the womb of Mary. From the perspective of this narration, Gabriel brings God's special word to Mary and pronounces it quite literally *into* her. The statement in Qur'an 3:47 is a natural commentary on the sequence of the gospel story: "God creates what He will. When He decrees anything He only says to it 'Be!' and it comes into being." The angel Gabriel brought the word "Be!" to Mary; Mary said, "Let it be according to God's word"; and Jesus was consequently in her womb! Thus, a dynamic relation between "word" in John and Luke was already active during the centuries between the New Testament and the Qur'an, and it is vividly present in the Qur'an itself.⁵⁰ It is not clear, however, how many have correlated the observation with an understanding of the transmission of Lukan tradition from the time of the New Testament to the time of the Qur'an.

Qur'an 3:40–41 continues with the Zechariah scene that opens the Gospel of Luke. Zechariah inquires how it will be possible to have a son when he is old and his wife is barren (Luke 1:18). The angel responds in the Qur'an simply with, "So (it will be). God does what He wills" (Q 3:40). This retort is an abbreviation of the angel's response in Luke 1:19–20, which includes a description by the angel of the time when these things "will be" (*genētai*) and a specific reference to the "words" (*logoi*) he has brought from God to him and Elizabeth (Luke 1:20). In Luke 1:24–25, the events unfold in exactly the manner the angel says they will. Zechariah responds in Qur'an 3:41 by asking the angel for a "token" to confirm his appearance to him and his special message. The angel gives him a token in the form of muteness for three days, making him unable to communicate except by making signs. Luke 1:22 explains how people immediately perceived, on the basis of Zechariah's muteness, that he had seen a vision in the temple, and goes

⁴⁹ Cf. Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, 18–19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

on to note how Zechariah made signs to the people in order to communicate with them (cf. *Prot. Jas.* 10:9). Qur'an 3:41 ends with an exhortation to Zechariah to remember the Lord continually and to praise him in the early hours of the night and morning.

Qur'an 3:42 continues the narrative with an appearance of the angels to Mary,⁵¹ which is the next scene in the Gospel of Luke (1:26–38). The Qur'anic assertion, "O Mary! Lo! God has chosen you and made you pure, and has preferred you above (all) the women of creation" (3:42), stands in direct relation to Luke 1:28: "Greetings (*chaire*), O favored one. The Lord is with you"; Luke 1:30: "... Mary ... you have found favor with God"; and Luke 1:42: "Blessed are you among women." Most noticeably, the Qur'an adds the following: "God has made you pure" (Q 3:42). This addition is related, above all, to the story of Mary in the *Infancy Gospel of James*. In this account, when Mary walks seven steps on the ground at the age of six months, her mother Anna vows that the child "will never walk on this ground again until I take [her] into the temple of the Lord" (*Prot. Jas.* 6:3). Anna turns Mary's bedroom into a sanctuary (*hagiasma*), permits nothing profane or unclean to pass the child's lips, and only allows undefiled daughters of the Hebrews to play with her (*Prot. Jas.* 6:4–5). When Mary is one year old, the featured guests Joachim invites are the high priests and priests who pronounce a special blessing on her (*Prot. Jas.* 6:6–9). When Mary is three, Joachim and Anna take her to the temple, where she is protected from impurity and fed by an angel until she is twelve years of age (*Prot. Jas.* 7:4–8:5). When Joseph is convinced that someone has defiled (*emiainen*: 13:4–5) Mary, Mary responds immediately that she is pure (*kathara*: 13:8). Again, when the high priest interrogates her, she insists that she is pure (*kathara*) before the Lord God (15:13). When the high priest confronts Joseph, he also asserts that he is pure (*katharos*: 15:15). After both Joseph and Mary pass the high priest's test of the "water of bitterness for unfaithfulness" (*Prot. Jas.*

⁵¹ One difference between Lukan and Qur'anic traditions is the plural reference to "angels" who come to Zechariah and Mary, although the narration may suggest a single angel in Qur'an 3:41. This feature appears to be related to the plural "We" of the divine voice in a majority of instances throughout the Qur'an. Thus, while the narration refers to angels in plural (Q 3:39, 42, 45), both Zechariah and Mary consistently address the "angels" as "My Lord" (Q 3:35, 38, 40, 41, 47).

16:4–8),⁵² it becomes clear that they are both pure. The emphasis on Mary's "purity," then, has a dynamic relation to Lukan tradition as it is reconfigured in the *Infancy Gospel of James*.

Qur'an 3:43 features the angels telling Mary to be obedient to her Lord, and to prostrate herself, bowing with those who bow (in worship). The Qur'an tradition is related to Mary's response to Gabriel in Luke 1:38, to her Magnificat in Luke 1:46–55, and to the reconfiguration of Lukan tradition in the *Infancy Gospel of James*. In Luke, when Gabriel tells Mary that "with God nothing will be impossible," she replies, "Behold, I am the slave of the Lord" (Luke 1:37–38; cf. *Prot. Jas.* 11:9). Then, when Mary is with Elizabeth, she adopts a position of worship, "magnifying the Lord," and praising God with extended verse reminiscent of the psalms of David sung in the temple (Luke 1:46–55). This enactment of obedience and worship of the Lord is deepened by the *Infancy Gospel of James*, as a result of Mary's life in the temple from age three until age twelve. At age sixteen (*Prot. Jas.* 12:9), when she is visited by an angel in the house of David, she does not protest against the possibility that she "will conceive of God's word." Rather, she inquires whether she will "give birth the way women usually do" if she conceives in this unusual manner (*Prot. Jas.* 11:5–6). When the angel explains that she will not give birth in the usual way, since the power of God will overshadow her and her child will be holy, the son of the Most High, and he will save his people from their sins, Mary immediately says, "Behold the slave of the Lord before him; may it be to me according to his word" (*Prot. Jas.* 11:7–9). Immediately in the *Infancy Gospel of James*, then, Mary shows her obedience before the Lord. Without delay, she continues her task of spinning the veil for the temple of the Lord from the purple and scarlet thread given to her by the high priest, and she proceeds to take it to him (*Prot. Jas.* 10:1–10; 11:4; 12:1). The high priest accepts her diligent gift for the temple and praises her, saying, "Mary, the Lord God has extolled your name and so you will be blessed by all the generations of the earth" (*Prot. Jas.* 12:2). Throughout the *Infancy Gospel of James*, then, Mary displays her obedience and willing subservience to the Lord, which is similarly reflected in the Qur'anic tradition.

⁵² Cf. Numbers 5:11–31; and Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 8.3.3; 6:1–15; 13:1–14:2.

Qur'an 3:44 begins with a divine address to Muhammad that is reminiscent of the tradition in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus says: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and you have revealed them to infants; yes, Father for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. . ." (Luke 10:21–22). In the Qur'an, Muhammad stands in the same relation to God that Jesus stands in the Gospel of Luke, except there is no reference to God as "Father" in the Qur'an. Thus, the narrational voice in the Qur'an says to Muhammad: "This is of the tidings of things hidden. We reveal it to you. You were not present with them when they threw their pens (to know) which of them should be the guardian of Mary, nor were you present with them when they quarreled about it" (Q 3:44). The special issue of "tidings of hidden things" emerges around both Jesus and Mary in the Gospel of Luke. It also emerges around Jesus in Luke 10:21 where, as noted above, God reveals all things to Jesus. For Mary, also, things that are hidden to others are known to her. Regularly, she is said to hide these things in her heart. When Jesus is born and shepherds come to visit him, "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Then Simeon tells Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—a sword will pierce your soul too" (Luke 2:35). When Jesus goes to the temple when he is twelve years of age and astonishes the teachers with "his understanding and answers" (2:47), Mary "treasures all these things in her heart" as Jesus "increases in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour" (2:52). Moreover, Mary possesses knowledge of "hidden things," as it says in *Infancy Gospel of James* 12:8–9, "And so Mary became frightened, returned home, and hid from the people of Israel [as she was growing in her pregnancy]. She was just sixteen years old when these mysterious things happened to her." Things related to Mary are thus especially mysterious and hidden in the Gospel of Luke and the *Infancy Gospel of James*, and this dynamic surrounds Mary as her story is revealed to Muhammad in Qur'an 3:44. The story of the "throwing of the pens (to know) which of them should be the guardian of Mary" is related to the gathering of "staffs" in *Infancy Gospel of James* 9:2–7, whereby Joseph was "chosen by lot" to be Mary's guardian. In turn, their "quarrelling" about the selection of Joseph is related to the problem that emerges for the temple assembly

of priests and elders when Annas the scribe discovers that Mary is pregnant (*Prot. Jas.* 15:1–16:2). The problem is solved only when Joseph and Mary pass the test of drinking the water of unfaithfulness that the high priest requires of them (*Prot. Jas.* 16:3–8).

Qur'an 3:45 continues yet further with Lukan tradition: "God gives you glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near (to God)." This ayah is related to Lukan language both when Gabriel speaks to Mary and when the angel announces the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. In Luke, Gabriel says to Mary: "You will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31–33). To the shepherds, the angel says: "I am bringing you glad tidings of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10–11). In Luke, the "glad tidings" are specifically placed in the mouth of the angel who comes to the shepherds. In the Qur'an, the "word from Him" may bear a relation to both Lukan and Johannine tradition about God's "word," as discussed above. The name of Jesus as Messiah is related to the speech of the angel who comes to the shepherds in Luke. The phrase "son of Mary" in the Qur'an is a forceful alternative to "the Son of the Most High," since according to Qur'anic doctrine God could not have a son, but God said to Mary, "Be!" and he came into being (Q 3:47, 59). Further, the Qur'anic "Illustrious in the world and the hereafter" is related to the Lukan "He will be great . . . and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David." Additionally, "And the hereafter" is related to "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:33). Moreover, when Qur'an 3:45 adds, "and one of those brought near (to God)," it is surely referring to the ascension of Jesus to God, which is present in only one gospel in the New Testament, namely at the end of the Gospel of Luke (24:50–51; cf. the summary in Acts 1:2). Once again, Qur'anic tradition reflects a deep, internal relation to Lukan tradition. In this particular ayah we observe the relationship extend beyond the birth and childhood of Jesus to the end of the Lukan story.

Qur'an 3:46 merges a tradition that is known outside the Qur'an only in the *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy* with a special insight from the

Gospel of Luke. Qur'an 3:46a reads: "He will speak to mankind in his cradle and in his manhood." Jesus' speaking from the cradle is found only in the introduction to the *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*: "We find what follows in the book of Joseph the high priest, who lived in the time of Christ. Some say that he is Caiaphas. He has said that Jesus spoke, and, indeed, when He was lying in His cradle said to Mary His mother: 'I am Jesus, the Son of God, the Logos, whom you have brought forth, as the Angel Gabriel announced to you; and my Father has sent me for the salvation of the world'" (1.1-2).⁵³ It is notable that this special tradition places words in the mouth of Jesus that correlate assertions found in the Gospel of John ("the Word") with declarations exhibited in the Gospel of Luke ("as the Angel Gabriel announced to you"). Qur'an 3:46b, on the other hand, makes an assertion related directly to the Gospel of Luke: "and he is of the righteous." An interpreter could easily miss this one, since the assertion that someone is "of the righteous" is so common in Qur'anic tradition.⁵⁴ Yet this, too, is a special emphasis found most predominantly in Luke. Only in Luke does it say: "Now when the centurion saw what had happened he glorified God, saying: 'Certainly this man was righteous (*dikaïos*)'" (Luke 23:47). Mark 15:39 and Matthew 27:54, in contrast, have the centurion say, "Truly this man was a son of god." Tatian's *Diatessaron*, according to the Arabic version, privileges the Lukan assertion by placing it first, so the centurion says, "This man was righteous; and, truly he was the Son of God." Qur'an 3:46b uses, of course, only the first part of the centurion's assertion in the *Diatessaron*, to highlight that Jesus is "of the righteous."

The Gospel of Luke uses the word "righteous" specifically to describe Zechariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, and Jesus. All of these are, of course, members of the Family of 'Imran in the Qur'an. The adjective "righteous" is not used to describe Mary in Luke, because even stronger eulogising language is used to portray her: "one who has found favor with God" (1:30); "slave of the Lord" (1:38, 48); "blessed among women" (1:42); "one with blessed fruit in her womb" (1:42);

⁵³ Based on the translation in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; 10 vols.; New York: Scribner's, 1925), 8:405.

⁵⁴ In the Qur'an, specific people are said to be "of the righteous" or "among the righteous," or they pray to be so in 2:130; 3:39, 46; 6:85; 16:120-22; 21:72, 74-75; 21:85-86; 26:83; 27:19; 28:27; 29:27; 39:100, 112; 66:10; 68:50.

"mother of my Lord" (1:43); and "one whom all generations will call blessed" (1:48). The second Lukan verse that describes Zechariah and Elizabeth asserts that "they were both righteous before God" (1:5). When the angel Gabriel describes John the Baptist, who will be born to them, he says: "[A]nd he [John] will go before him [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous" (1:17). In this verse, not only Zechariah and Elizabeth are depicted as righteous, but also their son, John, and the Hebrew prophet Elijah. Then, by the end of the story, it becomes very clear from the assertion by the centurion (23:47) that Jesus is also "of the righteous." The emphases in Lukan tradition are decisively present in Qur'an 6:85: "And Zechariah and John and Jesus and Elijah; each one (of them) was of the righteous." In addition, Qur'an 3:39 highlights the special nature of John among the righteous: "And the angels called to him (Zechariah) as he stood praying in the sanctuary: God gives you glad tidings of (a son whose name is) John, (who comes) to confirm a word from God lordly, chaste, a prophet of the righteous."

Qur'an 3:47 then continues with Mary's response: "My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal has touched me? He said: So (it will be). God creates what He will. If He decrees a thing, He says to it only: 'Be!' and it is." The first part of this ayah is related to Luke 1:34. Yet its wording is similar to the reading in Tatian's *Diatessaron*, saying that no man had "known" her, rather than like Luke 1:34, where Mary states that she has not "known" a man. The *Diatessaron* and the Qur'an make the male the active partner (cf. Q 3:47; 19:20), instead of presenting Mary as the one who had gone to the man.⁵⁵ The last part of the ayah reconfigures and expands the statement spoken to Zechariah in Qur'an 3:40. First, it reconfigures it by assertion that God "creates" what He will, rather than God "does" what He will. Second, it adds the following: "If He decrees a thing, He says to it only: 'Be!' and it is." The differences are related to Qur'an 3:59, where Jesus and Adam are compared to one another. The Qur'anic statements emphasise that Jesus was one of God's "created" beings, just like Adam was created. Yet it stressed that Jesus and Adam stand out among all humans by being

⁵⁵ Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, 19; cf. K. Luke, "The Koranic Recension of Luke 1:34," *Indian Theological Studies* 22 (1985): 381-99.

the only two where God simply said, "Be!", and they came to be. The emphasis on God's "word" as the source of the child is evident here (Luke 1:38), as is the broader context that includes the "spirit" that overshadows Mary (Luke 1:35) in Qur'an 4:171: "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of God, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him."⁵⁶

The angel continues in the Qur'an with the following: "And He will teach him the Scripture and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel" (3:48). Jesus' knowledge of Scripture (the writings) emerges in his encounter with the devil⁵⁷ in Luke, when he responds twice to the devil with the phrase "it is written" (4:4, 8). When the devil tries to test Jesus further with what is written in the Psalms (Ps 91:11–12 in Luke 4:10–11), Jesus responds with yet another verse from Scripture that says, "You shall not test the Lord your God" (Deut 6:16 in Luke 4:12).⁵⁸ Qur'an 3:48 continues with an assertion that God taught Jesus wisdom. Jesus' knowledge of wisdom that God has given to him is highlighted in Luke 2:40, 52; 7:35; 10:21–22; 11:49. Then Qur'an 3:48 asserts that God taught Jesus Torah. Specific assertions that Jesus knows Torah are present in Luke 10:26; 16:16–17; 24:44. Qur'an 3:48 also avows that God taught Jesus "gospel," which is especially clear in Luke 4:18, where Jesus asserts, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." The Gospel of Luke also emphasises Jesus' knowledge of the gospel in 4:43; 7:22; 8:1; 16:16; 20:1.

Qur'an 3:49 brings together many emphases found both in the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John. When Jesus says, "Lo! I come to you with a sign from your Lord," he is using language about signs specifically characteristic of the Gospel of John.⁵⁹ The ayah is closely

⁵⁶ Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity*, 156.

⁵⁷ In Luke, this character is referred to as the *diabolos*. Cf. Qur'an *iblis* (the same letters with different vowels, minus the preposition "d"; see further Gordon D. Newby, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* [Oxford: Oneworld, 2002], 86–87).

⁵⁸ These responses to the devil will be important when we get to Qur'an 3:51 below. In Luke, Jesus displays his knowledge of Scripture (writings) in Luke 4:14, 8, 12, 17, 21; 7:27; 10:26; 18:31; 19:46; 20:17, 37; 21:22; 22:37; 22:37; 24:27, 32, 45–46.

⁵⁹ See esp. John 2:22, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30.

related to the response of believers in John 7:31 who say, "When the Messiah comes, will he do more signs than this man has done?" It also bears a relation to John 6:14: When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!" Thus, Qur'an 3:49 begins with language characteristic of the Johannine tradition. Then it continues with the following: "Lo! I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it and it is a bird, with God's permission." These words are related to the opening of the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*; yet, as noted above, this scene constructs Jesus as an infant "playing creation," which is the role of Jesus in John 1:1–5. Thus, again the reader finds in a Qur'anic statement a merger of Lukan tradition dynamically interacting with Johannine tradition. Qur'an 3:49 then continues with the phrase: "I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead, with God's permission." This statement evokes Jesus' speech to disciples of John the Baptist in Luke 7:22: "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them" (cf. Matthew 11:5). The Qur'anic statement does not include the lame, the deaf, and the poor, but the three miracles to which he refers occur in the sequence in which Jesus states them in Luke. Qur'an 3:49 then includes this statement: "And I announce to you what you eat and what you store up in your houses. Lo! in this truly is a portent to you, if you are to be believers." The statements concerning "what you eat" and "what you store up in your houses" are closely related to Luke 12. "What you shall eat" is Jesus' specific topic of discussion in Luke 12:22–24, and "what you will store up" is the specific topic of discussion in Luke 12:16–21. The story in Luke 12:14–21 about the man with many possessions, which is not in any other New Testament Gospel, is truly a portent for believers: this man stored all his goods in barns, rather than storing up treasures in heaven by selling his possessions and giving alms (Luke 12:33). In contrast to this man, Jesus announces that a person must not be anxious about what he or she will eat, "For life is more than food" (Luke 12:23). Again, we find that the Gospel of Luke has a close relation to the Qur'anic statements.

Qur'an 3:50 continues with the following: "And (I come) confirming that which was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful some of that which was forbidden to you. I come to you with a sign from your Lord, so keep your duty to God and obey me." This ayah appears to

carry on with topics related to John 6:25–58. The subject of what a person will eat in Luke 12 reverberates with eating the bread from heaven in John 6. “Coming with a sign” is a specific issue in John 6:26, 30; confirming what was before Jesus in the Torah and then fulfilled is the topic of Luke 24:44; and the issue of keeping one’s duty to God and obeying Jesus is present in John 3:36: “the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.”

Qur’an 3:51 provides initial closure for this section⁶⁰ with: “Lo! God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is a straight path.” This emphatic assertion is related to the one made by Jesus in the middle of the Lukan version of the testing story, mentioned above, where Jesus responds decisively to the devil. When the devil tells Jesus that he will give him all authority over all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, if only he will worship him, Jesus tells him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve’” (Luke 4:5–8 [quoting Deut. 6:13]; cf. Matt 4:8–10). The relation of this ayah to the response of Jesus is especially apt, since Jesus shows clearly that he himself is devoted to the Lord God (thus, “God is my Lord”) by responding with a recitation that emphasises that “you” must worship “your Lord.”

Conclusion

In this essay I have argued for a specific history of the transmission of the Gospel of Luke, moving from Christian literature in the second century to the presence of “Lukan” tradition in the Qur’an. This history shows the remarkable interest in and the energising, reconfiguration, and supplementing of the Gospel of Luke through the centuries. With this account, we have received a special view of the *Auslegungsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Gospel of Luke. On the one hand, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and the *Infancy Gospel of James* supplement Luke by “backfilling” its story of Jesus’ birth and childhood. On the other hand, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and Tatian’s *Diatessaron* energise Lukan tradition in a special manner with the use of passages and topics taken from the Gospel of John. This energising

⁶⁰ Qur’an 3:52 continues with a section devoted to disbelief, and the story of Jesus is still internal to the subject matter. The subject matter is related to the topic of belief and disbelief in the Gospel of John.

of Lukan tradition with Johannine tradition, as we have seen, extends dynamically into the Qur’an. While there is still much more in this regard to interpret, both for Lukan tradition and for the relation of this tradition to the Qur’an, this extended task will definitely reward further careful scrutiny. There has been no attempt in this essay to investigate the relation of Lukan tradition to all other extracanonical gospel traditions, the Gospel of John, and the Qur’an. Neither has there been an attempt to explore the nature of those groups of Christians which helped to nurture this dynamic relation between Luke and John. Rather, the goal has been to introduce the special history of the Gospel of Luke down to the Qur’an and to display enough information to suggest that this is an area that merits substantive attention in the future by interpreters.

Already in 1997, Heikki Räisänen discussed issues raised in this current essay in “Word of God, Word of Muhammad: Could Historical Criticism of the Qur’an be Pursued by Muslims?”⁶¹ From my perspective, problematic issues emerge when Räisänen champions, as he occasionally does, “scientific” historical exegesis of texts that emulates the practices and goals of the natural sciences.⁶² These formulations create dichotomies between the natural and supernatural, the rational and irrational, that take us back to nineteenth-century conceptual frames of reference rather than move us forward to twenty-first century conceptual, cultural, and political issues. Räisänen’s formulations are very promising when he advocates for Gerd Theissen’s semiotic or cultural linguistic approach⁶³ and explores aspects of the “effective history” of biblical tradition.⁶⁴ My own preference is for a socio-rhetorical approach that addresses issues of diversity in contexts of “conceptualised” unity in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This approach places social, cultural, and ideological features in a position of priority and interprets historical-critical phenomena in contexts of “historical intertexture”⁶⁵ and

⁶¹ Räisänen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma*, 118–36.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 120–23.

⁶³ Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology*, 142–46.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 162–64; and idem, “The ‘Effective History’ of the Bible: A Challenge to Biblical Scholarship?” in *Challenges to Biblical Interpretation: Collected Essays 1991–2001* (BibInt Series 59; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 263–82.

⁶⁵ Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 118–27; and idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 63–68.