ments” demonstrates the conflict of conscience that occurs as the changing morals of modernity react with Islamic cultural and religious traditions. The essay “Inside the Islamic Reformation” deals with how education and the mass media have precipitated an ongoing reinter-pretation of Islam.

In light of recent world events, this book could not have come at a more appropriate time. Now, more than ever, it is important that the English-speaking world has access to a work that can help increase mutual understanding and respect between the West and the Muslim Middle East. In the editors’ own words, “The best way to combat stereotypes is to meet others on a person-to-person basis” (xi).

—Steven Bitner

The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature, edited and translated by Tarif Khalidi (Harvard University Press, 2001)

Although in Islam Jesus is not the divine being revered by Christians, he is often seen as a prophet second in importance only to Muhammad. He was held in particular esteem by Islamic ascetics and mystics and, one hadith states, by Muhammad himself (60). Accordingly, over the centuries Islamic scholars recorded many sayings attributed to Jesus, often couching them in brief stories. Al-Ghazali, for example, cites forty-seven sayings. Now 303 of the scattered post-Qur’anic references have been compiled into what their editor, Tarif Khalidi, calls “the Muslim gospel” (3).

Many of these sayings represent a Jesus familiar to readers of the Gospels, recasting, paralleling, or echoing New Testament material. One recurrent modification is the addition of an explicit moral where the biblical text is silent. These morals may take a somewhat unexpected, yet bracing, twist. For example, the recast text, “Look at the birds... They neither reap nor plough, and God provides for them” is interpreted as “Strive for the sake of God and not for the sake of your bellies... Beware the excesses of the world” (60).

In the “Muslim gospel,” Jesus is not perfect, although, as a prophet, he is still a worker of miracles. He is beset with self-doubt, struggles with anger, dreads the Hour (Judgment Day), complains of helplessness, is admonished by God, and occasionally is bested in holiness by his cousin John and an anonymous “old man.”

Understandably, in these sayings Jesus is Islamized. The mosque replaces the temple. Jesus cites the Qur’an, and as a Muslim prophet, he performs Muslim ablutions and prayers and is spared crucifixion. His contemporaries symbolically pay homage to the future Muhammad. Straying ‘ulama’ (religious scholars) receive the stinging rebukes reserved in the Gospels for the scribes and Pharisees, while Jesus attires himself in the midr’a, a garment preferred by Islamic ascetics and Sufis.

Poignant lessons for the modern situation abound. The Muslim Jesus teaches that pride and fanaticism arouse anger, a sin. Our real enemies are Satan and the enticements and distractions of the world. Mercy should be extended to all the “people of [one’s] race,” who, Jesus tells an interlocutor, are “all the children of Adam” (79). “He who prays for those who treat him badly defeats Satan,” he reminds us (170).

Readers will quickly find favorite sayings. Some I appreciate for their wryness: “A pig [unclean animal] passed by Jesus. Jesus said, ‘Pass in peace.’ He was asked, ‘Spirit of God, how can you say this to a pig?’ Jesus replied, ‘I hate to accustom my tongue to evil’” (123). As a teacher, I am humbled by the teachings on the responsibility of scholarship: To the question “Who is the most seditious of men?” Jesus replied, “The scholar who is in error. If a scholar errs, a host of people will fall into error because of him!” (61).

—Doris R. Dant