

FATOOHI, LOUAY. *The Mystery of the Historical Jesus: The Messiah in the Qur'an, the Bible, and Historical Sources*. Luna Plena Publishing, 2007, 568 pp.

Dr. Louay Fatoohi is to be lauded for this much needed volume. His account of the "Historical Jesus" is an undertaking of meticulous analysis: one of thorough comparison and contrast utilizing the Khaldunian methodology of Islamic scholar. With fair-minded passion and devotion, he demonstrates a daunting knowledge base and profound regard for the prophetic heritage of Monotheism.

Despite being the focus of mountains of literature, "Jesus" has remained an enigma due to a plethora of misconceptions which include mystical and mythical speculations. Appending this disturbing montage are deliberate scriptural interpolations in the Codex Sinaiticus—as demonstrated by Bently in 1985 - as well as in the doctrinally revised texts that followed. As if these were not enough, the student must also deal with the political maneuvering of Ecclesiarches of ancient Mystery Religions (Gnostics). In addition, we have thicker veils woven by unlearned and even learned pundits of varied persuasions, all of whom adjusted these fundamental errors to their own biases.

Fatoohi addresses most significant impediments that have prevented a balanced assessment of the man known as Jesus. His lucid treatise carefully and exhaustingly examines, discovers, debunks, explains and validates what is possible to assess from across the millennia that separate us from the advent of this holy prophet of God.

There is no romance in these pages: no feel-good allusions, no forays to the outer limits of reason, no weeping Madonnas and no "Ben Hur" Hestonian images emerge from the pen of this scholar. With the skill of a senior investigator, Fatoohi performs an autopsy on dead literature and discovers the toxic imaginations of either the foolish or cunning. He exhumes what has been buried alive, and re-evaluates what was exposed to elements of erosive social decay upon which myth mongers have built their dreams. He explores the unknown, revisits the supposedly known, and unveils useless

speculations with such tenacity one is tempted to shout "get on with it" as the reader's patience wears thin, but we are duly rewarded when veins of precious truth are conclusively revealed and many facts and misconceptions are sorted and filed, after which the author signifies further lines for query.

In 800 pages of humorless and unsparing contrast, comparison and assessment, Dr. Fatoohi's approach inspires confidence and goes further to challenge seeker, cynic or dupe with the gauntlet of balanced reasoning. Moreover, he allows both Muslims and non-Muslims an extremely lucid entrée to the Qur'an's pronouncements on all matters under discussion. Here I must truly applaud his treatment, for it is delicate yet firm, avoiding any approach that could be labeled polemic. Hence, there is naught but gain to be found within this seasoned labor of love.

Nevertheless, and despite my admiration for this immense undertaking, he seems to have avoided many Higher Critics and makes numerous references to the Septuagint's suspect renderings. However, the premise for the latter is indeed, "living context", as it is this exceedingly flawed text that Christians have studied as "Gospel" for two millennia. Fatoohi's treatments and deconstruction therefore, may be reassuringly received by Christian laymen and prelate, despite the likelihood of their discomfiture.

As a former Christian Minister and Missionary, I am impressed by the writer's respectful management of the New Testament's several versions. Rather than castigate those responsible, for the morass, Fatoohi's quest for 'Jesus the man', presents a sound and kindly approach from the Universalist perspective offered through Islam. Albeit, he is excused or missed some works that may have shed more light, such as Barbara's Theiring's analysis of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*—for which she was dismissed—in which Nazarene Essenes unquestionably indicate Jesus was married. Also, a contextual purview of contemporary society of the advent of Jesus is absent, such as observations offered by S.P. Brock's *Bible in the Syriac Tradition*, or the authoritative treatises of Heidenreich and Alfred Eidershiem. For example, these would certainly have made the argument for Jesus 'as a man' more viable, as he could not have been taken seriously in Hebrew society as "Rabbi" *unless he was*