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Abstract:

This thesis analyses Christian presentations of Christ for Muslims in the most creative periods of Christian-Muslim dialogue, the first half of the ninth and the second half of the twentieth century. In these two historical moments, Christians made a serious effort to present their faith in Christ in terms that take into account Muslim perceptions of him, with a view to bridging the gap between Muslim and Christian convictions. The difficulty of establishing dialogue is compounded by two Islamic denials of Christian beliefs about Christ, the rejection of Christ's divine sonship and the denial of the death of Christ by crucifixion. Muslims have not accepted the title "Son of God" for Christ, and they have held that Christ was taken up to heaven without going through death.

Part One of the thesis analyses the writing of three apologists from the early ninth century, Abū Qurra, Abū Rā'itā and 'Ammār al-Basrī. Abū Qurra attempted to defend a Christian account of Christ by showing that it is not inconsistent with Islamic convictions, Abū Rā'itā appealed to the Qur'ān in support of the Incarnation, and 'Ammār al-Basrī tried to show the internal coherence of the Incarnation as the best form of revelation. Part Two studies the contributions of three twentieth century apologists, Kenneth Cragg, John Hick and Hans Küng. Cragg challenged Muslims to rethink their concept of God's relationship with the world to include Incarnation, Hick sought common ground with Muslims on the historical Jesus, and Küng attempted to build Christology on Islamic foundations. A life of Christ in Arabic, combining Qur'anic and gospel terminology, is reviewed at the end as a possible model for future dialogue between Christians and Muslims on Christ.