The Relation of Muslim and Christian Community: Hermeneutic Contribution to Create the Third Space in the Communities

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ABSTRACT

One of the social conflicts caused by the false understanding of religion often occurs, making horizontal and vertical conflicts in social life. Nevertheless, there is a way to resolve the inter-religious conflict called a 'third space community.' This article seeks to answer how we should interpret Jesus in two different religious communities (Islam and Christian)? With Martin Buber's hermeneutic approach to 'I-Thou,' this paper describes an understanding of the "term of religions" to interpret each other in the two religious communities. Multicultural communication as a form of interpretation of the "third space" is a middle way to resolve conflicts. Thus, this paper is expected that the understanding of Jesus is not a source of division but rather a limitation of religion, culture, and horizons for its adherents. Referring to Gadamer's concept, a one-sided understanding will prevent each society (Islam and Christian) from interpreting Jesus. Afterward, this article suggests that the understanding of Jesus let the community fully interpret it.

Introduction

Very few people question whether there was a man named Jesus historically who lived in the first century AD, of whom is written in the Bible and the Qur'an. The 'truth' of the stories comes into question by Muslim scholars, Christian scholars, and Atheist

scholars. One would think, however, the simple fact that the Jesus in the Qur'an and the Jesus in the Bible with its vast similarities would be a place of good dialogue and communication. Still, instead, it has been the complete opposite. In Indonesia, two different names are referring to the same man. Christians call him *Yesus*, and Muslims call him *Isa*. Some Christians will go so far as to claim that to use Isa referring to Jesus is 'sinful'. Where does this ideology come from? In one of the world's most well-known interfaith initiatives between Muslims and Christians, 'A Common Word,' there is almost nothing about a person they have the most in common, Jesus ('Arabi, 2012; Bhabha, 2007; Bhabha, 1994; Buber & Kaufmann, 1970; Rutherford, 1990; Talal, 1983, 1993, 2001; Wright, 2011). There certainly are vast differences between each religion's view of Jesus. Still, there are vastly different views of Jesus within Christianity and not merely between Muslims and Christians, so why the sharp division between the two religions? Are those differences worth or not communicating about? In fact, can we even call an interfaith initiative successful if an entire topic or person in a religion is not discussed because of the vast differences of belief? Or is it because of the fear of violent disagreements about that person?

This paper seeks to answer the question, how should we approach a hermeneutic of the life of Jesus between two communities that interpret Jesus differently, namely Muslim and Christian communities? I argue that modern-day use of religion is neither conducive to an interfaith dialogue that honors one's complexity nor leaves space for one to have a flexible identity that allows for an area of growth for individuals within these groups. Therefore, I put forth Martin Buber's "I-Thou" concept as a way to approach each other in a hermeneutical middle space in order to allow each interpretation to speak to the "Other." I will also be engaging with Homi Bhabha's "third space" theory and hybridity to shed light on multicultural

communication as a form of interpretation concerning forming this third space. In doing so, I argue that Jesus does not need to be the source of division between Muslims and Christians, but rather that it is the limitations of religion, culture, and one's horizons to take from Gadamer that hinder each community in becoming who they entirely are.

Literature Review

But who is Jesus?

Jesus in both Christianity and Islam is highly regarded as a prominent figure in each community of faith. Contrary to many Western understandings of Isa (Jesus) in Islam, he is widely considered one of the most profound prophets. There are twenty-five prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, but many will argue there are five that are the *Ulul' Azam* or the persistent ones, the prophets with high determination to carry out the *Tawheed*. Among them are Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus), and Muhammad. This name is debated in the vast diversity of Muslim circles today, but it is widely accepted within global Islam perspectives. Jesus holds a sacred history within Islamic literature, tradition, and the Qur'an itself. There are several hundred sayings and stories of Jesus within premodern Islamic literature (Khalidi, 2001, p. 3). Still, there was one Javanese version of the *Qisas al-Anbiya*, which tells unique stories of Jesus from the late 19th century (Wasim & Steenbrink, 2005).

In the Christian perspective, Jesus is a prominent figure in the Bible as the stories and sayings of Jesus in the Gospels (*Injil*) make up many of the New Testament. Central to the Christian perspective is the divinity of Jesus, which means that Jesus is one hundred percent God and, at the same time, one hundred percent man. This notion has been debated for centuries, and it was not until Constantine, in

his self-confusion, who Jesus was, so that they decided to create a council to a unified conclusion on which Jesus was. It took place in the 4th century at the council of Nicaea. However, before the council and after, Christians have debated over the true nature of who Jesus was. Prominent scholars and historians in Christianity still seek to understand Jesus, such as is stated in the opening chapter of N.T. Wright's book, "Simply Jesus," where he admits, "Jesus of Nazareth poses a question and a challenge two thousand years after his lifetime. The question is fairly simple: who exactly was he? This includes...did he really rise from the dead? I have spent much of my life puzzling over these questions" (Wright, 2011).

Because Jesus plays such prominent roles in each religious belief system, there are many examples of stress between the communities due to the differences of interpretation. One example of Jesus being the center of controversy between Muslims and Christians is found in an article written by Mega Hidayati and Nelly van Doorn Harder investigated a sign that went up in Cilacap on the island of Java just before Christmas in 2018 with the inscription, "I love Jesus because Jesus is Moslem: *Toleransi tidak sama dengan Pluralisme* (Tolerence is not equal to Pluralism)." The sign was put up by the local branch of the Forum Umat Islam (FUI) in four different locations. The group leader stressed that it was not to humiliate Christians but rather to remind Muslims that they are not to attend Christmas celebrations. The article attempts to show how religious and community leaders influence common opinions. Hidayati and van Doorn Harder observe the influence that the fatwa from 1981 on Christmas and the fatwa in 2005 which forbade a Muslim to marry anyone outside of Islam (even though Islamic law allows Muslims to marry Christians and Jews), a fatwa against Muslims and non-Muslims praying together, and the most controversial one was its fatwa against pluralism and secularism. This last one took a blow by influential organizations

such as NU, which criticized a fatwa citing Pancasila as a core tenant of Indonesian society (Hidayati & van Doorn Harder, 2020). This fatwa was undoubtedly a hit to Indonesia's pluralistic society and certainly affected Indonesian inter-and intra-religious relationships as well.

The authors make the point that although the Qur'an speaks highly of Jesus and his mother Mary (even dedicating an entire chapter to her) Jesus does not play a significant role in Muslim-Christian encounters. Furthermore, when Jesus is at the center of Muslim-Christian relations, he is most often evoked as a source of objectifying the "other" rather than a source of peace. When I talk with Christians about Jesus, there is always a point in the conversation where I am required to identify whether I believe Jesus is God or not. Likewise, in my conversations with Muslims, it most often leads to the discussion regarding God's *tawheed*. Is it possible that there is a space where Muslims and Christians could meet without the boundaries of religion and allow the "Other" to be a part of their "becoming"?

Religion

Before we get to how we should approach Jesus in this middle space, it is imperative that we first dive into approaches to understanding religion. The modern concept of religion has taken a hit, especially since William Cantwell Smith's book, "The Meaning and End of Religion," came out in 1962. Smith's book was and still is controversial in the sense that it challenges modern categories of religion. The three core presuppositions that Smith holds are: "his belief that the world's "religions" are potentially convergent, his conviction that faith is both legitimate and necessary but that the conceptual systems in which it articulates itself are provisional and relative, and a respect for the Christian and Muslim traditions which is deeper than his unhappiness with their apparent exclusion

(Wainwright, 1984)." These presuppositions are good to have in mind because he is not concluding the destruction of all forms of faith but rather the categories in which we put faith. I am not, however, arguing as Smith would argue that faith and belief in doctrines are necessarily separate nor that we can come to some sort of world faith. That, I believe, is too idealistic. William Wainwright, professor of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, observes that Smith's idealistic approach to a sort of "world faith" is asking too much of Muslim, Hindu, Christian and other faiths to separate their faith with their theological expressions and therefore seriously modify each's doctrinal expressions (Wainwright, 1984, p. 354).

This leads to one of Smith's most unique and, therefore, most criticized concepts of his theory of religions. Smith argues that nouns should not name things that do not exist, religion included, only humans exist. We should then think of religion as an adjective "religious" rather than the noun "religion". Smith aims to escape the reification because it refers to a quality of one's religion rather than religion itself. This would mean that we ask instead what it would be like to live in the world "Christianly" or "Muslimly" rather than what it means to be a Christian or a Muslim. He said, "We shall consider later the notion that human history might prove more intelligible if we learned to think of religion and the religious as adjectives rather than as nouns (Talal, 2001, p. 20)." Many have criticized Smith's take on religion, including Talal Asad, a fellow post-colonial scholar himself. He criticizes this understanding in that Smith seems to suggest as a defense that God himself is personal. He wonders if this concept can be fully received by Muslims because in Asad's view, he is getting too close for comfort to the Christian God who he sees as believing they can be in touch with the Godhead (Talal, 1983). While Smith has had backlash from his own community, there are few who would not agree that his work on religion, especially in his

magnum opus, "The Meaning and End of Religion," is a classic and a must-read for all studying religion. For our purposes, it is helpful to note the way in which he challenges the categories of religion especially as they are defined today. If one were to define, especially in Islam and Christianity (not intending to use the terms in their noun form), salvation, one would not say that it is one religion that saves, but rather it is God. That may be moving too far into the realm of theology, but it is important to note here that most would agree that God is the one with authority not religion (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Hadiz, 2010). As Smith thinks of it, religion is a created entity, God; however, it cannot be according to Christians and Muslims alike.

Methods

This study uses a hermeneutic approach to understand the relationship between Muslim and Christian communities. Referring to Gadamer's concept, this study practices a discourse on phenomena that develops with reflection, dialogue, and interpretation (McCaffrey et al., 2012; Paterson & Higgs, 2015). First, the reflection in this study re-discusses the meaning of Jesus from insider and outsider perspectives to find a new understanding. The two dialogues are explanations of the meaning of religion that are relevant to this study. Third, interpretation explains the study of post-colonialism, which refers to the reviewers of interreligious studies. Most important are the views of Asad, Smith, Wright, and Bhababa (Bhabha, 2007; Talal, 1983, 1993; Wainwright, 1984; Wright, 2011). In this study, three patterns were carried out. First, look at the interpretation of the religious meaning of the two communities (Muslims and Christian's) by constructing the texts and literature used. Second, it creates a pattern to understand the meaning of Jesus to open third space communities. Third, build an interreligious theme that becomes a new meaning for religious dialogical activists.

Result

This study presents three significant findings: first, relationally and the third space; second, implementing the theory of "I and Thou"; lastly, interpretation of the Ibn 'Arabi as a perfect man.

Relationally and the Third Space

To think about the intersectionality of Muslims and Christians, we must dissect what this looks like to have a hermeneutic of relationality. Robert Setia, in a lecture on inter-religious dialogue, argues for a relational approach to inter-religious studies. He lays out a three-step progression to relationality within the inter-religious dialogue. First is "domination" where one sees the other as inferior and needs to be saved, therefore seeing herself as the dominant "I" over the "other." This is seen in both Christian and Muslim mission work, whereby the exclusivity of this approach hinders any hope for successful dialogue. Second is "dialogue" where we see mutuality between two parties alongside peace and harmony flowing from the intentional dialogue? It is most likely where we see the majority of people in inter-religious studies. It is also quite possibly a good explanation for why Muslims and Christians will have good productive dialogue but seem to get nowhere on Jesus. However, another step can take which he calls post-dialogue whereby the "Other" is the reason to reconstruct the self (Setio, 2021). This is quite the radical shift in understanding. Still, I believe is an important one in making a productive step towards a hermeneutic that allows for spiritual growth in both communities around Jesus. Conservative strands of religion may analyze this and think it goes a bit too far in that it seems universalistic and too inclusive, and the liberal strands of religion may see this as too problematic and idealistic. It may never be answered for both sides of the aisle. Still, below I aim to clarify what I mean by looking at three particular approaches but

predominantly looking at Martin Buber's I-Thou theory.

Here we will explore Homi Bhabha's work. His writing on colonialism, race, cultural difference, and our purposes, particularly his ideas on identity and the third space, have been highly influential in post-colonial studies (Bhabha, 2007; Bhabha, 1994, p. 208). Within the realm of identity or identification, he is primarily known for his understanding of hybridity. His theory of culture, by which his ideas of identity derive, are very close to theories of language in the sense that it is a form of translation, not meaning such in the literal sense as if translating a book from one language to another, but rather in the sense that there is displacement between two cultures and in our case religions (Bhabha, 1994). Moyaert also argues for a cultural-linguistic model to make her argument of a hermeneutic of interreligious hospitality, with a bit of an adaptation to it. The concept of cultural-linguistic theory holds that religions are untranslatable, but Moyaert disagrees. She argues that the analogy between language and religion is limited because it always ends in a reification of language whereby language has fixed properties. Moyaert argues that instead we should use the analogy of translation and interpretation in that both attempt to say the same thing differently and ultimately unlock the meaning of what is said. Moyaert says, "Just as in translation, it is the task of hermeneutics to mediate between the familiar and the strange on the one hand and to make the transfer of meaning possible on the other...Translation in the context of interreligious dialogue means explaining, clarifying, and elucidating particular religious meanings by searching for correlations and possible analogies between the strange and the familiar language (Moyaert, 2011, pp. 197–220)."

The difference is complex, but cultures tend to essentialize the "Other" and themselves. Bhabha quotes Renee Green, an African American artist, as she reflects on this concept,

> Multiculturalism doesn't reflect the complexity of the situation as I face it daily...It requires a person to step outside of him/herself to

actually see what he/she is doing. I don't want to condemn well-meaning people and say (like those T-shirts you can buy on the stree) 'It's a black thing, you wouldn't understand.' To me that's essentializing blackness (Bhabha, 2007, pp. 3–4).

What, therefore, can we say about who is a Muslim and who is a Christian? Who then gets to represent Christianity? The pastor? The Theologian? Who gets to represent Islam? The Ustadz? The Imam? The Ulama? However, rather than objectifying cultures and religions, we must be careful not to reduce a human's characteristics of culture or religion. Homi Bhabha says when writing about the issues that come with colonial studies that the one in power tries to construe the colonized as just a "population of degenerate types based on racial origin, to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction (Bhabha, 2007, p. 70)." Meaning that when we objectify and reduce human beings to these "types" they become a thing rather than a person. It will be important as we move closer to Martin Buber's ideas.

What then does this have to do with identity and hybridity? In an interview with Homi Bhabha he defines hybridity as,

Suppose the act of cultural translation (both representation and reproduction) denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture. In that case, we see that all forms of culture are continually in the process of hybridity...But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge (Bhabha, 1994, p. 211).

In other words, hybridity can only come from a space where we refuse to reduce the "Other" to some constructed idea of originality but rather see each person in a continual process of becoming. Our identities are not stagnant but are always in the process of becoming. A thing is made up of fixed parts, but humans have many moving parts in its identity formation. For Bhabha all forms of culture are in the process of hybridity and are not fixed (Bhabha, 2007, p. 71).

This third space then is a space for new forms of cultural meaning to be established by questioning traditional forms of identity, Bhabha's work is helpful for us in creating a middle space by which we can move beyond the binary identifications of Christian and Muslim religious affiliations to a new space. Not fully denying one's religious identification, but at the same time not allowing one's religious identity to hinder the interreligious hermeneutical attempt at understanding Jesus (Ashcroft et al., 2013).

Moyaert's work on the dialogical tension between openness and identity in her book "Fragile Identities" is helpful here. From her Christian perspective, she is trying to maintain this balance between identity and openness, holding tightly to her Christian identity while being open to the "other" from another faith. In her evaluation of exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism, and particularism, she works along with Paul Ricoeur to name the limitations of interreligious hermeneutics and concludes defining an interreligious encounter as something like a theological hermeneutic of interreligious hospitality (Moyaert, 2011, pp. 8–9). Here, it is important to note Moyaert's attempt to create space for the religious other. In Daniel Listijabudi's work on interreligious hermeneutics he emphasizes this point in her work. The moving in and out of one's religious community to enter the community of the other can be a confusing and fragile place to live, but "although there are tensions within fragile identity...it is compulsory for a theologian to attend this invitation of reflecting on what to do with the gaps with an open mind, great courage, and hospitality (Listijabudi, 2016, p. 9)." I would take this a step further beyond just the theologian to the individual practicing her religion the best she can unprofessionally.

I and Thou

While Moyaert and Bhabha's theories help us sharpen our thinking of the concept of beginning to create a space in between where we can allow our identities to be shaped by the "Other", it is Martin Buber's "I and Thou" theory that will help us in creating a space between Muslims and Christians to begin to not just discuss Jesus together, but be formed by each other's interpretation of him. The first insight Buber aims to make clear is that before there is an I or a You there is always a relationship between the "I-You" or the "I-it" that ultimately determines the "I" or the "You" (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970, pp. 21–22). In other words, we are mistaken to think that our understandings of the self and the "Other" are formed in isolation. Rather our understanding of the self is always formed by our relationships to the "You" or the relationship to the "it". Meaning that we do not begin trying to understand (interpret) ourselves or the "Other" in isolation rather, we must first start by looking at the relationship between ourselves and others. Usually, when we want to interpret our relationships, we first begin by thinking about ourselves, then we move to the other and finally about the relationship between ourselves and the other. Buber, however, is trying to help us understand that there is a fundamental posture or attitude of positioning oneself before the "Other" as either an "I-Thou" or an "I-It" relationship (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970, p. 9). It is important to note here that what Martin Buber does not mean is two forms of rigid categories by which the artist can choose to live one way and another. Instead, these are fluid postures by which each person moves in and out of every relationship. Meaning in one relationship, I can live in both the "I-Thou" mentality and the "I-It" mentality.

Therefore, the second insight is how each attitude affects the way we see the other. According to Buber, two ways of seeing the other are "I-It" or "I-Thou". To look at something through the lens of

an "I-It" relationship, one may not recognize that he or she is doing such an act. The "Other," however, should not be seen like it. Homi Bhabha's theory, for one to look at the other as it, is to reduce that person to an object that can be experienced. Buber says, "The life of a human being does not exist merely in the sphere of goal-directed verbs...I perceive something. I feel something, I imagine something. I want something. I sense something. I think something. The life of a human being does not consist merely of all this and its likes (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970, p. 54)." This posture experiences the other but does not encounter the whole being of the other. Buber is firmly against this perception of people but includes, "without it, people cannot live. But he who lives with it alone is not a person (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970, p. 55)." In this view, people are objecting to be observed bounded within others and created with the inability for ambiguity. This middle space of interpretation loses all hope if we see each other with the "I-It" attitude. The language we use to speak of each other can reveal the way in which we perceive each other. In particular, if we see each other as objects to be "converted" or objectively observed as in academic research, for example, then quite clearly, we look at each other as an it and any attempt at a middle space hermeneutic of Jesus is shattered.

There is another way of perceiving people, namely the "I-Thou" relationship. In contrast to the "I-It" relationship, looking at the other as "Thou" has no bounds. Buber says,

> When I confront a human being as my Thou and speak the basic word I-Thou to him, then he is nothing among things nor does he consist of things. He or she is no longer limited by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970, p. 59).

In other words, to see the Other as Thou instead of an It is to unbound the Other from experience and limitations surrounding the

person.

What then is the relationship of a Muslim to a Christian or the relationship of a Christian to a Muslim? Do we already objectify the Other when we use terminologies such as Christian or Muslim? There are a few observations that Buber makes to this end. First, he says that the Thou meets me through grace and is not found by seeking. Buber believes this to be an act of being chosen. He says,

> The Thou encounters me. But I enter into a direct relationship with it. Thus the relationship is election and electing, passive and active at once…The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one's whole being. The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished without me. I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970, p. 61).

Meaning that I cannot become without the Thou (or You). Although I am always moving and never fixed within my identity, I am never able to become a whole being without You. Second, the relation has to be direct, face to face, unmediated by a belief system or a set of ideas. Buber says, "every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounters occur (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970, p. 62)." Meaning that all ideas, imaginations, knowledge between I and Thou lead to obstacles. This does not mean that these obstacles cannot be overcome, but they must be identified.

My final insight from Buber is specifically related to the I in relationship to the Thou. I hinted at it above with Buber's quote on page 61 of his book, but completing the thought here, it is imperative to our argument to interrogate the I as we come before the Thou. Brainard says, "Each time a person treats another as a person, the unchanging consciousness of the person that reaches out to the Thou emerges clearly and breaks out into an I that is reflectively like a Thou and takes possession of oneself (Prince, 2018, p. 9)." Meaning that in order to become an I, we must go through the "Other". Levinas says, "God, the god, it's a long way there, a road that goes via the Other.

Loving God is loving the Other (Leirvik, 2014, p. 20)."

Ibn Arabi's "The Perfect Man"

Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) is known in the west as the Doctor Maximus and in the Islamic world as Muhyi ud-Din (Reviver of religion) and al-Shaykh al-Akbar (Great master). He is known for his prolific writing skills and his most famous work is his philosophy of the "Unity of Being" whereby he emphasizes the potential of human beings and the *path* to realizing that potential to becoming the perfect or complete man ('Arabi, 2012). In Ibn Arabi's work I will focus specifically on his thoughts on the perfect man (*al-insan al-kamil*). Today, the *al-insan al-kamil* is known as Muhammad, but Mastaka Takeshita argues that actually Ibn Arabi is most often using it in reference to Adam (not necessarily excluding Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad). In fact, he is not referring to the prophet Adam, but rather to the ontological Adam or humanity itself. This "Perfect Human" then is not one person, but rather people. Ibn Arabi intends to point out that humanity is the vicegerent of God. Ibn Arabi says,

> Man's relation to the universe is like the jewel's relation to the seal ring. The jewel is the place of the engraving and the insignia with which a king seals his treasure house. For this reason, man is called the vicegerent, for God preserves His creation through him, just as the seal preserves the treasures...He appointed him the vicegerent for the preservation of His kingdom (i.e. the universe). As long as the Perfect Man is in the universe, the universe continues to be preserved (Takeshita, 1983, p. 88).

Furthermore, in another quote Ibn Arabi Adam is called the exemplar which unites all the Divine Names (Names of Essence, Names of Attributes, and Names of Actions). He says, "For this reason, he (the Prophet) said concerning the creation of Adam, who is the exemplar which unites the description of the Divine Presence, that is the Essence, the Attributes, and the Actions. Meaning that

only in humanity are all Divine Names manifest, because humanity has all the realities of the universe within him (Abrahamov, 2015, pp. 89–102).

I do not necessarily think that Ibn Arabi speaks directly to the concepts that we are discussing here. However, from a Muslim perspective, his ideas shed light on the reality that humanity holds a unique quality of portraying the Divine Names. Therefore, if we neglect the "Other" we are neglecting the opportunity to meet God in the middle space.

Discussion and Conclusion

So far, we have engaged with Wildred Cantwell Smith's contestation of religious categories, which took us to an investigation of Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity and the third space and moved to Martin Buber's "I and Thou" theory, which helps us engage with a posture of interpretation as opposed to interpretation itself (Buber & Kaufmann, 1970). We also lightly engaged with Moyaert's and Listijabudi's thoughts on fragility within an attempt to leave space for the Other and Setio's concepts of relationality (Listijabudi, 2016; Moyaert, 2011). Finally, we looked at Ibn Arabi's concept of *al-insan al-kami*, which helps shed light on the concept of humanity from a Muslim perspective allowing the "Otherness" of someone to actually be a source of meeting the attributes of the Divine. Though not investigated in its entirety, each one of these ideas helps us engage with a hermeneutic of becoming that only can happen in this third space.

The third space is a space whereby our religious identifications, imaginations, doctrines, and ideas do not hinder the I from meeting the Thou. I see this space as somewhat of a holy place, whereby we are free from political agendas and religious affiliations that hinder us from seeing each other as humans created in the image of God. In

this space there is a place of freedom whereby our identities continue to be formed by the "Other". It is a liminal space of movement and hybridity. However, I am not assuming that we let go of all our identifications, ideas, and histories that have gone into forming us, for such is impossible, but rather that we seek to identify those boundaries and come to the middle space with openness to engage without hindrances that turn to seeing the Other as an It as opposed to Thou.

What does this mean about Jesus? We very rarely talk about Jesus outside of our religious affiliations because these identifications tend to give us a sense of belonging and a sense of peace about who we are. Stepping out into the unknown can be a scary thing. Still, suppose we can learn to engage with people without objectifying the "Other" as one who needs to be converted and, therefore, become a goal, achievement, mission, or target? In that case, we may find a holy space for us to engage with the centuries-long question of, who is Jesus? I do not perceive that this study answers all the questions of interpretation as it relates to Jesus, but my hope is that this starts to engage people in the form of interreligious hermeneutics that starts with a posture of engaging with the other in a way that is boundless and allows a space for us to meet God through the "Other."

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Authors' contributions and responsibilities
The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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