

Gabriel Said Reynolds

—  
A Muslim Theologian  
in the Sectarian Milieu

*‘Abd al-Jabbār and the  
Critique of Christian  
Origins*

BRILL



## A MUSLIM THEOLOGIAN IN THE SECTARIAN MILIEU

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AND  
ROTRAUD WIELANDT

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# A MUSLIM THEOLOGIAN IN THE SECTARIAN MILIEU

‘Abd al-Jabbār and the *Critique of Christian Origins*

BY

GABRIEL SAID REYNOLDS



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To my wife Lourdes



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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.</i>
<i>EI</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , New Edition (Leiden: Brill, 1954–Present).
<i>GCAL</i>	G. Graf, <i>Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur</i> (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1947).
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society.</i>
<i>JSAI</i>	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam.</i>
<i>OC</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i> (Serial).
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis.</i>
<i>TG</i>	J. van Ess, <i>Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra</i> , 6 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991–97).
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft.</i>

(note also: *v.i.* = see below, *v.s.* = see above)



## PREFACE

I began to work on this project after learning of a contentious debate between S. Pines and S.M. Stern over the section on Christianity in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s (d. 415/1025) *Tathbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* (*Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophecy*). This debate demonstrated how different methodologies and ideologies can lead two exceptionally competent scholars to wildly different opinions on the same text. The debate was also a sad affair. It marked the end of a friendship, and, as Stern died not much later, there was no chance of reconciliation between the two scholars.

As I began my research into the *Tathbīt*, I imagined that the goal of my project would be reconciliation, if not of the two scholars, then of their theories. Yet it soon became clear that the section on Christianity in the *Tathbīt* was important in ways that far surpassed the bounds of the Pines-Stern debate. They, and those that have later entered this debate, focus on the question of Judaeo-Christian influence on this work. Yet the section on Christianity in the *Tathbīt* is no less important for what it reveals of the thought of ‘Abd al-Jabbār and of the milieu in which he lived.

I begin the present work by analyzing the Pines-Stern debate and then move on to the biography of ‘Abd al-Jabbār and the historical and demographical nature of his milieu. I continue with a description of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s critique of Christianity in the *Tathbīt*. ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues that Christians changed the religion of Jesus (Islam) and created Christianity in its place. He does so by examining Christian scripture, Christian history, and his Christian contemporaries. On the surface, then, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s writing is exegetical, historical and sociological. At a deeper level, however, it is marked by the themes of the Qur’ān and the methods of *kalām*. In the second half of the present work I examine the sources of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s work, both Muslim and non-Muslim. In this way I describe ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s writing on Christianity in the context of the larger Muslim-Christian conversation.

It is this conversation, incidentally, that has remained on my mind throughout my research. While ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s writing on Christianity

is by no means irenic, it is both intellectually sophisticated and candid. The reader of the *Tathbīt* will have no doubt about ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s religious positions. Muslim-Christian dialogue today, meanwhile, is often intellectually sophisticated but not always candid. The present work, then, may be a service for what it reveals of the sources of Muslim thought on Christianity. In my analysis, I address two questions: What are the reasons behind, and what are the methods of, the Islamic critique of Christianity? These questions are as relevant for the contemporary Muslim-Christian conversation as they are for the conversation of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s day.

If the present work does indeed make a contribution to that conversation, it will be above all due to those who have supported me and my research during its composition. The basis for this work is a doctoral dissertation at Yale University, written under Prof. Gerhard Böwering. His direction was critical to its success, as was the guidance of the other members of my dissertation committee: Prof. Frank Griffel of Yale and Fr. Sidney Griffith of Catholic University of America. Fr. Griffith also taught me to appreciate the importance of personal values and character to intellectual life. In this regard I cannot but mention Leslie Brisman of the English Department of Yale, who taught me all that I know about being a teacher, above all that it is a vocation of service and devotion. My colleagues were a source of great emotional and academic support, especially Suleiman Mourad of Middlebury College and Mojtaba Akhlaghi of Qom, Iran. Meanwhile, in the Middle East I benefited greatly from the guidance of Prof. Samir Khalil Samir of Université Saint Joseph and Prof. Manfred Kropp of the Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, both of whom helped me to appreciate the connection between the issues involved in the present work and Muslim-Christian relations today.

As this project grew from a dissertation into a book, I found a new source of support in my colleagues of the Theology Department at Notre Dame University. The chair of the department, Prof. John Cavadini, has been both a mentor and an inspiration to me. At the same time, many problems in the present work were corrected, and many improvements made, through the careful editors and reviewers of E.J. Brill. I am obliged to Wadad Kadi of the University of Chicago for her advising and mentoring, which went far beyond that called for by her role as a co-editor of this series, “Islamic History

and Civilization.” Of course, none of this work would have been possible without my family, who have encouraged me and supported me from kindergarten through graduate school and beyond. Finally, I would like wholeheartedly to thank my wife, who even on the darkest days has been the light of my life.





## CHAPTER ONE

### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE *CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS* AND THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN THESIS

“Our conclusion is then that the story of the Romanization of Christianity, due to the apostasy of the majority of the early disciples, then of Paul, and finally of the self-interested conversion of Constantine, was invented by a Muslim, most likely an ex-Christian, who took as his point of departure the New Testament account of the early church and of Paul’s career, probably used some motives from a Jewish legend about Paul, but gave free reins to his scurrilous fancy.”

– S.M. Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account of How Christ’s Religion was Falsified by the Adoption of Roman Customs,” 184–5.

“The case for the survival of the Judaeo-Christian tradition thus rests entirely on the Judaeo-Christian writings, in particular the account preserved by ‘Abd al-Jabbār.”

– P. Crone, “Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm,” 94.

In the 1950’s an expedition of Egyptian researchers sent by the Arab League catalogued and filmed a large number of early Islamic manuscripts in Yemen. Among these were several works of the Mu‘tazilī Qāḍī and *mutakallim* ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025),<sup>1</sup> including the greater part of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *magnum opus*, the *Mughnī* (“Summa”). The subsequent publication of this opus (a project overseen, formally at least, by Taha Hussein), produced a surge of interest in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s theological doctrine and that of the Mu‘tazila in general. Two monographs on ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s thought later appeared,<sup>2</sup> although most of the scholarly attention was focused on what he preserved of the thought of earlier generations of Mu‘tazilī scholars. ‘Abd al-Jabbār soon became known as “the great ‘compiler’ of the Mu‘tazilī ideas.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Khalīl Nāmī, *al-Ba‘tha al-miṣriyya li-taṣwīr al-makhtūṭāt al-‘arabiyya* (Cairo: n.p., 1952), 15.

<sup>2</sup> G. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: the Ethics of ‘Abd al-Jabbār* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); J. Peters, *God’s Created Speech: a Study in the Speculative Theology of the Mu‘tazilī Qāḍī l-qudāt* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> Peters, 14.

All of this was taking place contemporaneously with a rise of interest in another work by ‘Abd al-Jabbār (preserved this time in Istanbul, not in Yemen), the *Tathbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* (*Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophecy*).<sup>4</sup> In this case, the interest was among a different set of scholars and for a different set of reasons. In the mid-1960’s the British scholar S.M. Stern went to Istanbul and sought out the manuscript of the *Tathbīt*, hoping to find information in it on the Ismā‘īliyya.<sup>5</sup> Yet it was something else therein that captured Stern’s interest: a long section of the text (120 pages in the printed edition, pp. 91–210) devoted to anti-Christian polemic.<sup>6</sup> With this critique ‘Abd al-Jabbār provides something exceptional: an Islamic vision of Christian origins.

I refer to this critique as the *Critique of Christian Origins*, a descriptive title that I have coined; it is not a translation of a phrase that ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself uses. It also does not imply that this section is an independent work that circulated by itself. Rather, it is a section of the *Tathbīt* that ‘Abd al-Jabbār incorporates into his discussion of the *dalā’il* (“proofs”) of Muḥammad’s prophethood. However, the *Critique of Christian Origins* (henceforth *Critique*) is clearly marked off from the rest of the text with ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s opening statement: “Another chapter on [Muḥammad’s] signs and marks: His report about the Christians and Christian teachings . . .” (p. 91, ll. 10–11). ‘Abd al-Jabbār then proceeds with a lengthy critique of Christian doctrine, scripture, history and practice, which ends abruptly on p. 210 of the printed edition, where he enters into a refutation of opposing Islamic schools. This section stands out as an extraordinary excursus from the rest of the text, which is otherwise a *sīra* (biography) of Muḥammad (with the exception of a concluding section against the Ismā‘īlī Shī‘a). Although only a section of a book, it is longer than almost all preceding Islamic anti-Christian polemics, with the exception of Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq’s (d. ca. 247/861) work.

When Stern left Istanbul, he met with the Russian/Israeli scholar S. Pines in order to discuss the *Tathbīt*. The two decided to split up

<sup>4</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, ed. ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-‘Arabiyya, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> He was encouraged to do so by H. Ritter’s description of the text in “Philologika,” *Der Islam* 18 (1929), 42.

<sup>6</sup> By “polemic” or “polemical” in the present work I intend the deconstruction of an opposing view. By “apology” or “apologetical” I intend the defense of one’s own view.

the analysis of the text. According to sources close to Pines with whom I have spoken, and as implied by Pines' own assertion,<sup>7</sup> it was agreed that he would work on the *Critique* while Stern would work on the anti-Ismā'īlī material at the end of the *Tathbīt*. In fact, however, both scholars focused their research on the *Critique*. Pines quickly published a provocative monograph, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source*, which elicited a sharp rebuke from Stern. With this their cooperation, and their friendship, ended.<sup>8</sup> This episode went on simultaneously with the rise of *kalām*-oriented studies on 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Mughnī*, and the two groups of scholars never communicated. In this way two different problems related to the *Critique* arose: the Stern/Pines debate and the apparent conflict between the 'Abd al-Jabbār of the *Critique* and 'Abd al-Jabbār of the *Mughnī*.

In the present work I will address both of these problems. By investigating the sources and strategies that shape the *Critique* I will argue, against Pines and with Stern, that it is not a heterodox Islamic text. I will also attempt to make sense of the *Critique*'s apparent conflict with the *Mughnī*, with reference to the specific context in which 'Abd al-Jabbār wrote the former work, and to the internal clues that explain why he wrote it. While eliminating some of the mystery surrounding this text, I will nonetheless emphasize its extraordinary quality. The *Critique* displays the sectarian milieu of the Islamic world of late 4th/10th century Iran, 'Abd al-Jabbār's Mu'tazilī intellectual heritage and his ingenious ability to craft arguments. For this reason 'Abd al-Jabbār should emerge from the present work as a more remarkable figure than ever.

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<sup>7</sup> "Stern chose to study the latter portion of the MS which deals in a very hostile spirit with the Ismā'īlī sect. . . . It was my task to explore the first half." *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source* (henceforth: *Jewish Christians*) (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1966), 2. See the brief but favorable review of L. Priejs, *ZDMG* 118 (1968), 176.

<sup>8</sup> According to G. Stroumsa: "Pines started his research in this field with his major discovery of the discussion of Jewish Christian theological tenets in a text of 'Abd al-Jabbār. This discovery brought Pines some fame outside scholarly quarters, and with it much sadness, when a violent polemic erupted." See G. Stroumsa's preface to *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines Volume IV: Studies in the History of Religion* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1996). R. Walzer, meanwhile, comments that this affair "saddened [Stern's] life during the years 1966–1969." See "Samuel Stern: In Memoriam," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), 13.

### 1.1. *The Judaeo-Christian Thesis*

S. Pines opens his book on the *Critique* by describing ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s text as “an Arabic manuscript which is not what it purports to be.”<sup>9</sup> Pines found the *Critique* to be fundamentally unlike other Islamic writings on Christianity. He initially theorized that this could be explained by the unique historical situation of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s day, when Sunnī Islam was hard pressed between the Byzantines in the northwest and the Fāṭimids in the southwest. But this explanation still left him with an “uneasy feeling that the anti-Christian chapter [of the *Tathbūt*, i.e. the *Critique*] represented an enigma of some kind.”<sup>10</sup> The answer to this enigma, Pines ultimately concluded, is that ‘Abd al-Jabbār did not write the *Critique*; he borrowed it from an unknown Judaeo-Christian community.<sup>11</sup> This moment of conviction was a watershed in the career of Pines. From this point on, Pines, who had already contributed ground-breaking work on questions of Jewish, Christian, Muslim (Sunnī and Shī‘ī, particularly Ismā‘īlī) and Hindu theology and philosophy, devoted himself in large part to the quest for Judaeo-Christianity.<sup>12</sup> It was the *Critique* that formed the center of this quest.

Pines’ argument that the *Critique* is based on a Judaeo-Christian text rests above all on two elements that appear in it. The first is ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s insistence that Jesus came to confirm the Mosaic

<sup>9</sup> Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Pines’ approach to the text, namely his “Judaeo-Christian thesis,” gained attention from the popular press, leading to an article in the *Jerusalem Post* (“10th Century Text Sheds New Light on Christianity” [June 22, 1966]) and in a Dutch magazine: “Belangrijke Ontdekking over de Oorsprong van het Christendom,” *Elsevier* (November 19, 1966).

<sup>12</sup> According to G. Stroumsa, “The history of religion in general, and Christian origins in particular, seem to have fascinated Pines more and more in his later years.” See G. Stroumsa’s preface to *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*. Pines’ scholarship on the subject includes: the aforementioned *Jewish Christians*; “Israel My Firstborn and the Sonship of Jesus, a Theme of Moslem Anti-Christian Polemics,” *Studies in Mysticism and Religion* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 177–90; “Judeo-Christian Materials in an Arabic Jewish Treatise,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 35 (1967), 187–217; “Notes on Islam and on Arabic Christianity and Judaeo-Christianity,” *JSAI* 4 (1984), 135–52; “Studies in Christianity and in Judaeo-Christianity Based on Arabic Sources,” *JSAI* 6 (1985), 107–61; and “Gospel Quotations and Cognate Topics in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Tathbūt*,” *JSAI* 9 (1987), 195–278. All of the above are re-printed in the section entitled “Judaeo-Christianity” of *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines Volume IV: Studies in the History of Religion*.

Law, not to abrogate it, and his condemnation of Christians for not following it.<sup>13</sup> Pines comments:

It is, to my mind, quite inconceivable that a Moslem author, who certainly regarded the Mosaic Law as having been abrogated by Mohammed, should constantly attack the Christians for not obeying the Old Testament commandments which he believed to have been rescinded by divine decree (*Jewish Christians*, 8).

The second element is ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s declaration that the language of Christ was Hebrew, and that the Christians abandoned it as “a trick and a plot” (*Tathbīt*, 154). According to Pines, the *Critique* has a “preoccupation with the Hebrew language”<sup>14</sup> that hardly becomes an Islamic mentality.

Simply put, Pines considered it impossible that a Muslim would be so interested in the Mosaic Law and the Hebrew language. He then followed the famous dictum of Sherlock Holmes: “When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” Thus the author of the *Critique* must be a Jew who believes in the Mosaic Law and that Hebrew is a sacred language, and a Christian who believes that Jesus was the Christ; in other words, a Judaeo-Christian.

To be fair, I have over-simplified the matter. Pines does point to other elements in the *Critique* to support his thesis, such as, first, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s comment that “a group [*farīq*] of them, who are the elite, believe that their Lord is a Jew, the son of a Jew, born from a Jew, and that his mother is a Jewish woman” (p. 199).<sup>15</sup> Pines, who translates

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<sup>13</sup> “Christ read his prayers as the prophets and the Israelites did so both before him and in his era [omit the second *fī zamānihi*] when they read from the word of God, from the statement of God in the Tawrāt and the Psalms of David” (*Tathbīt*, p. 148). Also: “[Christ] never took Sunday as the feast, nor did he ever build a church (*bī‘a*). He did not annul the Sabbath, even for one hour. He never ate pork, but forbade it and cursed those who ate it, just as the prophets did before him” (p. 149); and “By my life, Christ did not act like us in any way his whole life long. The same goes for his disciples after him, who [read *فِيمَا* for *فَمَا* of edition, ms. 91v] required the law of the Tawrāt” (p. 193).

<sup>14</sup> *Jewish Christians*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Pines shows no interest in the context of this passage, which is ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s larger argument that Christians leave Mary open to the charge of fornication. This passage leads Crone to similar conclusions, see “Islam, Judaeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm,” *JSAI* 2 (1980), 74. Stern (in his “Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in ‘Abd al-Jabbār,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 18 [April 1967], 51) sees nothing in this passage other than the fact that ‘Abd al-Jabbār knew some Christians who deny the Virgin Birth.

*farīq* as “sect,” suggests in *Jewish Christians* that these are Judaeo-Christians and identifies them with a Jewish group named by Sa‘adyā (d. 331/942) that considers Jesus to be a Prophet.<sup>16</sup> Second, ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes Exodus 4:22 in his argument against the divine sonship of Jesus,<sup>17</sup> which Pines identifies as a typical Jewish strategy.<sup>18</sup> Third, Pines maintains that the parallel which ‘Abd al-Jabbār draws between Constantine and Ardashīr, the pre-Islamic Persian ruler, could not have been made without the help of a pre-Islamic text.<sup>19</sup>

Pines also argues that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account of Paul in the *Critique* is based in part on the biography of Peter in the Greek Christian text *Martyrion tōn Hagiōn Apostolōn e Petrou kai Paulou*.<sup>20</sup> The parallels between the two works are, Pines admits, thematic and not literal.<sup>21</sup> In the *Martyrion*, Peter wins the conversion of Nero’s wife and two other prominent women, while in the *Critique* (*Tathbīt*, 157) Paul has influence over the wife of the emperor (who is identified as Nero, p. 160) and Roman women (*Tathbīt*, 157). In the *Martyrion*, Peter is accused of being a magician, while in the *Critique* ‘Abd al-Jabbār reports that Paul “enamored [the Romans] by carrying out incantations, medicine, magic and sorcery” (*Tathbīt*, 159). Most impressive, perhaps, is the fact that ‘Abd al-Jabbār has Paul declare in the *Critique*, “Do not crucify me vertically like our Lord Christ was crucified; rather, crucify me horizontally” (*Tathbīt*, 160). As Pines points out, this does not match the traditional martyrdom accounts of Paul, where he is beheaded (being a Roman citizen). Instead, it is similar to martyrdom accounts of Peter in the *Martyrion* and other texts, in which Peter requests to be crucified upside down, likewise

<sup>16</sup> This is in Sa‘adyā’s *K. al-Amānāt wa-l-i‘tiqādāt* (Leiden: Brill, 1880), 90 (See Pines’ translation, *Jewish Christians*, 40). The text has been translated into English as Sa‘adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. S. Rosenblatt (New Haven: Yale, 1948).

<sup>17</sup> *Tathbīt*, 120. Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 14 vols. (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya li-l-Ta’līf wa-l-Tarjama, 1965), 5:110.

<sup>18</sup> See “Israel My Firstborn,” 178–9.

<sup>19</sup> “Israel My Firstborn,” 177, n. 3. Cf. *Jewish Christians*, 35.

<sup>20</sup> See his “Studies in Christianity,” 142ff. Pines also makes the argument that the only reflection of an Islamic influence in the Paul and Constantine stories of the *Critique* are the references to veiled women (*Tathbīt*, 157) and female circumcision (*Tathbīt*, 158). The implication is that this is a Judaeo-Christian text that has only had minimal reworking in its Islamic adaptation. Many other references in this account (e.g. male circumcision, divorce, pork), however, apply equally to Muslim and Jewish contexts.

<sup>21</sup> See Pines, “Studies in Christianity,” 127ff.

out of deference to the crucifixion of Christ. Finally, in an article on the biblical material of the *Critique*,<sup>22</sup> Pines seeks out precedents thereto in apocryphal (although not necessarily Judaeo-Christian) gospels. Here he does not return to the writings that occupy him in *Jewish Christians*,<sup>23</sup> but rather to apocryphal biblical texts, including the Old Syriac Gospels,<sup>24</sup> the Persian *Diatesseron*,<sup>25</sup> the paraphrases of St. Ephraem (which Pines, following Leloir, argues are derived from a Syriac *Diatesseron*),<sup>26</sup> and the *Gospel of Peter*.<sup>27</sup>

Stern categorically rejects the Judaeo-Christian thesis,<sup>28</sup> describing Pines' *Jewish Christians* as "a regrettable act of folly by a distinguished scholar," and suggesting that his own first article on the subject will

<sup>22</sup> Pines, "Gospel Quotations."

<sup>23</sup> These are the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius (d. ca. 340), the *Panarion* (of *Adversus haereses*) and *De Ponderibus* of Epiphanius (d. 403) and the Pseudo-Clementine Writings. On the latter see G. Strecker, Introduction to the *Pseudo-Clementines*, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. Wilson, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster Press, 2003), 2:483–593. On pp. 268ff. of "Gospel Quotations," Pines again discusses the Pseudo-Clementines and their relationship to the *Critique*.

<sup>24</sup> See F.C. Burkitt, *Evangelion da Mepharrese*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904); A.S. Lewis, *The Old Syriac Gospels* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910).

<sup>25</sup> See *Diatessaron Persiano*, ed. G. Messina, S.J. (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1951).

<sup>26</sup> See St. Ephraem, *Commentaire de l'Évangile Concordant*, ed. L. Leloir, 2 vols. (Louvain: Durbecq, 1953–4); L. Leloir, *L'évangile d'Ephraïm d'après les œuvres éditées*, CSCO 180 (1958); L. Leloir, *Le témoignage d'Ephrem sur le Diatesseron*, CSCO 227 (1962). See esp. the latter work, pp. 232ff. for a discussion of the problem of Ephraem's version of the *Diatesseron*.

<sup>27</sup> *L'Évangile de Pierre*, ed. Vaganay (Paris: J. Gabalda & fils, 1930). Pines also attempts here to connect the Judaeo-Christians to the 'Īsawiyya ("Gospel Quotations," pp. 274ff.), a Jewish sect that spread in 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th century Iraq and Syria ("'Īsā" coming from its founder Abū 'Īsā al-Īṣfahānī, not from Jesus). His impetus for doing so is that, contrary to most writings on the 'Īsawiyya (which report that they acknowledged Jesus as a prophet, or wise man, sent to the gentiles), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) reports that they believe Jesus was sent to the Israelites. Pines does not explain, however, why he trusts the reference from the 5th/11th century Andalusian (the 'Īsawiyya disappeared in the 4th/10th century) more than the opinion of other scholars. See S. Pines, "'Īsawiyya," *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 4:95–6. Elsewhere ("Notes on Islam and Arabic Christianity," 151), Pines states plainly that Abū 'Īsā al-Īṣfahānī was a Judaeo-Christian since he acknowledged the prophethood of Jesus (but he does not mention that Abū 'Īsā also, apparently, accepted the prophethood of Muḥammad).

Elsewhere in his "Gospel Quotations" (p. 264, n. 40), Pines announces his intention to publish a study on the connection between the Judaeo-Christians and Ismā'īlī Shī'a. This study, to my knowledge, never appeared.

<sup>28</sup> The first of Stern's articles was a popular piece published in the Vatican's journal *Encounter*, which sought to dispel rumors (stemming from Pines' popular pieces) that the *Taḥbūt* provided critical new information on the origins of Christianity. See "New Light on Judaeo-Christianity?" *Encounter* 28 (May 1967) 5, 53–7.



“prove sufficient in itself to refute a great part of Pines’s fantasies.”<sup>29</sup> What Stern finds particularly offensive in Pines’ argument is its historical improbability. Reliable historical records attest to the survival of Judaeo-Christianity only to the fourth Christian century. Stern finds it incredible that Judaeo-Christianity would suddenly reappear six centuries later in an Islamic text:

What is more probable: that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s story comes from some unknown account of Judaeo-Christianity, possibly some Father of the Church whose passage left no other trace in Greek or Syriac (we may safely neglect Pines’s absurd theory about a Judaeo-Christian text in Syriac), or that it comes from a Christian converted to Islam who made it up with the help of some Jewish anecdotes about Paul, the New Testament accounts of Paul and his own somewhat coarse imagination? I for myself choose the second alternative.<sup>30</sup>

In line with this choice, Stern seeks out precedents to the *Critique* in orthodox Islamic works. In his article “Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in ‘Abd al-Jabbār,” Stern analyzes ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account of the passion of Christ by comparing it with Wahb b. Munabbih’s (d. 110/728) statements in the works of Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and Abū Ishāq al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/1036).<sup>31</sup> While Stern ultimately concludes that the source of this account is a non-canonical gospel,<sup>32</sup> he considers it to be heavily reworked by its transmission in the Islamic context and thus “a paraphrase rather than an exact quotation.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> S.M. Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account of How Christ’s Religion was Falsified by the Adoption of Roman Customs,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (April 1968), 129. Stern did not take it upon himself to refute Pines point for point, trusting “that everybody of sound judgment will be convinced that Pines’s publication must not be taken seriously” (p. 130). Unfortunately, Stern died (on 29 October 1969) soon after he published his last article on the subject, and never had the opportunity to respond to Pines’ later articles (the last of which was published in 1987).

<sup>30</sup> “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 183.

<sup>31</sup> See Stern, “Apocryphal Gospels,” 46ff.

<sup>32</sup> “The idea occurred to me that the text may after all not be a Christian version at all, but an account made up by a Muslim author out of vague reminiscences of the gospel story, just as Wahb b. Munabbih and Ibn Ishāq had made up such accounts. There are, however, some differences. Whereas the accounts of the early Muslim exegetes are manifestly based on the New Testament stories and the divergences are obviously due to such causes as misunderstanding, lapse of memory, and some discreet embroidery, all natural in the case of oral transmission, our story is more radically different and can hardly be derived from the canonical gospels.” Stern, “Apocryphal Gospels,” 50.

<sup>33</sup> Stern, “Apocryphal Gospels,” 50.

In a second article,<sup>34</sup> Stern turns his attention from the passion account to the accounts of Paul and Constantine in the *Critique*. While he confesses his inability to identify the sources of the Paul account,<sup>35</sup> Stern finds some important precedents to the account of Constantine. Once again he begins with the Islamic sources, specifically Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956) and two of 'Abd al-Jabbār's contemporaries in Rayy: al-Khaṭīb al-Iskāfī (d. 421/1030) and Ibn Miskawayh (also d. 421/1030).<sup>36</sup> Stern also turns to orthodox Christian texts to find sources. 'Abd al-Jabbār's narrative of Helen the mother of Constantine, he argues, is influenced by an account in the Syriac writings of Mārūtā (Ar. Marūthā, d. ca. 420), bishop of Mīferqēṭ (Ar. Mayyā-fāriqīn).<sup>37</sup> Finally Stern looks at the *Critique* and its relationship to the Hebrew work *Toledoth Yeshu*.<sup>38</sup> He points out the correspondence between the chapter on Paul in the *Critique* and that on Nestorius in the *Toledoth*. Satisfied with these findings, Stern concludes that "no other sources can be identified."<sup>39</sup>

The Dutch scholar T. Baarda also finds the Judaeo-Christian thesis unconvincing,<sup>40</sup> pointing out that certain phrases in the *Critique*, such as *ahl al-kitāb*, are exclusively Islamic.<sup>41</sup> He also refers (pp. 230ff.) to

<sup>34</sup> Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account.'"

<sup>35</sup> Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 159. It should be pointed out that years earlier E. Fritsch made the observation that these polemical anti-Pauline stories "wird wohl aus antipaulinischen judenchristlichen oder Markionitenkreisen stammen" (E. Fritsch, *Islam und Christentum in Mittelalter* [Breslau: Müller & Seiffert, 1930], 50. It is not clear why Fritsch would include the Marcionites here, whose view of Paul was especially positive). Pines apparently missed Fritsch's comment to this effect (a fact which Stern happily points out). Cf. Stern "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 182.

<sup>36</sup> This is a fruitful comparison, which I will consider in depth in chapter four of this work.

<sup>37</sup> See Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 173–4. On Mārūtā see *Histoire nestorienne, chronique de Séert*, PO 4:3 (1981), 318; G. Graf, *GCAL*, 1:586–90, 92. Mārūtā describes Helen as a native of "Kefar Paḥḥār in the territory of Edessa," an area, like Ḥarrān (which 'Abd al-Jabbār names as her city) in Mesopotamia. *The Canons Ascribed to Mārūtā of Maipherqat*, CSCO 439 (1982), 21; English trans. CSCO 440 (1982), 16.

<sup>38</sup> See Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 181ff. I will address this subject in the fifth chapter.

<sup>39</sup> Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 130.

<sup>40</sup> "Het is overigens niet nodig dat 'Abd al-Jabbār hier afhankelijk is van een joods-christelijk document." T. Baarda, "Het Ontstaan van de Vier Evangelien volgens 'Abd al-Djabbār," *Nederlands theologisch Tijdschrift* 28 (1974), 229–30. As for Pines' comment (*Jewish Christians*, 23) that "the Jewish Christians apparently also had canonical Gospels written in Hebrew," Baarda remarks that this "lijkt mij volstrekt onjuist" (p. 230).

<sup>41</sup> Baarda, 225.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s remark that the true gospel (Injīl) of Jesus did not include the crucifixion,<sup>42</sup> a remark that suggests the *Critique* has an Islamic origin since Muslims reject the historicity of the crucifixion, while Jews and Christians accept it. Pines would respond to this contention by theorizing that some Judaeo-Christians rejected worship of the Cross.<sup>43</sup> In another place he suggests that the Judaeo-Christian gospel to which the *Critique* is referring might have been only a book of the sayings of Jesus and thus not have included the crucifixion account.<sup>44</sup>

Baarda, meanwhile, seeks out possible antecedents to the gospel composition account of the *Critique* in orthodox Christian, primarily Syriac, writings. He argues that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account of the one true Injīl is influenced by the *Diatesseron*’s prolonged existence in the Eastern Church,<sup>45</sup> and its influence on the thought of Nestorian theologians such as Theodorus bar Kōnī (d. ca. 800) and Isho‘dad of Merv (d. ca. 850).<sup>46</sup> Baarda also points out that a number of Syriac authors held that the original gospel was written in Hebrew,<sup>47</sup> as

<sup>42</sup> *Tathbīt*, 153.

<sup>43</sup> *Jewish Christians*, 16, n. 1.

<sup>44</sup> See Pines, “Gospel Quotations,” 264, n. 40.

<sup>45</sup> Baarda also refers to early Christians, such as Marcion, who maintained that Christ himself was the author of a Gospel. See Baarda, 226–7, 233; A. von Harnack, *Marcion, Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924), 78ff. Baarda also isolates references among the Church Fathers, including Origen, to an “original gospel,” composed before the four canonical ones. See Baarda, 227, n. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Baarda, 235–8. In general, Baarda is able only to trace a thematic correspondence between these authors and the *Critique*, e.g. the argument that the four gospels are imperfect derivatives of an original scripture. More decisive is his conclusion that the order in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār gives for the composition of the gospels (Jn-Mt-Mk-Lk, *Tathbīt*, 155) is anticipated in certain East Syrian Christian writings. See Baarda, 236, n. 80.

<sup>47</sup> Baarda, 229, n. 54. Cf. the comments of the bishop Papias (d. 125), as quoted by Eusebius, that Matthew originally wrote his gospel in Hebrew (referred to by Baarda, 226 and Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 23). See Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898), 3:39:16. Yet Papias stops short of saying that Matthew wrote in Hebrew: “Matthew collected sayings (λόγια) in the Hebrew language, then everyone translated them according to their ability.” The precise interpretation of this sentence has already been the subject of a long scholarly debate. See R. Gryson, “A propos du témoignage de Papias sur Matthieu—Le Sens du mot logia chez les pères du second siècle,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 41 (1965), 530–47. The idea that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew is found elsewhere in the Islamic tradition. See, e.g., Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. F. Rosenthal, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon, 1958), 1:476. Ibn Khaldūn (1:476–7) also relates that the Gospel of Luke was written in Latin, as was the Gospel of Mark, which, according to Ibn Khaldūn, was actually written by the apostle Peter and only later ascribed to Mark.

‘Abd al-Jabbār maintains (although he does not conclude, like Pines, that these authors were therefore Judaeo-Christians).<sup>48</sup>

But Pines’ theories were not left without supporters. H. Busse, for one, refers to the faithful companions of Jesus in the account of the *Critique* as Jewish Christians.<sup>49</sup> He concludes this from ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s description of them as *man ankara l-tathlīth min al-naṣārā* (“those Christians who rejected the declaration of three [gods]”) (p. 110). It might be pointed out that this locution is like that used by Nāshī’ al-Akbar (d. 293/906) in his *K. al-Awsaṭ fī l-maqālāt* (he refers to them as the *muwaḥḥidūn* of the Christians).<sup>50</sup> Yet Nāshī’ is not referring to Judaeo-Christians but rather to Arius and his followers.

One of Pines’ students, G. Stroumsa, briefly argues in favor of the Judaeo-Christian thesis.<sup>51</sup> Yet the most impressive defense of this thesis is provided by P. Crone in a lengthy article.<sup>52</sup> Like Pines, Crone places great value in the statement of ‘Abd al-Jabbār regarding

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 37, 43.

<sup>49</sup> H. Busse, “Antichristliche Polemik und Apologetik im Islam und die Kreuzzüge,” *Halleische Beiträge zur Orientwissenschaft* 22 (1996), 57.

<sup>50</sup> Nāshī’ al-Akbar, *K. al-Awsaṭ fī l-maqālāt*, in J. van Ess, *Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie* (Beirut/Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1971), 76, 82. This monograph also contains the *K. Uṣūl al-nihāl*, which is identified there as a second work of Nāshī’. W. Madelung, however, shows that this latter work is in fact by Jaʿfar b. Ḥarb (236/850), a correction that van Ess himself accepts. See W. Madelung, “Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie: das *Kitāb al-Uṣūl* des Ḡafar b. Ḥarb?” *Der Islam* 57 (1980), 220ff; van Ess, *TG*, 3:436.

<sup>51</sup> Stroumsa mentions two references in support of the thesis. The first is a reference to “believing Jews” in Palestine by the pilgrim Bishop of Iona (a reference that Pines also makes, “Judeo-Christian Materials,” 146–7). The second reference is better known: John of Damascus, writing from his Palestinian monastery of St. Saba, mentions a Judaeo-Christian Elkesaite community that was located near the Dead Sea (See his *De haeresibus*, ch. 53, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981], 4:34–5). G. Stroumsa, “‘Vetus Israel’ Les juifs dans la littérature hiéroslymitaine d’époque byzantine,” *Savior et salut* (Paris: Cerf, 1992), 119–21 (reprinted from *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 205 [1988], 115–121).

<sup>52</sup> “Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm,” *JSAI* 2 (1980), 59–95. In this article Crone successfully makes a connection between the rise of Islam and Byzantine iconoclasm, but she fails, in my opinion, to make a connection between either of these two phenomena and Judaeo-Christianity. The fact that she assigns a separate section for the discussion of the Judaeo-Christians of the *Critique* (p. 83ff.) seems to me indicative of this fact. Curiously, she overlooks the one passage in the *Critique* which seems to me to have a connection with iconoclasm:

The Romans, at that time, worshipped the planets and magnified idols, putting up representations of them in their temples. They continued in this way even after they chose to revere the Cross and so forth. So they depicted Christ, his mother and his companions in the place of those statues. *Then they abandoned this bit by bit over time* (p. 167).

a group of Christians who “believe that their Lord is a Jew, the son of a Jew, born from a Jew, and that his mother is a Jewish woman” (p. 199). This reference leads Crone to a series of conclusions. She ultimately argues that “Islam made Judaeo-Christianity a polemically viable position, and accordingly the Judaeo-Christians came out of hiding and began to recruit.”<sup>53</sup> Crone is here openly coming to the defense of Pines, interjecting at one point that his thesis is “by no means as unlikely as Stern would have it.”<sup>54</sup> Crone firmly stands by Pines’ argument that the interest of the text in Hebrew and the Mosaic Law proves its Judaeo-Christian origin, “since it was not in the Muslim interest to argue that the Christians ought to be Jews.”<sup>55</sup> However, she does little to advance the position of Pines on this point.

Crone’s other arguments, meanwhile, are vulnerable to critique,<sup>56</sup> including her suggestion that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account of the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism (p. 186) has a Judaeo-Christian origin.<sup>57</sup> Elsewhere in the same article Crone argues that Pines “is certainly right that the original [of the *Critique*] must have been in Syriac,”<sup>58</sup> although she may have missed a correction that Pines himself made to his own argument on this point.<sup>59</sup> One may say, without rejecting entirely Crone’s work, that her thesis is built on *argumenta e silentio*. This can be seen in her repeated assertion that the covert and introverted character of Judaeo-Christianity precludes the possibility that positive evidence for her position could be found.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Crone, 74.

<sup>54</sup> Crone, 76, n. 90. Crone later adds, “But Stern’s view was clearly dictated by his extraordinary reluctance to concede that the Arabic accounts are Judaeo-Christian in character” (p. 86, n. 156a).

<sup>55</sup> Crone, 76, n. 91. Crone adds “It is most unlikely that it was invented by Muslims or Christian converts to Islam, as Stern maintained” (p. 76).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. S. Griffith’s rejoinder to one aspect of her theory in “Bashīr/Beser: Boon Companion of the Byzantine Emperor Leo III: The Islamic Recension of His Story in *Leiden Oriental MS 951*,” *Le Muséon* 103 (1990), 310–1.

<sup>57</sup> Crone, 94, n. 205. Cf. Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 49. Note, however, that this account is part of a longer narrative, in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār attempts to prove that Christianity was established by coercion, and not miracles. In doing so he also gives examples from Zoroastrianism, Manicheanism and Hinduism, making it seem that ‘Abd al-Jabbār simply did his homework on the history of religions.

<sup>58</sup> Crone, 76, n. 91. Cf. Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 8ff.

<sup>59</sup> See Pines, “Israel My Firstborn” 178, n. 3. Crone apparently missed this reference.

<sup>60</sup> At one point Crone suggests that a mysterious literary figure of the Muslim and Christian traditions is in fact a Judaeo-Christian, remarking: “The interesting point about his unclassifiability is that it fits precisely with that of the Judaeo-Christians in general” (p. 77).

Ultimately even Crone seems rather unsure about the Judaeo-Christian thesis.<sup>61</sup> This uncertainty is a feature that she holds in common with Pines.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, they are both defended in a recent review article, which does not, however, contribute new evidence to the problem.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> "The link between the Jewish Christians of Epiphanius and those of 'Abd al-Jabbār thus remains tenuous. That 'Abd al-Jabbār's heretics existed before Islam seems clear. That they were genetically related to a fifth century sect entrenched in the mountains of northern Mesopotamia is possible. But that this sect in its turn preserved the tradition of the heretics of Palestine can only be said to be unlikely in the present state of the evidence" (p. 95). On p. 93, Crone argues that the Judaeo-Christians "entrenched themselves" in the Armeno-Mesopotamian border, partially based on evidence in the *Critique*.

<sup>62</sup> Pines' own uncertainty regarding the Judaeo-Christian thesis is evident throughout his writings on the topic. In *Jewish Christians* (p. 17, n. 57), Pines glosses the word *al-nās* (people), with the remark, "apparently the spokesmen of the Jewish Christians." Summarizing 'Abd al-Jabbār's attitude to the Christian gospels, Pines comments: "In his opinion, they contained false statements and contradiction, but also a little true information concerning Jesus' life and teaching. This ambivalent attitude is perhaps characteristic for the Jewish Christians, many of whom may have ostensibly belonged to a recognized Christian Church" (p. 24). Speaking about 'Abd al-Jabbār's reference to a Syriac work, Pines comments: "It is true that in the context these words seem to apply in the first place to Nestorian texts; but there is a distinct possibility that they also applied to Jewish Christian writings which may have been preserved by the Nestorians. Indeed some of the latter may have been crypto-Jewish Christians" (p. 37). Thereafter, Pines goes on to suggest that because a group of Christian converts to Islam mentioned in the *Critique* used scriptural citations from the Old Testament, "there can be little doubt that these converts to Islam were Jewish Christians who may be supposed (this of course is a mere hypothesis) to have decided to exchange a clandestine existence as official members of the three universally known Christian sects for an equally official profession of the Islamic religion" (p. 38). Note also his argument in the second Excursus to *Jewish Christians* (pp. 70ff.) where he concludes that the Gospel of Barnabas may have been influenced by Judaeo-Christians.

This putative quality marks Pines' writings elsewhere on Judaeo-Christianity. In his article "Judeo-Christian Materials in an Arabic Jewish Treatise," he comments: "Moreover, the Jewish Treatise has a conception of the limitation of Jesus's mission which seems to be typically Judaeo-Christian" (p. 210). In his "Notes on Islam and Arabic Christianity," Pines cites Tertullian's reference to a group that sought to model its conduct on Abraham (p. 143) and the report of a 7th century Bishop of Iona, named Adomnan, who writes that during his pilgrimage to Palestine he met "believing Jews" there (pp. 146–7). He interprets both of these reports as witness of a Judaeo-Christian community. On 144, meanwhile, Pines remarks, "as far as I can see, the conception that Jesus was (despite his supernatural birth) a mere man can be found prior to the seventh century in Christianity only in the tenets of the so-called Judaeo-Christian sects."

<sup>63</sup> See J. Gager, "Did Jewish Christianity See the Rise of Islam?" (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 361–72. Gager summarizes the Pines-Stern debate and, noting the statement of J. Carleton Paget (See *The Cambridge History of Judaism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 750ff.) that Pines has found few followers, turns to the article of Crone. With this article, Gager concludes (p. 365), "Pines is largely vindicated, though with certain modifications." Gager, who does not himself investigate

### 1.2. *Some Problems with the Judaeo-Christian Thesis*

As I mentioned above, Pines argues that the place of the Mosaic Law and the Hebrew language in the *Critique* precludes the possibility that this is an Islamic work. The problem with this argument is, in a word, the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān relates explicitly that Jesus taught the Mosaic Law and, implicitly, that his scripture (the Injīl) was in Hebrew. One can argue cogently therefore that 'Abd al-Jabbār does not intend to endorse the continued practice of the Mosaic Law or the use of the Hebrew language. What he intends to do is to build a theological argument (*theologumenon*). He hopes, in his own words, "to demonstrate that [the Christians] parted from the religion of Christ" (p. 198).

Pines himself concedes that "a warrant may be found in one verse of the Koran (5:50 [Flügel]) for the notion that Christ did not abrogate the Law of Moses."<sup>64</sup> This verse (5:46 in the standard Cairo edition) reads: "We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming the Tawrāt that was before him. We gave him the Injīl, in which there is guidance and light, confirming the Tawrāt that was before him. It is a guide and a warning for the pious."<sup>65</sup> But this is not the only verse with this message. In Qur'ān 61:6 Jesus himself affirms that he has come to confirm the Tawrāt: "I am the Messenger of God to you O Israelites, confirming the Tawrāt that is with me" (On this see also Qur'ān 3:48, 50). Thus 'Abd al-Jabbār's contention that Christ taught and conducted himself according to the Tawrāt of Moses is thoroughly Qur'ānic. And in accordance with Qur'ān 14:4—"We have sent no Messenger save with the tongue of his people,"—it would not be difficult for a Muslim thinker to conclude that Jesus spoke Hebrew, the language of the Banū Isrā'īl to whom he was sent.<sup>66</sup>

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the Arabic sources, seems to have grander matters in mind, arguing that this case shows how "we need to be conscious of what recent cultural critics have called 'master narratives,' in particular their power to distort our picture of the past. In the present case, the master narrative is well known, widely circulated and deeply rooted in Western scholarship (e.g., Stern)" (p. 366).

<sup>64</sup> *Jewish Christians*, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Qur'ān translations are mine unless noted.

<sup>66</sup> At times the term *'ibriyya* appears in Arabic works as the name of the spoken language of contemporary Jews, viz. Aramaic and not Hebrew. Here, however, 'Abd al-Jabbār is referring to the religious language of the Israelites. See G. Vajda, "Judaeo-Arabic: Judaeo-Arabic Literature," *ET*, 4:302–307.



‘Abd al-Jabbār, then, seeking to prove that Christians changed the Islamic religion of Jesus, is measuring the Christian Jesus against the Qur’ānic Jesus. Thus he argues that the Cross and crucifixion were not in the original Injīl because the Qur’ānic Jesus is not crucified (Q 4:157). It might be objected, however, that this conclusion avoids the issue, for the Qur’ān itself may have been influenced by Judaeo-Christianity and thus the *Critique*, being influenced by the Qur’ān, is therefore indeed a Judaeo-Christian text. While this may be the case, it is not the issue at hand. For Pines contends that the *Critique* stands out from the rest of the Islamic tradition as a unique record of an otherwise silenced Judaeo-Christian tradition.

There is also reason to doubt Pines’ interpretation of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s remark that “a group [*farīq*] of [the Christians], who are the elite, believe that their Lord is a Jew, the son of a Jew” (p. 199). Pines, as I mention above, sees this as a reference to the Judaeo-Christians, yet the term *farīq* is generally not used for a coherent sect, as are other terms such as *madhhab*, *niḥla*, *milla* and even *firqā*. *Farīq* refers to a less formally associated group. Accordingly, ‘Abd al-Jabbār identifies this group as the elite (*al-khāṣṣa*) of the Christians. He is evidently referring to the Christian scholars whom, several pages earlier, he describes as *zindīqs*.<sup>67</sup> These scholars are, according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, openly irreligious, although they act as apologists for Christianity.<sup>68</sup> They are none other than the great Christian Arabic philosophers of Baghdād: Qusṭā b. Lūqā (d. 300/912–3), Ḥunayn b. Ishāq (d. 260/873), (his son) Ishāq b. Ḥunayn (d. 289/902), Ibrāhīm Abū Ishāq Quwayrī (d. late 3rd/9th), Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 328/940) and Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī (d. 362/972).

Pines’ use of Sa’adyā’s statement to support this interpretation is also questionable, since it is likely that Sa’adyā is not reporting inside information but information gathered from Muslims. He reports that this group holds Christ to be the son of God only in the way that Abraham is the close friend (*khalīl*) of God.<sup>69</sup> This is precisely a

<sup>67</sup> *Zindīq* (pl. *zanādiqa*) is a hostile label for those who place intellectual and philosophical knowledge above religious knowledge. Although this label is often given to dualists, there was no formal, coherent sect of *zanādiqa*. See J.L. Kraemer, “Heresy versus the State in Medieval Islam,” *Studies in Judaica, Karaitica and Islamica* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982), 167–80.

<sup>68</sup> According to ‘Abd al-Jabbār (*Tathbīt*, 192) they count Aristotle, not God, as their guide.

<sup>69</sup> Sa’adyā, 90. In the Qur’ān Abraham is called *khalīl Allāh*, “friend of God” (Q 4.125), as he is in the New Testament (James 2.23).



comparison the Mu‘tazilī Ibrāhīm Abū Ishāq al-Nazzām (d. 225/840) makes in an argument that is quoted and rejected by Jāhīz (d. 255/869) and referred to by ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself (see chapter 2, section 1.2.1).

Also questionable is Pines’ conclusion that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s use of Exodus 4:22 to argue against the divinity of Christ reveals his reliance on Judaeo-Christians. Indeed, the Muslim scholar Jāhīz had already used this argument over a century before ‘Abd al-Jabbār.<sup>70</sup> The same can be said for his argument that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s comparison of Ardashīr and Constantine must have been influenced by a pre-Islamic source (by which he implies that an ancient text is preserved in the *Critique*). To begin with, it is quite plausible that ‘Abd al-Jabbār got such information from contemporary Zoroastrians, who were still numerous in his city of Rayy and the surrounding area.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s comparison is preceded by that of the Muslim historian Mas‘ūdī.<sup>72</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s unique account of the crucifixion, which both Pines and Stern suggest is the remnant of an unknown apocryphal gospel, also has precedents in Islamic sources (see chapter 4, section 2.1), as does his description of Paul as the primary agent in the corruption of Jesus’ Islamic religion (see chapter four, section 2.3.1).

Pines’ arguments in his later writings are no less presumptive. In his last article on this subject, “Gospel Quotations etc.,” he examines ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version of Lk 1:44 (p. 101, 11.6–7), in which John’s (Yaḥyā’s) mother says to Mary the mother of Jesus: “That which is in my womb has prostrated to that which is in your womb.” Pines, wondering where the idea that John bowed or prostrated to Jesus comes from (instead of jumped or leaped, Gr. ἐσκίρτησε, as in Luke), finds eye-opening parallels in the Persian *Diatessaron* (which reads *sujūd kard*) and the Syriac writings of Ephraem (d. ca. 373) and Isho‘dad of Merv. Yet he does not mention that this is also the reading given by the Muslim scholar Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī in his universal history.<sup>73</sup> Pines, unaware of the Ṭabarī passage, uses the “prostration” refer-

<sup>70</sup> Jāhīz, “Fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Naṣārā” (henceforth: Jāhīz, *Radd*), *Three Essays of al-Jāhīz*, ed. J. Finkel (Cairo: Salafiyya Press, 1962), 25, 27.

<sup>71</sup> See M. Morony, “Majūs,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 5:1112.

<sup>72</sup> Mas‘ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Beirut: Maktabat al-Khayyāt, 1965, a reprint of the Leiden: Brill, 1894 de Goeje edition), 137.

<sup>73</sup> Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, 16 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901), 1:726.

ence as one piece of evidence that ‘Abd al-Jabbār had access to a non-canonical, Judaeo-Christian gospel.<sup>74</sup> (Although one might fairly object that there is nothing heterodox about suggesting that John bowed to Jesus, instead of leaping for joy).

Pines’ devotion to this project, it seems to me, is akin to the devotion of an archaeologist who is convinced that there lie, somewhere under the ground, traces of a forgotten civilization. He excavates many sites seeking to unearth the proof that he knows is there. The traces that he does unearth confirm to him the theory that he had already developed, but they are not impressive enough to convince a skeptical bystander.<sup>75</sup>

### 1.3. *The Goals of the Present Work*

In the preceding survey I have introduced, essentially,<sup>76</sup> the sum of western scholarship on the *Critique*, and it is clear that the lacunae

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<sup>74</sup> Pines comments: “In the second century, Tatian, who had been a student of Justin’s and was subsequently decried as a heretic, composed in Syriac a Harmony of the four Gospels, which, because of its four components, was known as the *Diatesseron*. Vööbus [in *Studies on the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac* (CSCO 128), 19ff.], in the wake of Baumstark and Peters, lends credence to a piece of information, disbelieved by other scholars, according to which Tatian’s Harmony had also a fifth component, the Gospel according the Hebrews” (“Gospel Quotations,” 252–3).

<sup>75</sup> One further example may be given here. On p. 247 Pines mentions that ‘Abd al-Jabbār (*Tathbīt*, 146) refers to the Nestorian Christian theologian ‘Abdishū Ibn Bahrīz (on whom see chapter 4, section 2.3), Metropolitan of Mawṣil. He then connects this reference with ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s description (*Tathbīt*, 153) of how the faithful companions of Jesus fled to that same city. Finally, he raises a third point: Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995) (*Fihrist* [Tehran: Dār al-Masīra, 1988], 26) describes Ibn Bahrīz as “in regard to wisdom, close to Islam.” Put together, these points lead Pines to conclude that Ibn Bahrīz may have “abandoned certain positions held by the dominant Christian denominations” (“Gospel Quotations,” 248). He further concludes that the books which, according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, include the letter of Ibn Bahrīz that he quotes from, may not have been simply Nestorian works, but “may have included Judaeo-Christian writings” (“Gospel Quotations,” 248). Yet does the passage in Ibn al-Nadīm really mean that the Nestorian Metropolitan was a Judaeo-Christian? It seems rather to relate to the previous sentence, where Ibn al-Nadīm mentions that Ibn Bahrīz composed refutations of Jacobite and Melkite theology.

<sup>76</sup> In addition to the above authors, the embattled German scholar G. Lüling refers to the *Critique* in his *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad* (Erlangen: Lüling, 1981). Lüling’s general argument in this work is that both Jesus and Muhammad preached an “Engelchristologie” (p. 60), whereby Christ is the highest angel of God’s high council. This monotheistic doctrine was corrupted by Hellenistic/magical influences, which led to the creation of the Trinitarian doctrine. Muhammad came to restore Christ’s teaching (and to teach that, he, too, was an angel); In Lüling’s words, Muḥammad “der bestens informierte letzte Kämpfer für

left by it are significant. Most of the *Critique* has gone unmentioned, as has its relation to the rest of the *Tathbīt*. Other questions remain. What is the place of the *Critique* in the career and scholarship of ‘Abd al-Jabbār? How was it affected by ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s historical context? What is the relation between it and earlier Islamic anti-Christian writings? Most generally, what is the place of the *Critique* in the history of Muslim-Christian conversation? These are the questions at issue in the rest of the present work.

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die vom hellenistisch-christlichen Abendland um imperialistischer Interessen willen verlassene urchristliche Vorstellung von Christus und Propheten gewesen ist” (p. 87). Lüling (p. 25) sees ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s argument in the *Critique* regarding the influence of Roman religions on Christianity as confirmation of his thesis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ‘ABD AL-JABBĀR’S *CRITIQUE*

The Būyid amīr Rustam b. ‘Alī Majd al-Dawla (d. after 420/1029) took control of Rayy in the year 419 AH/AD 1028, four years after the death of ‘Abd al-Jabbār in that same city.<sup>1</sup> Facing competition from Būyid rivals outside and an insurrection from his own Daylamī troops inside, he soon turned to the leader of the Ghaznavid forces to the East, Maḥmūd b. Sebūktigin (d. 421/1030), for help.<sup>2</sup> It was a fateful moment for the history of Rayy, a city heretofore distinguished by a diverse religious and cultural life, where Shī‘ism (notably Ismā‘īlism) and Mu‘tazilism flourished.<sup>3</sup> In Jumādā I of the next year (420 = May 1029), Maḥmūd’s forces, led by his son Mas‘ūd (d. 432/1040), entered Rayy and crushed the insurrection facing Majd al-Dawla. Yet they had come to occupy, not to liberate. Mas‘ūd took Majd al-Dawla

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<sup>1</sup> This after a long regency by his mother, Sayyida (d. 419/1028). The death date of Majd al-Dawla is unclear. In 420/1029 he was taken into captivity by the Ghaznavids. According to the Persian history of Abū Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Gardīzī, he was taken first to India and eventually to Ghazna, where he died in captivity. Yet Gardīzī does not provide a death date. See Gardīzī, *Ẓayn al-akhbār*, ed. Muḥammad Nāẓim (Berlin: Iranschār, 1928), 97. See also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-ta’rīkh*, ed. ‘Abdallāh al-Qāḍī, 11 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1995), 8:170.

<sup>2</sup> “Majd al-Dawla b. Fakhr al-Dawla b. Buwayh was the ruler of Rayy. He corresponded with [Maḥmūd], complaining to him of his soldiers, while he was preoccupied with women and the study and copying of books. His mother [Sayyida] was managing his kingdom, and when she passed away his soldiers moved against him.” Ibn al-Athīr, 8:170. See also Gardīzī, 90–1; C.E. Bosworth, “Madjd al-Dawla,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 5:1028; H. Busse, “Iran under the Būyids,” *Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. R.N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) 4:299.

<sup>3</sup> Maḥmūd himself refers to the conquest of Rayy and massacre of its inhabitants in a letter sent to the caliph al-Qādir (r. 381/991–422/1031): “A letter arrived to the caliph from the commander Yamīn al-Dawla, Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd. In it he greeted our master and ruler, the commander al-Qādir bi-llāh, the Commander of the Faithful. The letter was composed in his military camp in the outskirts of Rayy on the first day of Jumādā II [The sixth month of the Islamic calender] in the year 20 [i.e. 420/1029]: ‘God has removed the hands of iniquity from this place and purified it from the call of the unbelieving Bāṭiniyya and that of the shameless innovators.’” Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, 10 vols. (Hyderabad: Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1357–9), 8:38. Another version of the letter is preserved by Ibn al-Athīr, 8:171.

captive and established Ghaznavid rule in Rayy.<sup>4</sup> In doing so he also purged the city of its non-Sunnī elements. He crucified the Ismāʿīliyya along the streets of the city, removed the leaders of the Muʿtazila and the Imāmiyya and burned the books of all of these groups “to purify the people from their disorder.”<sup>5</sup> Maḥmūd was able to boast in a letter to the caliph: “Sunnism is victorious.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus within five years of the death of ʿAbd al-Jabbār the city in which he wrote, taught and served as the chief judge (Qāḍī al-Quḍāt) was changed irrevocably. It was in Būyid Rayy that ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s Muʿtazilism was not only tolerated but rewarded with an important administrative post under the Vizier al-Šāḥib b. ʿAbbād (d. 385/995). It was the culture of that city, where religious diversity was matched by a tradition of sectarian debate, that inspired ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s *Critique*. The Muʿtazilī school and the religious diversity of Rayy would never recover from this violent blow.

The present chapter is in part about this relationship: ʿAbd al-Jabbār, his environment and his text. I will discuss ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s intellectual heritage, i.e. Muʿtazilism (particularly as it relates to anti-Christian polemic), his biography and the historical dynamics of his day. While these points may seem elementary, it should be noted that the vast majority of early anti-Christian polemics, including ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s other writings, are theoretical and reveal little of their historical context.<sup>7</sup> This is manifestly not the case with ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s

<sup>4</sup> See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 8:40; Ibn al-Athīr, 8:170; Gardīzī, 90; H. Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig: die Buyiden im Iraq* (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1969), 102.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-Athīr relates that Masʿūd “crucified many of the Bāṭiniyya and banished the Muʿtazila to Khurāsān. He burned the books of the philosophers, the Muʿtazila and the astronomers, filling up about one hundred loads with their books” (8:170). Gardīzī provides the following account: “Thus they brought news to the prince Maḥmūd (may God have mercy on him) that in the city of Rayy and its surroundings there were many people from the Bāṭiniyya and the Qarāmiṭa. He commanded that those accused of being from that school be brought forward and stoned. He killed many of them, although some he took captive and sent to Khurāsān. They died there in his castles and prisons” (p. 91). Cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 8:40; “Madjd al-Dawla,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 1028. Ghaznavid Rayy was subsequently sacked by the Ghuzz Turks in 427/1035 and 434/1042, and later by the Mongols around 617/1220. See Bosworth, “Rayy,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 8:473.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 8:40

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *al-Mughnī*, 5:80–151; *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān (Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1965), 291–8; *al-Majmūʿ fi l-muḥīt bi-l-taklīf*, ed. J.J. Houben, S.J. (vol. 1), J.J. Houben, S.J. and D. Gimaret (vol. 2) and J. Peters (vol. 3), 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1965–1999), 1:222ff. The *Sharḥ* is actually the work of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s student Shashdīw Mānkdim (Aḥmad b. Abī Hāshim al-Qazwīnī, d. 425/1034), although it is largely a record of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s opinions. The

*Critique*.<sup>8</sup> By discussing that context in the present chapter, moreover, I will address not only *how* he wrote the *Critique*, but also *why* he wrote it.

## 1. *Mu'tazilī Polemic*

### 1.1. Origins of *Kalām*

Die Beschäftigung mit anderen Religionen war dem Islam in die Wiege gelegt.<sup>9</sup>

Many works have been written on the Mu'tazila, a group that has been studied since the beginning of western scholarship on Islam,<sup>10</sup> and I intend here neither to adumbrate the results of this scholarship nor to challenge it. I would like only to highlight the polemical tradition in Mu'tazilism inasmuch as this tradition influenced 'Abd al-Jabbār's thought.<sup>11</sup> For Islamic *kalām* involves not only the-

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*Majmū'* is also not 'Abd al-Jabbār's work, although the first volume of the edition is credited to him. It is the work of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Mattawayh (d. 469/1076), a disciple of 'Abd al-Jabbār who likewise records much of his teacher's thought.

<sup>8</sup> Note, however, that scholars have been almost entirely silent on the context in which 'Abd al-Jabbār wrote this work. Pines' only reference to the biography of 'Abd al-Jabbār comes in a footnote to his *Jewish Christians* (p. 1, n. 1). Stern, who is also the author of the *EI*<sup>2</sup> article "'Abd al-Djabbār" (1:59–60), is virtually silent on the historical context of the *Tathbīt*.

<sup>9</sup> H. Busse, "Antichristliche Polemik," 51.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., in chronological order: H. Steiner, *Die Mu'taziliten oder die Freidenker im Islam* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1865); I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1888–1890); A.J. Wensink, *The Muslim Creed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932); A. Nader, *Le système philosophique des Mu'tazila* (Beirut: Les lettres orientales, 1956); R. Frank, "Remarks on the Early Development of *Kalām*," *Atti del terzo Congresso di studi arabi e islamici* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1967), 315–329; W.M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973); J. Peters, *God's Created Speech*; R. Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basran School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period* (Albany: SUNY, 1978); D. Gimaret, "Mu'tazila," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 7:783–793; J. Van Ess, *Une lecture au rebours de l'histoire de Mu'tazilisme* (Paris: Geunther, 1984); M. Cook, "The Origins of *Kalām*," *BSOAS* 43 (1986), 32–43; van Ess, "Mu'tazilism," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade, 16 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1987), 10:220–229; van Ess, *TG*; Rashīd al-Khayūn, *Mu'tazilat al-Baṣra wa-l-Baḡdād* (London: Dār al-Ḥikma, 1997); S. Schmidtke, "Neuere forschungen zur Mu'tazila unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der späteren Mu'tazila ab dem 4./10. Jahrhundert," *Arabica* 45 (1998), 379–408. See also Schmidtke's introduction to Zamakhsharī, *al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. S. Schmidtke (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Two monographs have been written on 'Abd al-Jabbār's theological thought: G. Hourani's *Islamic Rationalism: the Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbār* and J. Peters, *God's Created*

ology (“an attempt to arrive at a synthetic view of God and the cosmos”),<sup>12</sup> but also religious polemic (an attempt to arrive at the failings of opposing views thereof).<sup>13</sup>

Two general statements can be made on this topic at the outset. First: there is no separating the rise of the Mu‘tazila and the rise of *kalām*. As D. Thomas points out, until the rise of the Ash‘ariyya and the Māturīdiyya, “almost anyone who engaged in theological discourse was regarded as a Mu‘tazilite of one sort or another.”<sup>14</sup> Second, Mu‘tazilī writings are, even in the earliest extant sources, polemical.

The canonical account of Mu‘tazilī origins is summarized by the Sunnī heresiographer Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153). The genesis of the Mu‘tazila, according to the story, came from a dispute over the teaching of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/722). Ḥasan, who used to teach his disciples while leaning up against a pillar in the mosque at Baṣra, was interrupted one day by a student named Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭā’ (d. 131/748) who held a different view on the state of a gravely sinning Muslim.<sup>15</sup> Unlike Ḥasan, Wāṣil maintained that the gravely sinning Muslim was neither a believer (*mu‘min*) nor an unbeliever (*kāfir*) but was in an intermediate position (*manzila bayna l-manzilatayn*). Sticking to his variant view, Wāṣil, along with his companion ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd (d. 144/761),<sup>16</sup> moved to another

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*Speech*. Hourani sees ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s thought as the epitome of “rationalistic objectivism,” whereby humans can rationally look at a moral object (including God) and evaluate its goodness (this he opposes to “theistic subjectivism,” epitomized by Ash‘arism, see pp. 10–12). Peters focuses on ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s understanding of the Qur’ān in the light of God’s unity and goodness (which are always comprehensible to mankind). Both authors are interested in ‘Abd al-Jabbār as a representative of later Mu‘tazilism and its theological system. They pay no attention to the *Critique*.

<sup>12</sup> Peters, 4. The appropriateness of the term “theology” to translate *kalām* is a source of occasional contention among scholars. See R. Frank’s argument in defense of the term in his “Remarks on the Early Development of the *Kalām*.” Cf. also his “The *Kalām*, an Art of Contradiction Making or Theological Science?” *JAOS* 88 (1968), 295–309.

<sup>13</sup> In describing the *Mughnī*, L. Gardet calls ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s tone “extremely polemical.” “Karāma,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 4:615.

<sup>14</sup> *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>15</sup> See Watt, *Formative Period*, 210ff.

<sup>16</sup> This according to al-Shahrastānī’s *K. al-Milal wa-l-nihāl*, ed. Aḥmad Fahmī Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.), 42–43. See the introduction and French translation in: D. Gimaret and G. Monnot, *Shahrastani, Livre des religions et des sects*, 2 vols. (Louvain-Paris: Peeters, 1986), especially 1:177ff. Cf. al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. Mufīd Muḥammad Qamīḥa, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.), 3:120.

pillar in the mosque. Ḥasan declared, "Wāṣil has withdrawn (*i'tazala*) from us!" Thus the movement received its name: Mu'tazila.

Scholars, however, have found this narrative wanting in historical authenticity, and have suggested a number of alternative explanations for the rise of the Mu'tazila.<sup>17</sup> H. Nyberg argues that the origins of Mu'tazilism lie in debates over the imāmate.<sup>18</sup> Goldziher, van Ess and others connect its origins with asceticism.<sup>19</sup> W.M. Watt, meanwhile,

<sup>17</sup> Shahrastānī's narrative became canonical in western scholarship partly due to the fact that it is in one of the first historical works to be published and translated into both English and German (W. Cureton, *Kitāb al-mīlāl wan-nihāl. Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects by Muhammad al-Shahrastani* [London: Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1842–6]. T. Haarbrücker, *Abu-l-Fath Muhammad asch-Schahrastānī's Religionsparteien und Philosophen-Schulen* [Halle: Schwetschke, 1850–1]). Yet accounts such as these, which seem all too complete and independent, are to be taken *cum grano salis*. Van Ess comments on this narrative, "Man darf sich jedoch durch die Kohärenz dieses Bildes nicht täuschen lassen" (*TG*, 2:256). In fact, even medieval Islamic sources differ regarding the historical rise of the Mu'tazila. Some have not Wāṣil but 'Amr b. 'Ubayd withdrawing from Ḥasan. See van Ess, *TG*, 2:256; Watt, *Formative Period*, 209–211; I. Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. A. and R. Hamori (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 86.

<sup>18</sup> See his article in the first *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1913–1934): "Mu'tazila," 3:850–6. Nyberg portrays Mu'tazilism as a movement that countered the claims of both the Umayyads and the 'Alids, supporting the 'Abbāsīd claim that while the imāmate should be held by a descendent of Muḥammad's family, the first three caliphs were nonetheless legitimate. His thesis is supported by the fact that in some sources those terms that later designate theological schools designate instead political positions. The early Mu'tazila, for example, appear in the earliest sources not as the group with five cardinal theological doctrines, but rather as the group that withdrew (*i'tazalat*) in protest with Sa'd b. Mālik (or Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, d. ca. 50/671) from 'Alī's camp at the battle of Šiffin (37/657). On this see al-Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-shī'a* (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā', 1404/1984), 5–6; Watt, *Formative Period*, 73; C. Nallino: "Sull'origine del nome dei Mu'tazilīti," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 7 (1916), 429–54.

<sup>19</sup> On this, see Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 87; L. Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1954), 200–1; S. Stroumsa, "The Beginning of the Mu'tazila," *JSAI* 13 (1991), 265–93. Van Ess emphasizes this point in his *Une Lecture à rebours de l'histoire du mu'tazilisme* (see pp. 127–8), associating the ascetic instincts of Mu'tazilism with 'Amr b. 'Ubayd and "la théologie dialectique" with Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā'. Van Ess later elaborated on this point: "Askese wurde erst zum beherrschenden Lebensideal, als man in die innere Emigration gehen mußte, nach der Konsolidierung der abbasidischen Herrschaft. 'Amr b. 'Ubayd hat diesen Prozeß mitgemacht, warscheinlich sogar gefördert, Wāṣil nicht . . . Askese ist vor allem ein bašrisches Phänomen. Wāṣil aber ist in Bašra möglicherweise ein Fremder." *TG*, 2:254.

Jāḥiẓ, as quoted by 'Abd al-Jabbār, emphasizes the reputation of the Mu'tazila for moral rigor: "The people of Bašra, having seen the ethics of the Mu'tazila (*ādāb al-mu'tazila*) sent their children to them to be trained." 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-ṛi'āzāl wa-tabaqāt al-mu'tazila*, ed. Fu'ād Sayyid (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1393/1974), 277.



focuses on the question of *qadar* (pre-ordainment),<sup>20</sup> arguing that the Mu'tazila themselves invented their connection with Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' and 'Amr b. 'Ubayd in order to counter the arguments of their Ḥanbalī opponents, who argued that the real founder of Mu'tazilism was the reviled Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746).<sup>21</sup> The fact that both the Watt and the Nyberg theories are so different from one another and yet at the same time individually coherent (although van Ess argues that the Nyberg theory is incorrect),<sup>22</sup> shows just how little is known about the historical origins of Mu'tazilism. The Shahrastānī narrative, meanwhile, is important as a foundational myth, for it shows what a central place theological disputation had in the self-understanding of the Mu'tazila.

The deep disagreement over what exactly encouraged the foundation of the Mu'tazila suggests a conclusion that scholars have otherwise arrived at: that *kalām* developed as a method of speaking about religious issues and not about any specific position on those issues. According to van Ess *kalām* "is not defined by reference to its contents as theo-logia (something about God, a logos about god) but it is defined in terms of its stylistic form, the dialectical method of argumentation."<sup>23</sup> This conclusion makes more probable another thesis that scholars have proposed about *kalām*: that it is a method borrowed, or at least inspired, by non-Islamic traditions. If indeed *kalām* is essentially a

<sup>20</sup> See Watt, *Formative Period*, 95; van Ess, "Kadariyya," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 4:368. In fact, the Mu'tazila's insistence on the justice ('*adl*) of God is closely related to the "Qadari" position on the question of *qadar*. The Mu'tazilī idea of '*adl* meant that God would not punish humans for an action that they did not themselves choose. This is, *mutatis mutandis*, not unlike the insight of Kant that "ought implies can." Such an insight also entails the conclusion that God's actions can be understood in terms of a "goodness" and "justice" that is accessible to human reason. This small move, that is, the analogy of creator and creature, opens up a whole world of theological possibilities, as God's actions and His very nature thereby become an object of speculation. The fruitful genre of Mu'tazilī *kalām* stems from this small seed.

<sup>21</sup> See Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London: Luzac, 1948), 63ff.; Watt, *Formative Period*, 209ff.

<sup>22</sup> See van Ess, *TG*, 2:339. Notice the case of Ḍirār b. 'Amr (d. 200/815), who is said to have denied the eternity of the Qur'ān and the divine attributes but also to have believed in God's *qadar*. Thus he is referred to in the sources variously as a Mu'tazilī and a forerunner of Ash'arī. See Watt, *Formative Period*, 189.

<sup>23</sup> Van Ess, "The Beginning of Islamic Theology," *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning* (Boston: D. Reidel, 1975), 105. Van Ess adds that beyond using a certain type of argument, a *mutakallim* should hold two fundamental doctrines: 1. that revelation is not the primary source of knowledge (since one must first prove that God exists), and 2. that knowledge is greater than belief, being its goal (p. 106).

method, then theological content would not prohibit such a borrowing.<sup>24</sup>

A number of western scholars have argued that *kalām* arose when Muslim scholars borrowed the methods of Christian disputation in order to engage both Christianity and Hellenistic philosophy in dispute. The Dutch scholar T.J. de Boer and the German A. von Kremer make this argument;<sup>25</sup> the connection is so apparent to C.H. Becker that he finds it unnecessary to contribute new evidence to prove it.<sup>26</sup> Nor is this idea the invention of western scholarship. In his *The Guide of the Perplexed*, the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (d. 600/1204) expresses a similar view:

Know also that all the statements that the men of Islam—both the Mu'tazila and the Ash'ariyya—have made concerning these notions are all of them opinions founded upon premises that are taken over from the books of the Greeks and the Syrians who wished to disagree with the opinions of the philosophers and to reject their statements.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> In this regard, note that Jewish scholars of the post-Mishnaic period (third-fifth centuries AD) were called, in Aramaic, *amorā'im*. Arabic *mutakallimūn* appears to be a calque on this term, which means, "speakers." See R. Goldenberg, "Talmud," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 14:257.

<sup>25</sup> See T.J. de Boer, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam* (Stuttgart: Frommanns, 1901), 41; A. von Kremer, *Geschichte der herrschenden Ideen als Islams: der Gottesbegriff, die Prophetie und Staatsidee* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1868), 8.

<sup>26</sup> On this, see U. Rudolph, "Christliche Bibelexegese und mu'tazilitische Theologie," *Oriens* 34 (1994), 300, n. 3. He refers to C.H. Becker, who comments: "Daß die ganze Methode des *kalām* aus dem Christentum stammt, ist bekannt. Wer hintereinander islamische Dogmatiker und christliche Patristik liest, wird von den Zusammenhängen so überzeugt, daß er des Einzelbeweises gar nicht mehr bedarf." C.H. Becker "Christliche Polemik und islamische Dogmenbildung," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 26 (1911), 175–95 (Reprinted in his *Islamstudien* [Leipzig: G. Olms, 1924], 1:432–449, quotation on 1:445. Further references are to the reprint.). See also M.S. Seale, *Muslim Theology: a Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* (London: Luzac, 1964).

<sup>27</sup> Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 177. Maimonides specifically mentions the Jacobite apologist Yahyā b. 'Adī in this regard, whom 'Abd al-Jabbār mentions several times in the *Critique* (see below, chapter 5, section 2.4).

It is worthwhile to note that opponents of the Mu'tazila accused them of taking not only the technique of *kalām* from Christians, but also religious doctrine. A *ḥadīth* found in the canonical collections explains that the Mu'tazila believe in the human origin of sin due to the influence of Christianity (on this see G. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition*, 80ff.). A number of modern scholars agree that the Mu'tazila were particularly affected by Christian doctrine. Becker argues that the Mu'tazilī doctrine of free will (and the cognate doctrine of divine justice) must have a Christian origin, since John of Damascus, writing on behalf of free will just before the rise of the Mu'tazila, so clearly associates Islam with determinism. See Becker, "Christliche Polemik," 1:439. G. Hourani points out that on five basic points of ethics Christian and Mu'tazilī teaching agree, a correspondence unlikely to be coincidental. These points, according to Hourani, are: objective values, God as the source of good

Recently J. van Ess, who in his earlier writings argues that the method of *kalām* is based on the technique of theological disputation of the Greek Church Fathers,<sup>28</sup> rejected Maimonides' opinion on this point.<sup>29</sup> He argues that *kalām* did not come from "an apologetic struggle against the unbelievers,"<sup>30</sup> but rather from intra-Islamic disputes on the question of *qadar* (which had profound political implications). He bases his argument on a work attributed to al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya (d. 100/718), the grandson of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: *al-Risāla fī l-radd 'alā l-qadariyya*.<sup>31</sup>

M. Cook takes issue with van Ess on this point, pointing to the similarities between *al-Risāla fī l-radd 'alā l-qadariyya* and a contemporary Syriac Christian polemical text.<sup>32</sup> He thus demonstrates that

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alone, rational knowledge of values, man's power as the source of moral evil and everlasting rewards and punishments. See Hourani, *Reason and Tradition*, 88–9.

<sup>28</sup> Van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology," *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), 22–4. Van Ess argues (p. 24) that the very term *kalām* is related to the Greek term διᾱλεκτος. See also van Ess, "Disputationspraxis der islamischen Theologie," *Revue des études islamiques* 44 (1976), 23–60.

<sup>29</sup> Van Ess: "Nach gängiger Vorstellung begann das systematische Interesse an theologischen Fragen im Islam mit der Mu'tazila. Maimonides sah dies so. . . . Aber das Bild ist falsch; es stammt aus einer Zeit, in der man nur noch Ash'ariten und Mu'taziliten kannte." *TG*, 2:233. See also H. Daiber, "Masā'il wa-ajwiba," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 6:636.

<sup>30</sup> Van Ess, "The Beginning of Islamic Theology," 88. He argues (p. 101) that *kalām* began "when, mainly through political development, the self-confident naiveté of the early days was gradually eroded."

<sup>31</sup> Al-Ḥasan's work, which if authentic would pre-date the founding of the Mu'tazila, contains the dialectal form of argument typical of *kalām* known as *masā'il wa-ajwiba* ("questions and answers"). The format of *masā'il wa-ajwiba* usually begins with an objection or explanation from a hypothetical opponent. First, the questioner responds to the opponent's argument with a disjunction, two consequences of that argument from which the opponent must choose. The opponent's choice will lead him to contradict himself, to see his argument reduced to inanity, or to face another disjunction. Ultimately, any path that the opponent takes will lead the unfortunate victim into a logical trap (sometimes after a long series of disjunctions). This scenario might be repeated several hundred times within a single treatise, which will help the student to understand where *kalām* ("theology," but lit. "speech") got its name from.

<sup>32</sup> The work comes from the pen of a monothelite (the christological doctrine that Christ has two natures but one operation, flowing from one will) theologian, who presents a theoretical discourse with a dyothelite (two wills) Christian opponent. The dialogue proceeds precisely according to *masā'il wa-ajwiba* format. The opponent is presented with a dilemma: one answer leads (sooner or later) to self-contradiction and the other (sooner or later) to the questioner's position. The very formula found in Islamic *kalām* works is used in the dialogue: "if they say . . ." (Syriac *en deyn nemrūn* like Arabic *fa-in qālū*). Cook also compares the Arabic *mutakallim* with the Syriac *memallel* (literally "speaker" but in the context, "theologian"). Cook, "The Origins of *Kalām*," 42–3. Cook expands on this argument in his latter monograph, *Early Muslim Dogma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chs. 13–15.

S. Griffith argues that the origin of *kalām* lies in "the Greek Erotapokriseis apologetical style." S. Griffith, "Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rā'īṭah, a Christian Mutakallim

Christians and Muslims of the same historical context were speaking about religion with the same terms and the same syntax. In other words, it is unlikely that *kalām* does not owe anything to Christian theological disputation, as Muslim scholars were part of a more general intellectual context, a "sectarian milieu;"<sup>33</sup> This observation has recently been made by U. Rudolph, who, while acknowledging van Ess's correction to the exaggerations of earlier Christian/Islamic comparative studies,<sup>34</sup> maintains that the correspondence between the technique of Muslim (particularly Mu'tazilī) and Christian disputation is too significant to be ignored.<sup>35</sup>

Accordingly, S. Pines argues that Muslim scholars initially adopted the discursive reasoning of *kalām* for the sake of disputation (as he puts it, *ahl al-kalām* = *ahl al-jadal*),<sup>36</sup> and only later discovered that it was valuable for theological speculation as well. In this he follows the interpretation of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 784/1382):

Speculative theologians do not use the (rational) arguments they talk about as do the philosophers, in order to investigate the truth of the (articles of faith), to prove the truth of what had previously not been known, and to make it known. (Their use of rational arguments) merely expresses a desire to have rational arguments with which to bolster the articles of faith and the opinions of the early Muslims concerning

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of the First 'Abbāsid Century," *OC* 64 (1980), 168. Griffith describes the symbiotic relationship of Christian and Muslim theology: "On the other hand, our insistence that these [Christian] apologists are consciously modeling their discourse on that of the contemporary Muslim dialecticians should not be taken as a denial of the obvious influences of the church fathers on the origins of Muslim theology. Nor is it incompatible with the suggestion that the refinement of the *'ilm al-kalām* owes much to the involvement of the Muslim mutakallimūn in arguments with non-Muslim controversialists, including Christians" (pp. 171–2).

<sup>33</sup> J. Wansbrough coined this term with his *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). It expresses the importance both of the religiously diverse environment in which the Islamic tradition developed and the importance of inter-religious apologetics/polemics to that development. Long before Wansbrough, I. Goldziher noted: "The most important stages in [Islam's] history were characterized by the assimilation of foreign influences . . . so thoroughly that their foreign character can be detected only by the exact analysis of critical research" (*Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 4).

<sup>34</sup> In reference to van Ess's article above, Rudolph (301), comments: "Übertreibungen dieser Art sind in der jüngeren Forschung mehrfach bemängelt und korrigiert worden."

<sup>35</sup> Rudolph describes the influence of the *mutakallim* Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī's (d. 333/944) *K. al-Tawḥīd* on the thought of a Jacobite Christian, arguing that this example represents a more general trend of inter-religious interchange: "Unübersehbar ist jedoch, daß ein reger Austausch stattfand" (p. 302).

<sup>36</sup> Pines, "A Note on an Early Meaning of the Term *Mutakallim*," *Israel Oriental Studies* 1 (1971), 233.

them, and to refute the doubts of innovators who believe that their perceptions of (the articles of faith in their interpretation) are rational ones. . . . The only thing that caused the theologians (to use rational arguments) was the discussions of heretics who opposed the early Muslim articles of faith with speculative innovations. Thus, they had to refute these heretics with the same kind of arguments. This (situation) called for using speculative arguments with these arguments.<sup>37</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn's comments, meanwhile, are preceded by those of the philosopher Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), who centuries earlier observed that *kalām* developed as a method by which to support *a priori* positions, not as a tool for theological speculation. He defines *kalām* as "the capacity that permits one to make his opinions and religious obligations victorious, which are already declared by the founder of the community, and to nullify all opposing theses."<sup>38</sup>

Fārābī's insight is certainly valid for 'Abd al-Jabbār's interest in anti-Christian polemic. The invalidity of Christianity is already firmly established by the Qur'ān—a text which Goldziher describes as "das älteste Buch muhammedanischer Polemik gegen die Schriftbesitzer."<sup>39</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār's task, then, is to prove by reason that which is accepted from revelation.

## 1.2. *The Tradition of anti-Christian Polemic in Mu'tazilism*

### 1.2.1. *Mu'tazilī origins and anti-Christian Polemic*

By 'Abd al-Jabbār's day this task had become virtually a *sine qua non* of Mu'tazilī scholarship.<sup>40</sup> A. Charfi remarks regarding anti-Christian

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 1:154–5.

<sup>38</sup> Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, ed. 'Uthmān Amīn (Cairo: Dār al-Anglū al-Miṣriyya, 1968), 131. Reference from G. Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974), 143. Elsewhere Fārābī, himself on the receiving end of the *mutakallimūn*'s intellectual aggression, suggests that these offensive tactics are a way for those scholars to cover up their own defects:

A certain group of them hold the opinion that they should defend things of this sort, which they imagine to be absurd, by looking into other sects and selecting the absurd things in them, so that when a follower of one of the other sects seeks to vilify something in theirs, they will confront him with the absurd things in the sect of the other and thus ward off his assault upon their own sect.

Fārābī, 136–7. Translation from *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Hyman and J. Walsh (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 29–30. My thanks to Dr. Frank Griffel for drawing my attention to this text.

<sup>39</sup> I. Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen ahl al-kitāb," *ZDMG* 32 (1878), 344. Elsewhere (p. 343) he comments, "Die literarische Polemik der Muhammedaner gegen die 'Schriftbesitzer' ist so alt wie der Islām."

<sup>40</sup> "It is no exaggeration to say that almost every theologian of note from [the

polemic: "ce sont surtout les Mu'tazilites qui sont les initiateurs du genre et qui lui ont imprimé ses principales caractéristiques."<sup>41</sup> G. Monnot notes: "Les mu'tazilites furent en Islam les pionniers de la littérature religieuse polémique."<sup>42</sup> It is not clear, however, who the first of these pioneers was. There are a number of polemical texts attributed to Wāsil b. 'Aṭā', the supposed founder of the Mu'tazila, although none of them are manifestly anti-Christian.<sup>43</sup> S. Griffith, meanwhile, considers the possibility that Wāsil b. 'Aṭā' might be the "Wāsil al-Dimashqī" referred to in a disputational text set in the court of the Byzantine emperor Leo III (r. 717–41).<sup>44</sup> Yet, as Griffith notes, there is not enough known about Wāsil (except, perhaps, that he was not a *dimashqī*, "Damascene") to make a conclusive judgment on this.

More is known of Ḍirār b. 'Amr (d. 200/815), who is sometimes described as Wāsil's student.<sup>45</sup> While Ḍirār is not always described

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early Islamic era] about whose works we have knowledge composed at least one attack on some aspect of Christian beliefs." D. Thomas, "Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturidī on the Divinity of Jesus Christ," *Islamochristiana* 23 (1997), 43. H. Busse comments that *kalām* "im frühen Islam den Anstoß zur Beschäftigung mit den Fremdreigionen gegeben hatte." "Antichristliche Polemik," 61. He points out (in n. 23) that Abū 'Abdallāh al-Khwārizmī includes writing on other religions within the chapter on *kalām* in his dictionary of sciences: *Maḡāṭih al-'ulūm*. See Khwārizmī, *Maḡāṭih al-'ulūm*, ed. G. van Vloten (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 22–41; Cf. C.E. Bosworth, "al-Khwarazmī on Theology and Sects: The Chapter on *Kalām* in the *Maḡāṭih al-'ulūm*," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 29 (1978), 85–95.

<sup>41</sup> "Polémiques islamo-chrétiennes à l'époque médiévale," *Scholarly Approaches to Religion, Interreligious Perceptions and Islam* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1995), 263.

<sup>42</sup> *Penseurs musulmans*, 101.

<sup>43</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār (*Faḍl al-ī'tizāl*, 165) attributes to Wāsil a *K. Alf mas'ala*, which he describes as a polemic against the Dualists. Van Ess (*TG*, 5:138) suggests that Wāsil also addressed other opponents here. Another work that likely addressed other religions is *K. al-Da'wa*. See the list of works attributed to him, van Ess, *TG*, 2:136ff.

<sup>44</sup> See S. Griffith "Bashīr/Beser," *Le Muséon* 103 (1990), 302–4. Regarding Wāsil b. 'Aṭā', Van Ess comments, "Das hat die Biographien nicht daran gehindert, immer wieder über Wāsil, manchmal auch über 'Amr (b. 'Ubayd) zu schreiben; diese waren eben berühmte Leute. Aber die Informationsbasis war zu schmal; das Material wird meist nur umgeschichtet. Vor allem setzt die Überlieferung viel zu spät ein. . . . Ash'arī erwähnt Wāsil in seinen *Maḡāṭāt* nur ein einziges Mal. . . . Shahrastānī hat ihn zwar als "Kirchenvater" aufgebaut, aber seine Darstellung ist Gelehrtenarbeit und überaus problematisch." Van Ess, *TG*, 2:234. The biography of Wāsil is generally too coherent to inspire trust in the historian. He is, for example, the only early Mu'tazilī whose death date is not disputed in the sources. "Das ist erstaunlich," remarks van Ess. *TG*, 2:235. See also Watt, *Formative Period*, 211. Contrast this with the more optimistic view of Gimaret: "It appears to be established that Wāsil, originally a disciple of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, was indeed the sole founder [of the Mu'tazila], and that during the lifetime of the latter." "Mu'tazila," 783.

<sup>45</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār reports (*Faḍl al-ī'tizāl*, 163) this, but the fact that Ḍirār died a full sixty-nine years after Wāsil invites skepticism. See van Ess, *TG*, 3:33.



as a Mu'tazilī due to his association with Jahm b. Ṣafwān,<sup>46</sup> he was known above all for religious disputation. This would become the hallmark of the Mu'tazila,<sup>47</sup> a group that van Ess calls, "die Wachhunde gegen die Ketzerei."<sup>48</sup> Both Ḍirār and his equally heterodox student

<sup>46</sup> Ḍirār, for example, is omitted from the Mu'tazilī biographical dictionaries of Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka'bī (d. 319/931), *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*, and 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-ī'tizāl* (and therefore of Jishumī [d. 545/1150], *Sharḥ 'uyūn al-masā'il*, and Ibn al-Murtaḍā [d. 840/1437], *Ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila*). Fu'ād Sayyid has published the chapter by Ka'bī on the Mu'tazila, the *Faḍl al-ī'tizāl* of 'Abd al-Jabbār (which charts the first ten generations of the Mu'tazila) and the end of Jishumī's *Sharḥ 'uyūn al-masā'il* (covering the eleventh and twelfth generations) in his *Faḍl al-ī'tizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila*. Note, however, that the first section of Jishumī's work (on the first ten generations of the Mu'tazila) has substantial changes to 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Faḍl al-ī'tizāl*. On this see S.A. Mourad, *Early Islam Between Myth and History: Al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 AH/728 CE) in Classical and Modern Scholarship* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 2004), 230. Ibn al-Murtaḍā's biography is published as *Ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila*, ed. S. Diwald-Wilzer (Beirut: al-Maṭba'at al-Kāthūlikiyya, 1961).

As van Ess points out, the absence of Ḍirār from these dictionaries has the curious consequence of creating a gap in the *ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila* between the traditional founding generation of Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' and 'Amr b. 'Ubayd and the generation of the founders of the Baṣran and Baghdādī schools, namely Abū l-Hudhayl and Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir, respectively. See J. Van Ess, *TG*, 3:35–36, and *Une lecture à rebours de l'histoire du mu'tazilisme*, 98. Most non-Mu'tazilī authors, including Nawbakhtī (d. 300/310 or 912/922) and Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), portray Ḍirār as a loyal Mu'tazilī. See van Ess "Ḍirār b. 'Amr," 225 and *Une Lecture à rebours de l'histoire du mu'tazilisme*, 97. Ibn al-Rāwandī, himself hardly a model of orthodoxy, considers Ḍirār a Mu'tazilī, as do Ibn al-Nadīm (p. 214) and Pseudo-Nāshī' al-Akbar (i.e. Ja'far b. Ḥarb, see above). See (Pseudo-Nāshī' al-Akbar, *K. Uṣūl al-niḥāl*, in J. van Ess, *Frühe mu'tazilitische Häresiographie*, 52. These two relegate him to heterodox status, for not holding the five canonical principles of the Mu'tazila: 1. God's oneness (*tawḥīd*), 2. God's justice (*'adl*), 3. Threat and the punishment in the afterlife (*al-wa'd wa-l-wa'id*), 4. The intermediate position of the sinning believer (*al-manzila bayna l-manzilatayn*), and 5. Commanding the right and forbidding the wrong (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahī 'an al-munkar*). Ḍirār was apparently accused of violating God's justice (#2) with his determinism, (for a just God would not punish a man for that which He preordained). These principles, however, were likely not formalized before Abū l-Hudhayl, and Ḍirār died twenty-seven years earlier. See D. Gimaret, "Mu'tazila," 786–7.

Gimaret notes that in this era the Mu'tazila were distinguished by an "extreme diversity of people and of doctrines; it is a case of a collection of distinguished individuals, of often 'colourful' personalities, rather than continuous and homogeneous associations." Gimaret, "Mu'tazila," 784.

<sup>47</sup> Goldziher long ago argued against the notion, in vogue at the time, that Mu'tazilism was the liberal movement of Islam. He concludes, "All that we have learned so far about the nature of the Mu'tazilite movement confers on these religious philosophers the right to lay claim to the name of rationalists. I shall not dispute their right to the name . . . But is that enough for calling them liberal? That title we must certainly refuse them. They are in fact, with the formulas they directed against orthodox conceptions, the very founders of theological dogmatism in Islam." Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 100–1.

<sup>48</sup> Van Ess, *TG*, 3:31. G. Monnot, meanwhile, describes the Mu'tazilī devotion as "la lutte acharnée contre toutes les pensées musulmanes ou non, qui menaçaient

Ḥaḥṣ al-Fard<sup>49</sup> would count the Christians among their targets.<sup>50</sup> Another of Ḍirār's students, Abū l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. ca. 226/841), an opponent of Ḥaḥṣ in theological matters, is likewise known for his disputational writings,<sup>51</sup> which include a treatise against the East Syrian (Nestorian)<sup>52</sup> Christian Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. early 3rd/9th).<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, Abū l-Hudhayl's student (and nephew), Nazzām,<sup>54</sup> followed

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leur doctrine: *muḥṣa*, *mushabbīha*, *mujabbira* [sic, *mujbira* is better], Juifs, chrétiens, dualistes et mages, philosophes. . . Ils ont bien mérité la description avantageuse que fait d'eux Malaṭī: 'Ce sont les seigneurs du *kalām* et les maîtres de la dialectique, du discernement, de la spéculation, de l'invention intellectuelle (*istimbāt*); contre leurs adversaires ils font usage d'arguments, et ils pratiquent toute sorte de discours.' " *Penseurs musulmans*, 9. The excerpt from the Shāfiʿī *faqīh* Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Malaṭī (d. 377/987) is from his *K. al-Tanbīh*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Muthannā, 1388/1968), 35ff.

<sup>49</sup> Ḥaḥṣ's death date is entirely unknown. See Ibn al-Nadīm, 229–230, who lists him among the *Mujbira* and not among the Muʿtazila, reporting that he held God and not man as the creator of acts. Thus Ḥaḥṣ was accused of holding a heterodox position like that of his teacher Ḍirār. Cf. Van Ess, *TG*, 2:729–35, especially 730. The Zaydī al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rasī (d. 246/860), author of a famous anti-Christian polemic, reports that Ḥaḥṣ engaged in a formal religious debate with a Coptic Christian. See Van Ess, *TG*, 2:734.

<sup>50</sup> Works entitled *Radd ʿalā l-naṣārā* are attributed to both of them. G. Monnot maintains that Ḍirār was the first to write a specifically anti-Christian work. See his "Les doctrines des chrétiens dans le 'Moghni' de 'Abd al-Jabbār," *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales* 16 (1983), 14.

<sup>51</sup> H. Nyberg calls Abū l-Hudhayl, who is traditionally recognized as the founder of the Baṣran school of Muʿtazilism, "the apologist of Islam against other religions and against the great currents of thought of the preceding epoch." "Abū l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 1:127. Van Ess points out that almost half of his works have a named opponent. *TG*, 3:220. See also Ibn al-Nadīm, 203ff.

<sup>52</sup> The proper term is East Syrian, yet a difficulty arises from the fact that Arabic medieval texts—Muslim and Christian, East Syrian and non-East Syrian—do in fact use the term Nestorian. Therefore, in the present work I use "Nestorian" when I am making a reference to a text that uses this term. Otherwise I use "East Syrian," or both terms together.

<sup>53</sup> *K. ʿAlā ʿAmmār al-naṣrānī fī l-radd ʿalā l-naṣārā*. See Ibn al-Nadīm, 203; ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, *K. al-Burhān* and *K. al-Masāʾil wa-l-ajwiba*, in M. Hayek, *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, apologie et controverses* (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1977); S. Griffith, "The Concept of al-Uqnūm in ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's Apology for the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Actes du premier congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, ed. S.K. Samir (Rome: PISO, 1982), 169–91; M. Hayek, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī: la première somme de théologie chrétienne en langue arabe ou deux apologies du christianisme," *Islamochristiana* 2 (1976), 69–113; and the introduction to the aforementioned *ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, apologie et controverses*.

<sup>54</sup> Nazzām was a caliphal advisor in the court of al-Maʾmūn (r. 198/813–218/833). According to Ibn ʿAqīl, he died at thirty-six years of age (just as Ibn al-Rāwandī). This would lead one to the incredible conclusion that he was more than twenty years younger than his pupil Jāḥiẓ. Van Ess is skeptical (*Une Lecture à rebours de l'histoire du muʿtazilisme*, 31–2), while Pellat hesitantly accepts this fact (*Le Milieu baṣrien et la formation de Ḡāḥiẓ* [Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1953], 70).



his teacher by writing against the Christians,<sup>55</sup> although the two reportedly had bitter differences of opinion in other matters.<sup>56</sup> (The same can be said, incidentally, for Nazzām and his student Jāḥiẓ).<sup>57</sup>

Nazzām seems to have had a particular interest in refuting Christianity. ‘Abd al-Jabbār reports that he “memorized the Qur’ān, the Tawrāt, the Injīl, the Psalms and their interpretation.”<sup>58</sup> The Shī‘ī scholar al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1016) preserves Nazzām’s comments on the appellation “*kalimat Allāh*” (“word of God”) given to Christ in the Qur’ān.<sup>59</sup> The fact that he is so called in the Qur’ān is a point raised by Christian apologists, including John of Damascus (d. 753),<sup>60</sup> to argue for Christ’s divinity. Nazzām, however, argues that

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<sup>55</sup> Van Ess remarks about Nazzām’s thought: “la pensée constructive semble l’avoir emporté sur la polémique.” *Une Lecture à rebours de l’histoire du mu‘tazilisme*, 35 (One wonders if this is not true for all of the Mu‘tazila, or all of the *mutakallimūn* for that matter). In addition to attacking Christian beliefs, he also wrote refutations against Jews, dualists, those who hold the eternity of the world, the Murjī‘a, ‘Alids, those who hold predestination, and even other Mu‘tazila (including Abū l-Hudhayl, over the latter’s atomism). See also van Ess, *TG*, 3:296ff.; idem, “al-Nazzām,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 7:1057–8; S. Stern, “‘Abd al-Djabbār,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 1:59–60; Ibn al-Naḍīm, 204; ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-ī‘tizāl*, 264–5; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 49–54.

Nazzām is also similar to Abū l-Hudhayl in his independence as a theological thinker (especially in his rejection of atomism), something that would later sully his reputation with the Mu‘tazila when the school’s doctrine had become codified. Yet did Nazzām really harbor sympathy for Manicheans, as reported by ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (*K. al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd [Cairo: Maktaba Muḥammad, 1964], 131ff.)? He wrote against such groups (*Refutation of Adherents of the Dualists*, Ibn al-Naḍīm, 306) and ‘Abd al-Jabbār remembers Nazzām for his devotion to the strictest doctrine of *taḥwīd* (*Faḍl al-ī‘tizāl*, 264). See also C. Pellat, “Deux curieux Mu‘tazilites: Aḥmad b. Ḥābiḡ et Faḍl al-Ḥadathī,” *Mélanges de l’Université St. Joseph* 31 (1984), 483–4; van Ess, “al-Nazzām,” 1057.

<sup>56</sup> Abū l-Hudhayl wrote several treatises against Nazzām. Nyberg, “Abū l-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf,” 128. It is also reported that, in the midst of a heated argument, Abū l-Hudhayl spat in Nazzām’s face. Van Ess, *TG*, 3:222.

<sup>57</sup> Jāḥiẓ is said to have rejected the ideas of Nazzām (see van Ess, “al-Nazzām,” 1057), but ‘Abd al-Jabbār reports only his admiration for Nazzām. He has Jāḥiẓ remark, “I have not seen anyone more learned in *kalām* and *fiqh* than al-Nazzām.” ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-ī‘tizāl*, 264. Elsewhere (265) ‘Abd al-Jabbār reports that Jāḥiẓ remarked: “The forefathers said, ‘Every thousand years there is a man without equal.’ If this is true, then he is Abū Ishāq al-Nazzām.”

<sup>58</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-ī‘tizāl*, 264; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 53; Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 32. This report has no correspondence with the contents of the Bible; it is simply an adumbration of the Qur’ānic terms for the scriptures of Muḥammad, Moses, Jesus and David.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted from his *Ḥaqā’iq al-ta’wīl* by van Ess, *TG*, 6:140–141. Van Ess records two different extant fragments of al-Nazzām’s writing on Christianity (*TG*, 6:136–141). A third is preserved in the *Tathbūt* (p. 148).

<sup>60</sup> Notice, for example, Ch. 100 of his *De haeresibus*: “How, when you say that the Christ is the Word and Spirit of God, do you revile us as associators? For the Word and the Spirit are inseparable . . . So we call you mutilators [κόπτας] of God.”

*kalima* should be read simply as a proper name.<sup>61</sup> Nazzām's argument regarding Christ's biblical appellation of Son of God is also known.<sup>62</sup>

Still more is known about the arguments against Christian teaching of Nazzām's student Jāḥiẓ.<sup>63</sup> The involvement of a figure like Jāḥiẓ in anti-Christian polemic is to A. Charfi "a clear proof that Islamic-Christian dispute was neither the place of 'specialist' scholars, nor of secondary importance nor the domain of converts alone."<sup>64</sup> Like his teacher, Jāḥiẓ wrote a "Refutation of the Christians," the *Risāla fī l-radd 'alā l-naṣārā*.<sup>65</sup> This work was reportedly commissioned by

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Translation from R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 486. See the more complete translation in D.J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 133–41.

<sup>61</sup> "If one designates him as 'Word,' this has the same significance as when one calls Abraham's father Āzar." Nazzām's point here is that Āzar (see Qur'ān 6:74) is another name for Terah (the name which appears in the Bible, and was known also in the Islamic tradition). This is analogous to "Word" being a secondary name for Jesus. See van Ess, *TG*, 6:140–1. Elsewhere van Ess remarks that on this matter, Nazzām "machte keine Konzessionen." *TG*, 6:397. On the matter of the name of Abraham's father, see A. Jeffrey, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 53–5.

<sup>62</sup> His strategy, which would become the standard for those Muslim debaters that accept (if only for the sake of argument) the historical authenticity of the Bible, is to compare "Son of God" to Abraham's Qur'ānic title *khalīl Allāh*, "Friend of God." He argues, "If God can take someone as a friend, then he can also take someone as a son. That is, if in this way he seeks to show how merciful and loving He is towards him." Quoted from van Ess, *TG*, 6:136. Nazzām's argument was later rejected by Jāḥiẓ, who comments: "This is Ibrāhīm b. Sayyār al-Nazzām's answer, which I will mention, God willing. The Mu'tazilī 'ulamā' follow it, but I find it neither convincing nor satisfactory." Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 29. Cf. Van Ess, *TG*, 6:138.

Van Ess concludes on the basis of this quotation that Nazzām held a type of adoptionist Christology, having been influenced by Judaeo-Christianity. He comments: "Die These war ja im Grunde auch gar nicht so revolutionär; denn was man meinte, war Adoptianismus, und adoptianische Christologie war durch das Judentum im Orient verbreitet worden." *TG*, 3:397. In fact, van Ess assumes more than we know. Although many scholars have found in Judaeo-Christianity an antecedent for Islam, notably Shlomo Pines (*Jewish Christians*) and Tor Andrae before him (see *Mohammed: The Man and His Faith* [New York: Barnes and Noble, 1935], 101ff.), very little is known of the history of Judaeo-Christian groups. See A.F.J. Klijn, "Judaeo-Christianity," *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:454. See also G. Strecker, "On the Problem of Jewish Christianity" in W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (London, SCM Press, 1972), 241–285.

<sup>63</sup> According to Mas'ūdī, Jāḥiẓ studied under Nazzām in Baghdād. *Murūj al-dhahab*, 4:114. See Pellat, *Le milieu basrien*, 69–70, who suggests that the two likely met earlier in Baṣra, in the circle of Abū l-Hudhayl. For Jāḥiẓ, see Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 67–70; Ibn al-Nadīm, 1:208–209.

<sup>64</sup> A. Charfi, *al-Fikr al-Islāmī* (Tūnis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1986), 138.

<sup>65</sup> Jāḥiẓ's treatise is partially translated by Finkel as "A *Risāla* of Jāḥiẓ," *JAOS* 47 (1927), 311–334.

the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232/847–247/861).<sup>66</sup> Jāḥiẓ brings up Nazzām's position therein on the "sonship" of Christ and refutes it.<sup>67</sup> Yet perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Jāḥiẓ's treatise is his commentary on Christians. Much of Muslim polemical literature is theoretical and abstract; Jāḥiẓ's treatise, meanwhile, presents a vivid, if critical, image of the Christians of his day.<sup>68</sup>

Not all of the Mu'tazila, however, were interested in anti-Christian polemic. Two other students of Nazzām, Aḥmad b. Khābiṭ (d. 230/845) and Faḍl al-Ḥadathī (d. 3rd/9th), were interested instead in a theological rapprochement with Christianity, for which they received the wrath of Muslim commentators.<sup>69</sup> Khayyāṭ (d. 300/913), quoting Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. late 3rd/9th), remarks that these two, "claim that Christ is the one who created the world, the Lord of the first and last, and the judge of mankind on the Day of Resurrection."<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Reported in a letter from the Vizier al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān (d. 247/861). See O. Schumann, *Der Christus der Muslime* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1988), 49. Jāḥiẓ addresses this treatise to a group of Muslims who had written to him regarding some of their members, perhaps new converts, who were troubled by Christian questions. See Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 10.

<sup>67</sup> Jāḥiẓ argues that God could not adopt a human as a son, even as a sign of mercy and love, any more than a man could adopt a dog as a son. "Even a righteous believer does not resemble God at all, while a dog resembles a man in every way." Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 29ff. Jāḥiẓ's rebuttal of Nazzām is quoted by 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:107.

<sup>68</sup> Jāḥiẓ warns the reader not to be impressed at the fact that Christians in his day were masters of medicine and philosophy, since these sciences actually came from pagans like Aristotle, Ptolemy, Euclid and Galen. He also complains that Christians, feeling pompous due to their social status, have grown so insolent as to take off the distinctive dress of the *dhimmī* (*al-ghiyār*), to cease paying their poll tax, and to give their children Islamic names. The Prophet has ordered that they be kept subordinate to Muslims, saying, "if they injure you, strike them. If they strike you, kill them" (Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, Finkel's translation, 329; I have not found this *ḥadīth* in any of the canonical collections; it is on p. 18 of the Arabic text). In their arrogance, Jāḥiẓ continues, Christians also seek to undermine the faith of Muslims: "They enter into private conversation with our weak-minded, and question them concerning the texts which they have chosen to assail" (Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, Finkel's translation, 331). Yet their own teaching is helplessly illogical: "How can one succeed in grasping this doctrine, for if were you to question concerning it two Nestorians, individually, sons of the same father and mother, the answer of one brother would be the reverse of the other" (Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, Finkel's translation, 333). On the historical context of this treatise see Schumann, 49.

<sup>69</sup> "They gave Christ preference over our prophet." Khayyāṭ, *K. al-Intiṣār* (Beirut: Dār Qābis, 1986), 148–9.

<sup>70</sup> Khayyāṭ, 148. Khayyāṭ compares their apostasy to that of Ibn al-Rāwandī himself. Addressing Ibn al-Rāwandī, he comments, "As for adding Ibn Ḥā'it (Khābiṭ) and Faḍl al-Ḥadhdhā' (Ḥadathī) to the Mu'tazila: By my life Faḍl al-Ḥadhdhā' was a Mu'tazilī, a Nazzāmī, until he became mixed up and left the truth. So the Mu'tazila expelled him and threw him out of their circles, as they did with you when you apostasized." Khayyāṭ, 149.

The doctrine of these two thinkers is outside the present topic of anti-Christian polemic, but it is nonetheless an important product of the interaction between the Mu'tazila and Christianity.<sup>71</sup>

Another heterodox Mu'tazilī is among the school's most prodigious polemicists: Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq.<sup>72</sup> Warrāq, who has been described

<sup>71</sup> Due to their heretical reputation little is known about Ibn Khābiṭ and Ḥadathī; even their names are a matter of uncertainty. The former is referred to as Ḥābiṭ by Ibn Ḥajar and Sam'ānī; Ḥāyīṭ (or Ḥā'it) by Jāḥiṣ, Khayyāt, Mas'ūdī, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Shahrastānī; and as Khābiṭ by Ibn Ḥazm and Dhahabī. See van Ess, *TG*, 3:431; Thomas, 5, n. 8; Pellat, "Deux curieux Mu'tazilites," 484–5. Faḍl al-Ḥadathī's *nisba* also appears in a number of forms, including Harbī (Ibn Ḥazm) and Ḥadhdhā' (Khayyāt). See C. Pellat, "Deux curieux Mu'tazilites," 484, n. 3.

Ḥadathī, who came to Baṣra from the predominantly 'Alid town of al-Ḥaditha, was known as an ascetic and a Sufi. Van Ess, *TG*, 3:436. Pseudo-Nāshī' al-Akbar (i.e. Ja'far b. Harb) includes Ḥadathī among the *sūfiyyat al-mu'tazila*. The precise identity of this group is unclear (See van Ess, *Une Lecture à rebours de l'histoire du mu'tazilisme*, 30). Van Ess suggests that part of Ḥadathī's asceticism was celibacy, since he reprimanded the Prophet for his marriages and emphasized the rigorous piety of Jesus. *TG*, 3:437. Ḥadathī's teacher Nazzām, meanwhile, was opposed to the ascetics. See van Ess, *Une lecture à rebours de l'histoire du mu'tazilisme*, 33. Ibn Khābiṭ seems to have been a disciple of Nazzām, along with Jāḥiṣ, in Baṣra and the leader of a small circle of students that included Ḥadathī. He followed Nazzām, among other things, in rejecting atomism. At some point, a split occurred, which left Ibn Khābiṭ and Ḥadathī accused of heresy and Jāḥiṣ rejecting his former master. Van Ess, *TG*, 3:431, 437. Khayyāt reports that when the Mu'tazila informed the caliph al-Wāthiq of Ibn Khābiṭ's teaching, the caliph ordered the Qāḍī Aḥmad b. Abī Duwād (d. 240/854) to look into the matter and Ibn Khābiṭ died soon thereafter. He adds the malediction: "May God curse him on that Day and speed his soul into the Fire." Khayyāt, 149; Pellat, "Deux curieux Mu'tazilites," 485.

Together, Ibn Khābiṭ and Ḥadathī are accused of holding three heterodox doctrines (On this see Shahrastānī, 54–5; 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, 277ff): transmigration of souls (*kurūr* or *tanāsukh*), literal interpretation of the beatific vision (*nu'ya*) and the divinity of Christ (van Ess, *TG*, 3:436). For Ibn Khābiṭ and Ḥadathī, Christ is the visible god and the immanent agent of the One. Their Christology is clearly heterodox, yet D. Thomas argues that Ibn Khābiṭ and Ḥadathī were nevertheless Mu'tazilis, since their ultimate concern was to emphasize the transcendence of God (Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 6–7). 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, argues: "To count these two lost ones among Islamic sects would be to count the Christians as a Muslim sect!" (261). See Pellat, "Deux curieux Mu'tazilites," 494. Van Ess argues that Ibn Khābiṭ and Ḥadathī sought to reconcile differences between Islamic and Christian theology: "sie mag also im Kontakt mit christlichen Kreisen, vielleicht in einer Art 'Ökumenischer' Bemühung zwischen Šūfīs und (nestorianischen?) Mönchen, entwickelt worden sein." *TG*, 3:440.

<sup>72</sup> A. Charfi comments, "He is among the most famous *mutakallimīn* and philosophers of the third/tenth century, but he is still obscure. He has not had the fortune to this point of the study and attention which he deserves." *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 141. According to Mas'ūdī (4:121), Warrāq died in 247/861. This is cast in doubt by a quotation that Shahrastānī attributes to Warrāq, which includes a reference to the year 271 (884–5). See Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 17; S.M. Stern, "Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq," *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 1:130. Mas'ūdī's account is remarkably free of antagonism or accusations. He concludes: "[Warrāq] has many good compilations, among them his book *Maqālāt fī l-imāma* and others on speculation" (4:121). The

as “one of the arch-heretics of Islam,”<sup>73</sup> is said variously to have been a Mu‘tazilī, an ‘Alid, an associate of Ibn al-Rāwandī,<sup>74</sup> and a crypto-Manichean. His writings were not preserved, perhaps due to his heretical reputation.<sup>75</sup> Fortunately, his *Radd ‘alā l-naṣāra* survived through the quotations of Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, the Jacobite Christian philosopher and student of Fārābī, who responded to it.<sup>76</sup> Yet Warrāq’s work was not only read in Christian circles. Its impact on later Islamic polemics, including that of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, is unmistakable.<sup>77</sup> Clearly Warrāq’s *Radd* was so valuable that Muslims could

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Shī‘īs al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) and Abū ‘Alī al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058) also have favorable comments on Warrāq. It seems likely, then, that the accusations against him stem in part from the anti-Shī‘ī bias of the accusers. See Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 12–14, which has been updated by D. Thomas, *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 22–33.

<sup>73</sup> Stern, “Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq,” 130. In some accounts, Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq is said to have found fault with the Qur‘ān as well as with the Prophet Muḥammad and his cousin/son-in-law ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib on the subjects of sex and violence. At the same time, he is described as openly admiring Manicheanism. Some western scholars (C. Colpe and S. Stroumsa) accept the reports that he converted to Manicheanism, while both Massignon and S.M. Stern are skeptical, as is D. Thomas. See S.M. Stern, “Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq,” 130; Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 18ff.; A. Charfi, *Fikr al-islāmī*, 141–6.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn al-Rāwandī is sometimes described as an antagonist of Warrāq. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, the two accused each other of writing the infamous *K. al-ẓumurrud*. He also reports a tradition from Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī that in the year 298 (likely well after both of their deaths) Warrāq and Ibn al-Rāwandī were arrested. The former, according to the tradition, died in prison and the latter in the house of a Jew. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 6:100; Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 15, 24.

<sup>75</sup> D. Thomas provides a list of nineteen titles that are attributed to Warrāq, including three versions of the *Radd ‘alā l-naṣāra* (*al-Kabīr*, *al-Awsaṭ* and *al-Aṣghar*). *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 22–24. Ibn al-Nadīm lists eleven works (p. 216).

<sup>76</sup> A. Abel put together the second section of Warrāq’s work, which covers the Incarnation, as *Le livre pour la réfutation des trois sectes chrétiennes* (Bruxelles: n.p., 1949). This has been edited more recently, along with Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī’s reply: Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, *Jawāb ‘an radd Abī ‘Isā al-Warrāq ‘alā l-naṣāra fī l-ittihād*, ed. E. Platti, CSCO 490 (1987) and French trans. CSCO 491 (1987) (when quoting from Warrāq, I cite “Warrāq, *al-Radd fī l-ittihād*.”).

More recently D. Thomas has edited and translated the first section as *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam* (I cite this section as Warrāq, *al-Radd ‘alā l-tathlith*, translations from Thomas) and the second section as *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also van Ess, *TG*, 4:289–94 for information on Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq, esp. 291, n. 24. For an analysis of the relationship of Yaḥyā’s work to that of Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq see E. Platti, *Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī. Théologien chrétien et philosophe arabe* (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistek, 1983), 91–93.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas writes that ‘Abd al-Jabbār never mentions Warrāq by name (*Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 47) but in fact he does so in the *Tathbīt*, p. 198. Meanwhile, the influence of Warrāq on ‘Abd al-Jabbār is evident from the following passages: ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:81, ll. 7–14 and Warrāq, *al-Radd ‘alā l-tathlith*, 66, l. 8–70, l. 3 (cf. also 72, ll. 3–12); ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:99, ll. 10–12; 101,

not bear to part with it, even after his name became anathema.

In his *Radd*, Warrāq proceeds with tireless discussions of Incarnation and Trinity in a fashion that is both philosophically sophisticated and demonstrative of an unusual familiarity with Christian doctrine.<sup>78</sup> He writes in consistent *masā'il wa-ajwiba* format, presenting a myriad of dialectical traps for opponent. His work is also one of the first to show knowledge of the theological differences between Christian groups, as he treats the doctrines of the three main Christian sects separately:<sup>79</sup> Nestorian, Jacobite and Melkite.<sup>80</sup>

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ll. 4–6; 102, l. 6 and Warrāq, *al-Radd 'alā l-tathlīth*, 132, ll. 11–13; 147, ll. 15–17; 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:146–7 and Warrāq, *al-Radd fī l-ittihād*, 193, ll. 5–15. On the connection of the two works see also D. Thomas, *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity*, 79–82.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas attributes Warrāq's "massed arguments suited to all circumstances and a mocking, rhetorical style" to his intention of creating a type of handbook for Muslim debaters. *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 60. He concludes as well that Warrāq had an unusual ability to assimilate a foreign system of thought: "He conveys the impression of possessing so much knowledge about Christian teachings that he was able to think like a Christian expert himself" (p. 60). Van Ess mentions that Warrāq also had a superior understanding of Manichaean doctrine. "Ebenso wie in seiner Auseinandersetzung mit dem Manichäismus konnte er eine überlegene Sachkenntnis ins Spiel bringen." *TG*, 291. See also D. Thomas' introduction to Warrāq's writing on the Incarnation: *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity*, 61–83.

<sup>79</sup> Notice, for example his presentation of their different understandings of the Trinity:

The Jacobites and Nestorians claim that the Eternal One is one substance and three hypostases, and that the three hypostases are the one substance and the one substance is the three hypostases. The Melkites, those who follow the faith of the king of the Byzantines, claim that the Eternal One is one substance which possesses three hypostases, and that the hypostases are the substance but the substance is other than the hypostases, though they do not acknowledge that it is numerically a fourth to them (Warrāq, *al-Radd 'alā l-tathlīth*, 67).

Warrāq is also sensitive to subtle terminological variations among the Christian sects: "They vary over the interpretation of their term 'hypostases' (*aqānīm*). Some of them claim that the hypostases are properties (*khawāṣṣ*), others that they are individuals (*ashkhāṣ*), and others that they are attributes (*ṣifāt*)." Warrāq, *al-Radd 'alā l-tathlīth*, 69 (insertion of Arabic words mine).

<sup>80</sup> This tripartite division is a common format in medieval Muslim writings on Christianity (as it is in Christian writings of the same period). More properly, the "Jacobites" are only those "monophysites" who trace their heritage back to the sixth century Antiochean bishop Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578). In medieval writings, however, this term is used for and by other monophysite Christians (today the proper term is Oriental Orthodox Christians). Because I am dealing with medieval writings, I have followed the wording of these authors, so by "Jacobite" I refer to all Oriental Orthodox Christians. See A. Atiya, "Jacob Baradaeus," *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 4:1318–9. The term Nestorian also appears in Christian and Muslim medieval writings, although "Nestorians" themselves (today the proper term is East Syrian Christians) were more reluctant



The case of Warrāq further proves the point that the early Muʿtazila, in all of their diversity,<sup>81</sup> were generally devoted to anti-Christian polemic. Perhaps this was one element that lent coherence to an otherwise divided group of intellectuals.

### 1.2.2. *Baghdādī Muʿtazila and anti-Christian Polemic*

After the generation of Jāḥiẓ and Warrāq, the doctrine of the Muʿtazila began to crystallize into two coherent schools: Baṣran and Baghdādī. D. Gimaret comments that in this period “the landscape becomes altogether different. This time, genuine schools are established, around a coherent body of doctrine which may truly be called a ‘system.’”<sup>82</sup> Yet this was an ideological, not an institutional, division. Figures such as Nāshīʾ al-Akbar, who wrote a chapter against the Christians in his *K. al-Awsaṭ fi l-maqālāt*, and al-Qaḥṭabī (d. ca. 299/912) upon whom Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995) relies for a list of Christian sects,<sup>83</sup> were opponents of the Baṣran school, but they had studied with its leaders: Abū l-Hudhayl, Naẓẓām and Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915–6). Similarly, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, a Baṣran Muʿtazilī, gives credit to scholars of the Baghdādī school for their writing on Christianity.<sup>84</sup>

The tradition of anti-Christian polemic in the Baghdādī school begins with the figure considered to be its founder: Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir (d. 210/825).<sup>85</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār relates that Bishr “commissioned himself every day to call two people to the religion of God.”<sup>86</sup> This mis-

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to use this term. Note also that at the time the term Melkite (that is, belonging to the king or emperor) referred to the orthodox Church of the Byzantine Empire. Today it is used primarily for those Orthodox churches that have united with the Roman See, i.e. the “Uniate” Churches. The distinction is not of great significance in this context, however, since the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches traditionally hold the same Christological doctrine.

<sup>81</sup> “Ansonsten waren die Muʿtaziliten dieser Epoche individuelle Denker, die jeweils eigene Positionen entwickelten.” Schmidtke, “Neuere forschungen,” 380.

<sup>82</sup> “Muʿtazila,” 784. R.M. Frank describes the development of the Muʿtazila in similar terms: “In the early 9th century (with what is classed as the 6th *ṭabaqa* of the Muʿtazila) we find a diversity of systems, though having certain characteristic traits in common, fundamentally opposed to one another in some of their most basic presuppositions . . . By the end of the century, however, this diversity is considerably reduced.” “Remarks on the Early Development of *Kalām*,” 316.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, 405. See also van Ess, *Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie*, 70, 81; D. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic*, 42.

<sup>84</sup> See ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s list in the *Mughnī* (5:198) of those Muʿtazila who provide useful material on Christians and Christianity.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, 205.

<sup>86</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl*, 265.

sionary tradition was carried on by Bishr's student Abū Mūsā al-Murdār (d. 226/840), the so-called "monk of the Mu'tazila," who was equally well-known for his efforts to convert non-Muslims.<sup>87</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm attributes to him both a *Radd 'alā l-naṣārā* and a work written against the Melkite theologian Theodore Abū Qurra (d. 204/820).<sup>88</sup>

'Abd al-Jabbār mentions the anti-Christian writing of another Baghdādī Mu'tazilī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854, the student of Murdār's student Ja'far b. Ḥarb, who died in 236/850),<sup>89</sup> as well as that of a Baghdādī Mu'tazilī from several generations later: Abū Bakr b. 'Alī b. al-Ikhshīd (d. 326/938).<sup>90</sup> Other Baghdādī Mu'tazilīs are reported to have written against Christianity, including Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Zayd al-Wāsiṭī (d. 306/919)<sup>91</sup> and Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka'bī (d. 319/931), the student of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt.<sup>92</sup>

### 1.2.3. *Baṣran Mu'tazila and anti-Christian Polemic (See Appendix 1)*

The Baṣran school of the Mu'tazila was not outdone in anti-Christian polemic by its Baghdādī rival.<sup>93</sup> I have already discussed the importance

<sup>87</sup> Both Ibn al-Rāwandī and Khayyāt refer to Murdār as monk (*rāhib*), a title used in early Islamic sources for pious, ascetic Muslims. See van Ess, *TG*, 3:134.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, 207. See also S. Griffith, "The Qur'an in Arab Christian Texts; The Development of an Apologetical Argument: Abū Qurrah in the Maglis of al-Ma'mūn," *Parole de l'Orient* 24 (1999), 203–33; John of Damascus and Theodor Abū Qurra, *Schriften zum Islam*, ed. and trans. R. Gleis and A. Theodor-Khoury (Wurzburg: Echter, 1995).

<sup>89</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm relates (p. 213) how Ja'far b. Ḥarb saved al-Iskāfī from the boredom of a tailor's life and brought him into the exciting world of *kalām*. See also 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-ʿitizāl*, 285; "Al-Iskāfī, Abū Dja'far Muḥammad," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 4:126–7; R. Brunschvig, "Mu'tazilisme et Aṣ'arisme à Bagdad," *Arabica* 9 (1962), 348–9.

<sup>90</sup> Ibn al-Ikhshīd was a Shāfi'ī known for his legal writings. His *Ḳ. al-Ma'ūna* (Book of Assistance), to which 'Abd al-Jabbār refers in the *Tathbūt* (p. 198), is lost. See Ibn al-Nadīm, 220–1; J.-C. Vadet, "Ibn al-Ikhshīd," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 4:807; Busse, *Chalīf und Grosskönig*, 440–1.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, 218ff. Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 166.

<sup>92</sup> Ka'bī's "Radd 'alā l-naṣārā" (a section of his *Ḳ. Awā'il al-adilla*) is partially preserved in a Christian response to it by a certain 'Isā b. Ishāq b. Zur'a, written in 387/997: *Vingt traités philosophiques et apologétiques d'auteurs arabes Chrétiens du IX<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Paul Sbath (Cairo: Friedrich, 1929), 52–68. See A. Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 146.

<sup>93</sup> One author has suggested that the social context of Baṣra provided this school with a predilection for polemic since it was a city where "Uthmāniyya, Shī'ites, Khārijites, murjī'ites, dahrites, Mu'tazilites, *zindiq*-s, Chrétiens, Juifs confrontent leurs opinions et leurs doctrines dans un climat de liberté relative." C. Pellat, *Le milieu baṣrien*, xvi. Yet similar religious diversity could be found in other cities, including Baghdād, the locus of the competing Mu'tazilī school (on this see Brunschvig,



of Abū l-Hudhayl's contribution to this genre. His disciple, Abū Ya'qūb al-Shaḥḥām (d. ca. 267/881),<sup>94</sup> is described by Gimaret as a "trenchant polemicist," yet there is no *Radd 'alā l-naṣārā* attributed to him.<sup>95</sup> Shaḥḥām's student, Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī, is one of 'Abd al-Jabbār's principle authorities on Christianity.<sup>96</sup> Abū 'Alī writes on Christianity in a distinctly *kalām*-minded fashion,<sup>97</sup> much like Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq. He deconstructs the Christian doctrine of the Trinity as he does the doctrine of Muslims who uphold the real existence of the divine attributes, the Kullābiyya.<sup>98</sup> ('Abd al-Jabbār makes an explicit comparison between the two).<sup>99</sup>

The son of Abū 'Alī, Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d. 321/933), followed his father as the leader of Baṣran Mu'tazilism.<sup>100</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār (*Tathbūt*, 198) credits Abū Hāshim with a chapter against the Christians in his work entitled *Baghdādiyyāt*, which is not extant. 'Abd al-Jabbār also refers to the anti-Christian polemic of Abū Hāshim's student

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345–56). Moreover, even in the earliest period the labels of Baghdādī or Baṣran Mu'tazilī do not have a consistent correlation with the cities that are their namesakes. By the later period, they serve as labels of certain theological positions and not of the geographic bases of the schools. See Gimaret, "Mu'tazila," 684; Schmidtke, "Neuere forschungen," 380.

<sup>94</sup> Khayyāt (p. 53) adds that he studied directly under Mu'ammār b. 'Abbād (d. 215/830), the teacher of Abū l-Hudhayl and the disciple of Ḍirār b. 'Amr. This is possible if 'Abd al-Jabbār's comment about Shaḥḥām reaching the age of 80 is correct. Other reports have him studying under Jāḥiẓ. See 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-īṭizāl*, 280; van Ess, *TG*, 4:46.

<sup>95</sup> "Abū Ya'qūb al-Shaḥḥām," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 9:202. See also van Ess, *TG*, 6:271.

<sup>96</sup> G. Monnot describes him as the authority "duquel 'Abd al-Jabbār défère sans cesse" in his anti-Christian polemic. Abū 'Alī is specifically mentioned in the *Critique* along with a number of authors (p. 198). He is also one of only two authors (the other is Jāḥiẓ) to whom 'Abd al-Jabbār refers in his "Radd 'alā l-naṣārā" of the *Mughnī* (5:91, 111, 126, 134, 140, 141). See G. Monnot, "Les doctrines des chrétiens dans le 'Moghni' de 'Abd al-Jabbar," 16; Ibn al-Nadīm, 217; L. Gardet, "al-Djubbā'ī," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 3:569–570; D. Gimaret, *Une lecture mu'tazilite du Coran* (Louvain: Peeters, 1994). For a summary of Jubbā'ī's works, see D. Gimaret, "Matériaux pour une bibliographie des Ġubbā'ī," *Journal Asiatique* 264 (1976), 277–332.

<sup>97</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār records, among other things, that "[Abū 'Alī] forced [the Christians] to affirm power, hearing and sight for [God], in as much as they affirm Him to be Powerful, Hearing and Seeing. This necessitates affirming many hypostases." 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:141–142.

<sup>98</sup> D. Thomas comments that Abū 'Alī addresses the Trinity as "an aberrant form of a familiar Muslim question." D. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 41.

<sup>99</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbūt*, 95; *Mughnī* 5:86, 88–9, 93 and 95.

<sup>100</sup> See Ibn al-Nadīm, 222. He is credited by some sources with founding a subgroup thereof, known as the Bahshamiyya (a term apparently derived from the name Abū Hāshim), a group to which 'Abd al-Jabbār belonged. See Gimaret, "Mu'tazila," 785; Schmidtke, "Neuere forschungen," 381. 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān argues that 'Abd al-Jabbār inclined more to the beliefs of Abū Hāshim than to those of the latter's father, Abū 'Alī. See *Qāḍī al-quḍāt* (Beirut: Dār al-'Arabiyya, 1967), 50.

Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad b. Khallād al-Baṣrī (d. 350/961),<sup>101</sup> and to that of the latter’s student, Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Baṣrī (d. 369/980, known as *al-ju‘al*, “the dung-beetle”), who wrote against the Christians in his now lost *al-Īdāh*.<sup>102</sup> From this point the tradition of Mu‘tazilī anti-Christian polemic connects directly with ‘Abd al-Jabbār, as Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣrī was the teacher of ‘Abd al-Jabbār in Baṣra.<sup>103</sup>

As other theological schools arose, they likewise took up the task of anti-Christian polemic. Thus the renegade Mu‘tazilī and former colleague of Abū Hāshim, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 300/913), wrote extensively against the Christians,<sup>104</sup> as did ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Ash‘arī contemporary Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) in his *al-Tamhūd*.<sup>105</sup> Māturīdī (d. 333/944) also showed interest in this topic, devoting a short chapter in his *K. al-Tawḥīd* against the Christians.<sup>106</sup> It is no wonder, then, that ‘Abd al-Jabbār had an interest in writing against the Christians. It went along with the job of *kalām*.

## 2. ‘Abd al-Jabbār: A Brief Biography

### 2.1. Sources<sup>107</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār appears in the work of a number of historians, including al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), Sam‘ānī (d. 562/1166),

<sup>101</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār reports that Ibn Khallād wrote a section against the Christians in his *Uṣūl*. See *Tathbūt*, 198.

<sup>102</sup> See ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbūt*, 198.

<sup>103</sup> On ‘Abd al-Jabbār as the prototypical Mu‘tazilī, see Peters, 14.

<sup>104</sup> This is the now lost *Maqālāt ghayr al-islāmiyyīn*, which is reported to have been even longer than his famous *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*. See Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī*, ed. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudṣī (Damascus: al-Qudṣī, 1347), 128. On p. 135, Ibn ‘Asākir makes a reference to two other works attributed to al-Ash‘arī against the Christians. See also Monnot, *Penseurs Musulmans*, 114; Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic*, 41.

<sup>105</sup> Ed. R. McCarthy (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1957), 75–103, 138ff. See Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 153ff.

<sup>106</sup> Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad al-Māturīdī, *K. al-Tawḥīd* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1970), 210–15. See also D. Thomas, “Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī on the divinity of Jesus Christ,” *Islamochristiana* 23 (1997), 43–64; A. Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 147. On Māturīdī see U. Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand* (New York: Brill, 1996).

<sup>107</sup> Among modern biographies, by far the most detailed (although not always the most scientific) is the work of the *Tathbūt*’s editor, ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān: *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*. The article by W. Madelung is brief (“‘Abd-al-Jabbār,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater [London: Routledge, 1982–Present], 1:116–8) although it updates that of S. Stern (*ET*<sup>2</sup>, 1:59–60). See also the first chapter of J. Peters’ *God’s Created Speech*.

Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) and Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).<sup>108</sup> The first to write about ʿAbd al-Jabbār, however, was not an historian at all, but a *litterateur* and satirist: Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023).

Tawḥīdī met ʿAbd al-Jabbār in Rayy and did not like him. He attacks ʿAbd al-Jabbār, along with the entire circle surrounding the Vizier al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād, in two works: *al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʿānasa* and *Mathālib al-wazīrayn* (also referred to as *Akhlaq al-wazīrayn*).<sup>109</sup> In this latter work Tawḥīdī has Ibn ʿAbbād address ʿAbd al-Jabbār in a lengthy speech that makes ʿAbd al-Jabbār seem corrupt and Ibn ʿAbbād petulant.<sup>110</sup> Tawḥīdī, clearly, is not an objective source. He held a personal grudge against all those associated with Ibn ʿAbbād after being dismissed from Ibn ʿAbbād's court for refusing to copy

<sup>108</sup> al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh baghdād*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995), 11:114–6; Samʿānī, *Ansāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Yamanī, 10 vols. (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿa Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʾārif, n.d.), 1:211–2. Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar fī khabar man ghabar*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, 5 vols. (Kuwait: Dāʾirat al-Maṭbaʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1960–1969), 3:199; idem, *Duʿwā al-islām* (Hyderabad: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Jāmiʿiyya, 1364–5), 1:247; idem, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, 4 vols. (Cairo: ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1963), 2:533; idem, *al-Mughnī fī l-duʿafāʾ*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿIṭr (Aleppo: Dār al-Maʾārif 1971), 1:366; idem, *Sīyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Shuʾayb al-Arnaʾūt, 28 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1996), 17:244–245; idem, *Taʾrīkh al-islām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1988–Present), yrs. 401–420:347, 376; Ṣafadī, *al-Wafī bi-l-wafayyāt*, vol. 18, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1988), 18:31–4; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mūzān*, 6 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʾārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1329–1331), 3:386–7; Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, ed. A. Meursinge (Leiden: S. & J. Luchtmans, 1839), 16. See the Bibliography for a longer list of sources of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's biography.

<sup>109</sup> Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ wa-l-muʿānasa*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1939–44), 1:141. Note that in this passage Tawḥīdī refers to ʿAbd al-Jabbār as al-Dārakī (a *nisba* of place referring to an Iranian town). See the references to the *Imtāʿ* in Madelung, “ʿAbd al-Jabbār,” 116, 118. In his *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-dhakhāʾir*, Tawḥīdī relates a discussion that he had with a *faqīh* named Dārakī. The editor of the 1988 edition, Wadad Kādī, identifies this Dārakī as Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 375/985). See Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-dhakhāʾir*, ed. Wadad Kādī, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1988), 5:97. There is good reason, however, to identify the Dārakī of the *Imtāʿ* as ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Tawḥīdī mentions there that Dārakī is “today the Qāḍī of Rayy.” In other words, when Tawḥīdī knew him (ca. 367/977), “Dārakī” (i.e. ʿAbd al-Jabbār) was not yet Qāḍī of Rayy, but when Tawḥīdī wrote the *Imtāʿ* (ca. 374/984), he had assumed that position. This matches with what we know of the biography of ʿAbd al-Jabbār (v.i.). Moreover, Ibn Ḥajar (*Lisān al-mūzān*, 3:386) reports the information given here in his biography of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and names Tawḥīdī as his source.

The *Mathālib* is devoted to the defects (*mathālib*) of Ibn ʿAbbād and his predecessor Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿAmīd (d. 360/970, not to be confused with his son Abū l-Faḥ ʿAlī Ibn al-ʿAmīd [d. 366/976] who replaced his father as Vizier after the latter's death). See C. Cahen, “Ibn al-ʿAmīd,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 3:703–4.

<sup>110</sup> Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib al-wazīrayn*, ed. Ibrāhīm Kīlānī (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1961), 67ff.

the Vizier's lengthy prose writings.<sup>111</sup> Still, Tawhīdī is an eyewitness and his observations cannot be ignored. Ibn Ḥajar relies on those observations in his own antagonistic biography of 'Abd al-Jabbār.<sup>112</sup>

The biography of 'Abd al-Jabbār by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī has a different tone. Baghdādī, who visited the city of Rayy on his way to Khurāsān just after 'Abd al-Jabbār's death in 415/1025,<sup>113</sup> neither praises nor criticizes the Qādī. In fact, he provides very little information on 'Abd al-Jabbār's life and scholarship, other than the names of those scholars from whom 'Abd al-Jabbār received *ḥadīth* and to whom he transmitted *ḥadīth*. More anecdotes on the life of 'Abd al-Jabbār, especially on his relationship with Ibn 'Abbād, are found in the writing of the Vizier Abū Shujā' (d. 488/1095), author of *Dhayl tajārib al-umam* (an appendix to Ibn Miskawayh's history *Tajārib al-umam*).

This line of sober historical sources is continued by Yāqūt (d. 626/1229) and by Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), who records a brief biography of 'Abd al-Jabbār in the context of the power struggles among Būyid princes.<sup>114</sup> Another historian of the same era, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāfi'ī (d. 623/1226), describes 'Abd al-Jabbār's life and travels in his local history of the Iranian city Qazwīn.<sup>115</sup> Sam'ānī, meanwhile, quotes both Baghdādī and Rāfi'ī in his biography of 'Abd al-Jabbār in the *Ansāb*. Ṣafadī, who is to some degree dependent on Ibn al-Athīr, has an unusually detailed biography of the Qādī,<sup>116</sup> which is followed in its details by the Ash'arī Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī (d. 764/1363).

<sup>111</sup> On this see C. Pellat, "al-Ṣāhib Ibn 'Abbād," *Abbāsīd Belles-Lettres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 101.

<sup>112</sup> Ibn Ḥajar cites Tawhīdī by name as an authority on 'Abd al-Jabbār. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mizān*, 3:386. 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān, 'Abd al-Jabbār's contemporary biographer, comments on these authors: "We see that these narratives are far from truth and close to falsehood, since we smell from them the scent of emotion and sectarian chauvinism." 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 30.

<sup>113</sup> al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, 11:116.

<sup>114</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, 8:142 (yr. 414). Cf. 7:472 (yr. 385).

<sup>115</sup> Only Rāfi'ī, for example, provides any information on 'Abd al-Jabbār's activities in the murky last three decades of his life. 'Abd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfi'ī, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, ed. 'Azīz Allāh al-'Aṭṭārīdī, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīyya, 1408/1987), 3:119–125. Rāfi'ī's biography of 'Abd al-Jabbār is also included in the edition of 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Faḍl al-i'tizāl*, 122–6.

<sup>116</sup> Ṣafadī relates anecdotes on 'Abd al-Jabbār that are unmentioned elsewhere. He notes (18:33), for example, that 'Abd al-Jabbār had a wife and a child. He also describes 'Abd al-Jabbār's life in Baghdād, his appointment as Qādī in Rayy, and his later dismissal from the position.

A third line of sources is the Mu‘tazilī *ṭabaqāt* (biography by generations) literature, beginning with the account of al-Ḥākim Abū l-Sa‘d al-Bayḥaqī al-Jishumī (d. 545/1150). These authors are as predisposed to praise ‘Abd al-Jabbār as Tawḥīdī and Ibn Ḥajar are predisposed to censure him. Jishumī’s biography of ‘Abd al-Jabbār appears in his appendix to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s own biographical dictionary, *Faḍl al-ī‘tizāl*,<sup>117</sup> and contains extensive anecdotes of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s life, reports of his sayings, and the most comprehensive list of his compositions (translated below). The same laudatory approach is seen with the Zaydī Ibn al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1437), who edited and abridged Jishumī’s biography several centuries later in his *Ṭabaqāt al-mu‘tazila*.<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile, a Māturīdī author, Abū l-Mu‘īn Maymūn b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114), confirms the exalted place that ‘Abd al-Jabbār held among the Mu‘tazila.<sup>119</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār also appears in a number of Shāfi‘ī *ṭabaqāt* for his contributions to *fiqh*, including Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī’s (d. 771/1370) *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā*, and the *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā’ al-shāfi‘iyya* of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba (d. 851/1448).<sup>120</sup> In addition, he finds a place in several biographical dictionaries of Qur’ān commentators (*Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*), including those of Suyūṭī and Dāwūdī (d. 945/1538).<sup>121</sup>

## 2.2. Life

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s full name, according to Subkī, is Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad b. al-Khalīl b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qāḍī al-Hamadhānī al-Asadābādī.<sup>122</sup> The last two names

<sup>117</sup> This is Jishumī’s *Sharḥ ‘uyūn al-masā’il*. His biographies of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s generation (*ṭabaqa*) are published within the edition of *Faḍl al-ī‘tizāl* cited above, pp. 382–4.

<sup>118</sup> Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 112–3.

<sup>119</sup> Nasafī comments that the Mu‘tazila held Abd al-Jabbār to be the most knowledgeable of their school (*‘alamu ahlī niḥlatihim*). Nasafī, *Tabṣirat al-adilla*, ed. C. Salamé, 2 vols. (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1990–3), 270. See also 271, 272 and 697.

<sup>120</sup> Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī and ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilū (Cairo: Maṭba‘a ‘Isā al-Bābī, 1964–76), 5:97–8; Abū Bakr Ibn Qāḍī al-Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā’ al-shāfi‘iyya*, 4 vols. (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-kutub, 1407/1987), 1:183–4.

<sup>121</sup> Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Umar, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1392/1972), 1:256–8.

<sup>122</sup> Subkī, 5:97. For differences in the biographical sources on his name and ancestry see Peters, 8, ns. 23, 24.

are *nisbas* relating to 'Abd al-Jabbār's place of birth: Asadābād, a small city in western Iran on the road to Baghdād, to the southwest of Hamadhān.<sup>123</sup> He was likely born in the mid 320s/930s.<sup>124</sup> Tawhīdī refers to him as the son of a peasant (*fallāḥ*).<sup>125</sup>

'Abd al-Jabbār traveled widely to pursue his studies. In Qazwīn he studied with Zubayr b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Asadābādī (d. 347/958–9) and Abū l-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm b. Salama al-Qaṭṭān (d. 345/956–7).<sup>126</sup> In 339/950 he performed the Ḥajj (which he would perform again in 379/989).<sup>127</sup> The following year he went to Hamadhān and studied with Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jallāb (or Ḥallāb, d. 342/954). After Jallāb's death he moved on to Iṣfahān, where he learned ḥadīth from 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far al-Iṣbahānī (d. 346/958) and Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī (d. 352/963).<sup>128</sup> It was not until he arrived

<sup>123</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal (d. after 362/973) refers to Asadābād as a lively town with a mosque and markets; he adds that the honey produced in its outskirts was well-known. *K. Šūrat al-arḍ*, ed. J.H. Kramers (Leiden: Brill, 1938), 358–9. See also G. Le Strange, *Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), 196.

<sup>124</sup> Both Dhahabī and Ibn al-Athīr report that 'Abd al-Jabbār lived past his 90th year, as do Ṣafadī and Abū l-Fidā' (d. 732/1331). In light of his death date of 415/1025, 'Abd al-Jabbār must have been born in or before 325/937. See Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 17:245; Ibn al-Athīr, 8:142; Ṣafadī, 18:31; Abū l-Fidā' Ismā'īl b. 'Alī, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1956–1961), 4:21–2. Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-islām*, yrs. 401–420:347 and 376.

'Uthmān comes up with the year 320/932, partly since al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reports that 'Abd al-Jabbār studied with Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Zī'baqī al-Baṣrī, who died in 333/944, by which time 'Abd al-Jabbār must have reached maturity. See *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 23 and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, 11:113. Ismā'īl Bāshā Baghdādī (d. 1920) reports in his *Hadīyyat al-ʿarīfīn* that 'Abd al-Jabbār was born in 359 (970). This is well off the mark, as 'Abd al-Jabbār had already begun his studies before this date. See Ismā'īl Bāshā Baghdādī, *Hadīyyat al-ʿarīfīn* 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1407/1982), 1:498.

<sup>125</sup> Tawhīdī, *al-Imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa*, 1:141. Ibn Ḥajar reports that he read Tawhīdī refer to 'Abd al-Jabbār's father as a *ḥallāj* (a wool carder), not as a *fallāḥ*. These two words in undotted Arabic writing might be easily interchanged. Both, incidentally, would reflect an equally humble upbringing. See Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mūzān*, 3:386; 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 29.

<sup>126</sup> They are both named as ḥadīth sources for 'Abd al-Jabbār by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (11:113), Dhahabī (*Siyar*, 17:244; *Ta'rikh al-islām*, yrs. 401–420:376) and Subkī (5:97). See also 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 23.

<sup>127</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār's younger contemporary, the Būyid secretary Abū l-Ḥusayn Hilāl b. al-Muḥassin al-Ṣābi' ("the Sabian"—he became a Muslim in 403/1012, d. 448/1056), mentions that 'Abd al-Jabbār returned from the Ḥajj in 379 (989). See his *Tuhfat al-umarā' fī ta'rikh al-wuzarā'*, ed. Aḥmad Farrāj (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1958), yr. 379. Cf. 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 26.

<sup>128</sup> See Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:244; idem, *Ta'rikh al-islām*, yrs. 401–420:376; Subkī, 5:97; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, 11:114; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 109. See also 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 24.



in Baṣra in 346/958, however, that ‘Abd al-Jabbār began to focus on *kalām*. In Baṣra, he embraced *ītizāl* under the influence of Ibrāhīm b. ‘Ayyāsh (d. 386/996),<sup>129</sup> who was himself a student of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī, Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣrī and Abū ‘Alī b. Khallād.<sup>130</sup>

While he never fully abandoned other sciences, ‘Abd al-Jabbār became henceforth first and foremost a *mutakallim*. As Jishumī records: “In *fiqh* [‘Abd al-Jabbār] reached great heights. He had choices, then, but he filled his days with *kalām*. He said, ‘Those who study *fiqh* seek the things of the world. But *kalām* has no goal other than God most high.’”<sup>131</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār soon moved on from Baṣra to the caliphal capital, Baghdād,<sup>132</sup> where he studied with the leader of the Baṣran Mu‘tazilī school, Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣrī (d. 369/980), a student of Abū ‘Alī b. Khallād and Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s attachment to Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣrī was strong enough that he wanted to leave the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab* in *fiqh* to join the latter’s Ḥanafī *madhhab*.<sup>133</sup> While he studied with a number of other schol-

<sup>129</sup> “In the beginning of his career, he followed the Ash‘arī teachings in the principles [of theology] and the teachings of Shāfi‘ī in the branches [of law]. Then, when he attended a study session of the scholars, he observed and debated. He realized the truth and followed it.” Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 112. Ibn al-Murtaḍā also records ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s description of Ibn ‘Ayyāsh: “He is the one with whom we first studied. He reached a great height with respect to piety, asceticism and knowledge.” Jishumī, 365–6.

<sup>130</sup> Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 107. ‘Abd al-Jabbār includes various quotations from Ibn Ayyāsh in his *Mughnī*. See F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schriftums*, 12 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1967–2000), 1:624; Madelung, “‘Abd-al-Jabbār,” 117; ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 24, 48.

<sup>131</sup> Jishumī, 367; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 113. The Shāfi‘ī chronicler Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba writes (1:184): “[‘Abd al-Jabbār] followed the Shāfi‘ī school and he was a leader of the Mu‘tazila.”

<sup>132</sup> In Baghdād and in ‘Askar Mukram, ‘Abd al-Jabbār also studied with Abū Aḥmad b. Salama (*Faḍl al-ītizāl*, 333; see also Sam‘ānī, 1:211–2), whom he would later name “among the fanatics against our companions” (*Faḍl al-ītizāl*, 333). This is likely a reference to Ibn Salama’s allegiance to Baghdādī Mu‘tazilism. ‘Abd al-Jabbār remembers Ibn Salama in less than flattering terms: “He participated in every sort of fanaticism, which led him into a blameworthy path.” *Faḍl al-ītizāl*, 333.

<sup>133</sup> Abū ‘Abdallāh reproved him for thinking that one legal school was better than another: “He wanted to read the *fiqh* of Abū Ḥanīfa with Abū ‘Abdallāh. [The latter] said to [‘Abd al-Jabbār], ‘Every legist (*mujtahid*) of this science is correct. I am a Ḥanafī and you a Shāfi‘ī.’” Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 112. Cf. Jishumī, 367, where this report is corrupted. In ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s context, the Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanafī schools had overlapping spheres of influence (on which see Muqaddasī, *K. Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* [Leiden: Brill, 1904], 285). Not only was ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s teacher a Ḥanafī, so was one of his most important students, Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044). See W. Madelung, “Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, Supplement: 25. The focus on political cohesiveness in Sunnī Islam encourages a broad interpretation of orthodoxy on legal questions, whereby each school was allowed its “legiti-

ars,<sup>134</sup> it was Abū 'Abdallāh who left the greatest impression on him.<sup>135</sup>

It was in Baghdād that 'Abd al-Jabbār began to write his own works, including *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*, an exegesis of ambiguous Qur'ānic verses. In the important Mu'tazilī center of Rāmhurmuz<sup>136</sup> he began to dictate his *magnum opus*: *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-'adl* (*Summa on the Issues of Unity and Justice*).<sup>137</sup> For some time, however, 'Abd al-Jabbār did not reap any material fruit from his growing reputation as a scholar.<sup>138</sup> This would change when his teacher Abū 'Abdallāh arranged for 'Abd al-Jabbār to work under the Vizier Ibn 'Abbād (another one of Abū 'Abdallāh's students), the wealthy and powerful counselor of the Būyid ruler Mu'ayyid al-Dawla (d. 373/984).<sup>139</sup>

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mate particularities" (Goldziher: "*berechtigte Eigentümlichkeiten*"). On this see Goldziher, "Catholic Tendencies and Particularism in Islam," *Studies on Islam*, trans. M. Swartz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 123–139, esp. 131ff.

<sup>134</sup> Baghdādī adds the following teachers: al-Qāsim b. Abī Ṣāliḥ al-Hamadhānī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Baṣrī, Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh Akhū al-Sāwī, and Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Rāmhurmuzī, who was the son of Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās al-Rāmhurmuzī, an important student of Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī and opponent of Ash'arī, and in whose mosque (in Rāmhurmuz) 'Abd al-Jabbār studied. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, 11:113. See also van Ess, *TG*, 4:247 and 'Uthmān, *Qaḍī al-quḍāt*, 48.

<sup>135</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār remembers his teacher in glowing and unequivocal terms. "[Baṣrī] learned from Abū 'Alī b. Khallād. Then he learned from Abū Hāshim, but he achieved through his efforts and intellectual striving what these never achieved. As he rose up in *kalām* so he rose up in *fiqh*. . . . He did not attain the things of this world, but devoted himself intensively to the two sciences." 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-ītizāl*, 325. See also the well-known tale (*hikāya mashhūra*) that 'Abd al-Jabbār reports (*Faḍl al-ītizāl*, 325–6) of Baṣrī's devotion to composition and 'Abd al-Jabbār's more sober anecdotes on Baṣrī (*Tathbīt*, 627). Note Jishumī's comment (p. 369) that unlike Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī 'Abd al-Jabbār preferred study (*dars*) over composition (*imlā'*).

<sup>136</sup> 'Uthmān speculates that throughout the 360s (970s) 'Abd al-Jabbār traveled between Rāmhurmuz, where he studied with the Mu'tazilī Abū l-'Abbās b. Rizq, and Baghdād, where he stayed in contact with Ibn 'Abbād until the latter called him to Rayy. See 'Uthmān, *Qaḍī al-quḍāt*, 25.

<sup>137</sup> Jishumī, 366.

<sup>138</sup> Ṣafādī relates that one night 'Abd al-Jabbār purchased an ointment to treat a malady. However, when it grew dark 'Abd al-Jabbār used the ointment as burning oil instead, having no other means by which he could read his books. Ṣafādī, 18:33.

<sup>139</sup> Ṣafādī (18:32) reports how the appointment took place: "al-Ṣāḥib [Ibn 'Abbād] sent to his teacher Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī, requesting that he send him a man who would summon the people to his *madhhab* [Mu'tazilism] through his conduct and knowledge. So [Abū 'Abdallāh] sent to him Abū Ishāq al-Naṣībī, who had excellent eloquence and memory. Yet Naṣībī was not acceptable to al-Ṣāḥib due to his inappropriate conduct. al-Ṣāḥib was reticent to reward him for that which he disapproved of. One day, when [Naṣībī] was eating with him, and stuffing himself with cheese, al-Ṣāḥib said to him: 'Do not eat so much cheese, because it damages the mind.' Naṣībī said, 'Do not reprimand people at your table.' Now this statement was unpleasant to al-Ṣāḥib. So he sent [Naṣībī] five hundred dinars,



It is not unlikely that the relationship between Ibn ‘Abbād and Abū ‘Abdallāh was strengthened by Zaydī Shī‘ism. There are hints that they were both Zaydīs,<sup>140</sup> although in Abū ‘Abdallāh’s case this may be more a question of sympathy than formal allegiance. There is also reason to believe that another teacher of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, the aforementioned Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. ‘Ayyāsh (who also studied with Abū ‘Abdallāh), was likewise a Zaydī.<sup>141</sup> If this is the case, it would further what is known of the important connection between the Mu‘tazila and the Zaydiyya.<sup>142</sup> Note also that ‘Abd al-Jabbār had a large number of Zaydīs among his disciples.<sup>143</sup> This is one of the reasons why he gained

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clothing and baggage, and ordered [Naṣībī] to depart from him. Then al-Ṣāhib wrote to Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣrī, saying: ‘I want you to send me a man who will instruct the people with his intellect rather than inciting them with his knowledge and conduct.’ So [Abū ‘Abdallāh] sent ‘Abd al-Jabbār to him. [al-Ṣāhib] found [‘Abd al-Jabbār] to have great knowledge and refined morals. He thus found him acceptable.”

The previous Qāḍī discussed here is Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī al-Naṣībī. See the reference in Tawhīdī, *Muqābasāt*, ed. Muḥammad Tawfīq Ḥusayn (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-Irshād, 1970), pp. 159ff.

<sup>140</sup> ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān argues that Ibn ‘Abbād was a Zaydī, noting that he wrote a *K. al-Zaydiyya* to which the Imāmī theologian al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) responded. See *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 35; Ibn al-Nadīm, 150. A number of other scholars come to the same conclusion. See Pellat, “Al-Ṣāhib Ibn ‘Abbād,” 102, 104; C. Cahen, “Ibn ‘Abbād,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 3:672. Peters, 7. J. Kraemer describes Baṣrī as a Zaydī, without providing references for this assertion. See his *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 178. Van Ess does not explicitly address the question but implies that Baṣrī was simply interested in courting the Zaydiyya for political purposes. See van Ess, “Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣrī,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, Supplement:13.

<sup>141</sup> See ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 49.

<sup>142</sup> On this R. Brunschvig comments, “N’est-ce pas d’ailleurs le šī‘isme, sous sa forme zaydite principalement, qui allait le mieux perpétuer le mu‘tazilisme dans le monde musulman?” Brunschvig, 351. Cf. also W. Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehren der Zaiditen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1965).

<sup>143</sup> Among ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Zaydī Shī‘ī students were: Abū Ṭālib al-Nāṭiq (d. 424/1033), Shashdīw Mānkdm, al-Mu‘ayyad bi-llāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn (who claimed to be the Imām, d. 411/1020 or 421/1030) and Abū l-Qāsim Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abdallāh al-Bustī (d. 420/1029). Al-Mu‘ayyad, the teacher of Bustī, later embraced the Baghdadī school under the influence of the Zaydī Abū ‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad and opposed ‘Abd al-Jabbār. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Imāmī Shī‘ī students included Abū l-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī (d. 447/1055) and al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī (d. 436/1045), who quarreled with ‘Abd al-Jabbār over questions of the imāmate.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s most important non-Shī‘ī Mu‘tazilī students include the *faqīh* Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Baṣrī, (who, according to Jishumī, was repudiated by his fellow Mu‘tazila for his critique of Abū ‘Alī and Abū Ḥāshim al-Jubbārī), Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-Ṣaymarī (who related ḥadīth from ‘Abd al-Jabbār), Abū Yūsuf ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. late 5th/11th, the author of a pious Qur’ān commentary that Subkī claims was in three hundred volumes), Shashdīw Mānkdm and Ibn Mattawayh (both of whom compiled and edited ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s writing). See Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:245; idem, *Ta’rīkh al-islām*, yrs. 401–420:376; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 124; Sam‘ānī, 1:211; ‘Uthmān 50ff.; Sezgin, 1:626; Schmidtko, “Neuere forschungen,” 398ff. On the connection between al-

a reputation for 'Alid leanings. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) names him "*min al-mu'tazila al-mutashayyi'a*,"<sup>144</sup> for holding 'Alī to be the best of men after Muḥammad (before the first three caliphs).

Ibn 'Abbād made 'Abd al-Jabbār the chief judge (Qāḍī al-Quḍāt) of Rayy, the capital of the Iranian province of Jibāl. 'Abd al-Jabbār arrived there in Muḥarram of 367/977,<sup>145</sup> receiving a lavish welcome from Ibn 'Abbād. His appointment was written up in an ornate document.<sup>146</sup>

The two must have seemed to be an ideal pair,<sup>147</sup> the brilliant Vizier and studious Qāḍī, both disciples of Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī, both devoted to the principles of *i'tizāl*.<sup>148</sup> This idealistic image is reflected in Ibn 'Abbād's official statements. When Ibn 'Abbād appointed 'Abd al-Jabbār Qāḍī over Rayy, Qazwīn, Suhraward, Qumm, Sāwa and the areas adjoining them,<sup>149</sup> he remarked that

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Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and 'Abd al-Jabbār, see W. Madelung, "Imāmism and Mu'tazilite Theology," *Le Shī'isme imāmīte* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1979), 25. For a more general consideration of the question see Peters, 7.

<sup>144</sup> See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Qāsim and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, 37 vols. (Beirut: Maṭba'a Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1980–97), 35:129.

<sup>145</sup> Jishumī and Ibn al-Murtaḍā report that Ibn 'Abbād summoned 'Abd al-Jabbār to Rayy after the year 360/970 (Jishumī, 366; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 112). Yet Rāfi'ī and Ibn al-Athīr both report 367/977, in the month of Muḥarram (Rāfi'ī, 3:125; Ibn al-Athīr, 7:380). The latter date is more likely, since Ibn 'Abbād would not have had the authority to choose the Qāḍī al-Quḍāt until he became Vizier, which occurred in 366/976 when he secured the ouster of his predecessor Abū l-Faṭḥ 'Alī b. al-'Amīd. (The latter's father, Abū l-Faḍl b. al-'Amīd, had been Ibn 'Abbād's patron. Abū l-Faṭḥ, however, moved against Ibn 'Abbād, whom he thought to be too close to Mu'ayyid al-Dawla: "Abū l-Faṭḥ, who had remained at Rayy, quarreled there with the influential counselor of al-Mu'ayyid, Ibn 'Abbād, whom he feared and tried to get removed and even killed, and finally, on the orders of 'Aḡud, al-Mu'ayyid's suzerain, was arrested, tortured and put to death." C. Cahen, "Ibn al-'Amīd," 3:704).

<sup>146</sup> 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 36.

<sup>147</sup> 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān suggests that 'Abd al-Jabbār and Ibn 'Abbād might have met much earlier when they were both students of Abū 'Abdallāh. 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 36.

<sup>148</sup> Ibn 'Abbād actively sponsored Mu'tazilism and was himself the author of *al-Tadhkira fī l-uṣūl al-khamsa*, a work on the five cardinal doctrines of the Mu'tazila. See Cahen, "Ibn 'Abbād," 671–3. 'Uthmān comments: "Al-Ṣāḥib was not simply a ruler zealous for a certain belief or political goals but was himself skilled in the Mu'tazilī teachings." 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 34.

<sup>149</sup> Al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād, *Rasā'il*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1366/1947), 42. Cf. the list that Rāfi'ī (3:119) gives of 'Abd al-Jabbār's domain, with the additions of Abhar, Zanjān and Danbāwand (note that in the version of Rāfi'ī's biography of 'Abd al-Jabbār printed in the volume that contains the *Faḍl al-tizāl*, Abhar and Zanjān are incorrectly written together [p. 123] as "أبهرزنان").

‘Abd al-Jabbār has “knowledge that guides with lights and piety that waters with tempests.”<sup>150</sup> Ibn ‘Abbād’s statement announcing the promotion of ‘Abd al-Jabbār several years later is likewise filled with praise,<sup>151</sup> as is the proclamation that he delivered after receiving from ‘Abd al-Jabbār a copy of the *Mughnī*.<sup>152</sup>

Still other references paint an image of Ibn ‘Abbād and ‘Abd al-Jabbār as the ideal Mu‘tazilī Vizier/Qāḍī combination.<sup>153</sup> The *mufas-sir* Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) reports an occasion when Ibn ‘Abbād came to ‘Abd al-Jabbār for his opinion on the interpretation of Qur’ān 76:3. Ibn ‘Abbād was so delighted at the insight of ‘Abd al-Jabbār that his face beamed with joy.<sup>154</sup> In the *Mughnī* mentions his many sessions at the *majlis* of Ibn ‘Abbād and the benefits he gained from the Vizier’s lessons in rhetoric and *kalām*.<sup>155</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār also benefited materially from his relationship with Ibn ‘Abbād. He grew so wealthy that Tawḥīdī could accuse him of “eating the world [*dunyā*] with religion [*dīn*].”<sup>156</sup> As his political and financial status was on the rise, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s status as a scholar was also reaching a new height. In Rayy ‘Abd al-Jabbār enjoyed a large number of disciples from a variety of backgrounds, many of whom

<sup>150</sup> Al-Ṣāḥib b. ‘Abbād, 42.

<sup>151</sup> “Piety is his mount and path. Truth is his goal and sign. I have given words of wisdom about the goodness of his teachings. I have described his knowledge. Therefore [Mu‘ayyid al-Dawla], by the command of the Prince of the Faithful, al-Ṭā‘i‘ li-llāh (May God grant him a long existence), has seen to adjoin under [‘Abd al-Jabbār’s] authority his territories of Jurjān, Ṭabaristān and their dependencies, to the territory which he previously entrusted to him.” Al-Ṣāḥib b. ‘Abbād, 34; Cf. Rāfi‘ī, 3:119; Ibn al-Athīr (4:472), who insists that the title of Qāḍī al-Quḍāt applied to Rayy and its outskirts alone.

<sup>152</sup> “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Benevolent: May God bestow his grace upon Qāḍī al-Quḍāt. May He give generously of His favor to [him]. For he has completed his book *al-Mughnī*, which is a treasure to the monotheist and a woe to the atheist.” Jishumī, 369–70. The text of the letter that ‘Abd al-Jabbār composed to Ibn ‘Abbād on this occasion is recorded by the Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Mālik b. Aḥmad al-Qazwīnī (d. 534/1140) in his *Rawḍat al-balāgha*. Ms. 148 in the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, folios 18–19. See Jishumī, 369, n. 26.

<sup>153</sup> See Ibn ‘Abbād, *Rasā’il*, 139, 183. Jishumī, meanwhile, records: “On one occasion al-Ṣāḥib said about him: ‘He is the best among the people of the land.’ On another occasion he said: ‘He is the most knowledgeable among the people of the land.’” Jishumī, 366; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 112. Cf. Ibn ‘Abbād’s statement on ‘Abd al-Jabbār preserved by Ibn Hajar, *Lisān al-mizān*, 3:387.

<sup>154</sup> Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1957–9), 2:514.

<sup>155</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 20:154. Cf. ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 37.

<sup>156</sup> Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtā‘ wa-l-mu’ānasa*, 1:141.

traveled from distant lands to study under him. He traveled to Iṣfahān and 'Askar Mukram to teach *kalām* from the *Mughnī*,<sup>157</sup> and he also became known as an authority in Shāfi'ī *fiqh*.<sup>158</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār was such a respected figure, Jishumī reports, that when he suffered from gout (*nigris*), people carried him on their shoulders to save him from the pain of walking.<sup>159</sup> When Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī passed away in 369/980 'Abd al-Jabbār was recognized as the greatest Mu'tazilī *mutakallim* alive.<sup>160</sup> This was, undoubtedly, the zenith of his career.

Yet 'Abd al-Jabbār was not left without critics. Tawhīdī refers to 'Abd al-Jabbār in his *Mathālib al-waṣṭayn* as the servant-boy (*ghulām*) of Ibn 'Abbād. He also shows overt disgust for 'Abd al-Jabbār's vocation as a *mutakallim*.<sup>161</sup> Ibn Ḥajar finds the Qāḍī, whom he describes as one of the extremists of the Mu'tazila,<sup>162</sup> to be a perfectly hypocritical *mutakallim*: "[Abd al-Jabbār] gained possessions until he began to resemble Croesus (*Qārūn*) in the extent of his riches, but he was corrupt on the inside.<sup>163</sup> He [taught] hateful doctrine and had little comprehension. He went on without restraint in the infamy of *kalām* and

<sup>157</sup> See 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 26.

<sup>158</sup> Notice the central place that his legal thought takes in the *fiqh* work of his (Ḥanafī) student Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *K. al-Mu'tamad*, edited along with the *Ẓiyādāt al-mu'tamad* by M. Hamidullah, 2 vols. (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1964–5).

<sup>159</sup> Jishumī, 369.

<sup>160</sup> 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 43. Speaking of 'Abd al-Jabbār's generation of the Mu'tazila, Jishumī (p. 365) remarks, "The first of them and the most virtuous is Qāḍī al-Quḍāt Abū l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī. . . . He became the leader of the Mu'tazila; he was their unopposed shaykh and scholar." He adds (p. 365), "As he grew in age he persevered in teaching and dictation until he covered the land with his books and his disciples, with the reach of his voice and the greatness of his standing. He received authority among the Mu'tazila until he became their shaykh and scholar without opposition. His books and treatises became relied upon to the point that they replaced the books of those shaykhs who preceded him. His fame has no need of an exaggerated description." Cf. Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 11:114.

<sup>161</sup> "[Abd al-Jabbār] has a hidden evil: he is certain about very little. This is because the path which [the *mutakallimūn*] must take and travel along leads to nothing other than doubt and uncertainty. For religion does not come with 'how many' and 'in what way' at every turn. For this reason the party of *ḥadīth* . . . has an advantage over the companions of *kalām* and the party of speculation (*naẓar*)." Tawhīdī, *al-Imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa*, 1:142. On this see the excellent article of Iḥsān 'Abbās, "Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī wa-'ilm al-kalām," *al-Abḥath* 19 (1966), 189–207.

<sup>162</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 3:386.

<sup>163</sup> *Naghīl al-bāṭin*. Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 3:386. Cf. al-Tawhīdī, *al-Imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa*, 1:141–2. *Naghīl* literally refers to rotten skin, particularly animal hide in the context of tanning. Ibn Maṣṣūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, 18 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1418/1997), 14:221.

its people and lived long.”<sup>164</sup> Yāqūt, meanwhile, finds it ironic that ‘Abd al-Jabbār, the moralist, had so many possessions: “[‘Abd al-Jabbār] claimed that a Muslim would go to eternal hellfire over a quarter *ḍīnār*, but all of this money came from his corrupt judgeship. He is the true unbeliever.”<sup>165</sup>

These critical statements might shed light on the incident that reversed ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s fortunes. In 385/995 Ibn ‘Abbād died. The Vizier’s funeral was a state affair, led by the Būyid amīr Fakhr al-Dawla himself.<sup>166</sup> Abū Shujā‘ gives an ornate description of the dignitaries who attended the event and the pomp that accompanied it.<sup>167</sup> Yet while many venerated the memory of the Vizier, ‘Abd al-Jabbār refused to pronounce the expected statement of mercy for a deceased Muslim:

When [Ibn ‘Abbād] passed away ‘Abd al-Jabbār said, “I do not consider him [worthy] of the mercy statement (*tarahḥum*), since he died without demonstrating repentance.” So ‘Abd al-Jabbār was considered to have meager loyalty. Then Fakhr al-Dawla seized ‘Abd al-Jabbār and held him.<sup>168</sup>

According to this account, Fakhr al-Dawla dismissed ‘Abd al-Jabbār (and extorted a large sum of money from him) because the latter refused to declare the *tarahḥum* for his Vizier. Yet did Fakhr al-Dawla act out of principle or out of Realpolitik? He had long resented Ibn ‘Abbād,<sup>169</sup> and he felt threatened by all of Ibn ‘Abbād’s associates, including ‘Abd al-Jabbār.<sup>170</sup> Both Ibn ‘Abbād and ‘Abd al-Jabbār

<sup>164</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mūẓān*, 3:386.

<sup>165</sup> Yāqūt, *K. Irshād al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb*, ed. D.S. Margoliouth, 7 vols. (London: Luzac, 1907–1926), 2:335.

<sup>166</sup> See Yāfiʿī, *Mirʾāt al-janān*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbuʿāt, 1390/1970), 3:29.

<sup>167</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn Abū Shujāʿ, *Dhayl tajārib al-umam* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Tamaddun, 1334/1916), 261ff. Abū Shujāʿ also relates Ibn ‘Abbād’s dying speech to Fakhr al-Dawla, in which he encourages the latter to preserve the structure that he had established.

<sup>168</sup> This is the version of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s statement related by Ibn al-Athīr, 7:472 (yr. 385). It is repeated by a number of sources, including: Abū Shujāʿ, 262; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mūẓān*, 3:387; Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 2:335; Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Ibar*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1956–61), 4:995. On Ibn ‘Abbād’s death see also Abū l-Fidāʾ, 2:130–1.

<sup>169</sup> Thaʿālabī quotes Fakhr al-Dawla accusing Ibn ‘Abbād of *madhhab al-ʿitizāl* and *nayk al-rijāl*. Abū Manṣūr ‘Abd al-Mālik al-Thaʿālabī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Ṣawī, 1353/1934), 3:179.

<sup>170</sup> Abū Shujāʿ (p. 264) claims that Fakhr al-Dawla took all of Ibn ‘Abbād’s companions into custody, not only ‘Abd al-Jabbār.

had been close to the former ruler of Rayy: Fakhr al-Dawla's brother and rival Mu'ayyid al-Dawla (who died in 373/984 while campaigning against Fakhr al-Dawla's allies, the Ziyārīds and the Sāmānīds); Ibn 'Abbād was known as *al-ṣāhib* ("the companion") due to his close connection with Mu'ayyid al-Dawla.<sup>171</sup>

Thus it seems that Fakhr al-Dawla seized the opportunity of Ibn 'Abbād's death to accuse 'Abd al-Jabbār of disloyalty and free himself of two potential threats. By extorting money from 'Abd al-Jabbār,<sup>172</sup> and seizing all of Ibn 'Abbād's assets (while the latter's corpse still lay in his house no less),<sup>173</sup> Fakhr al-Dawla also solved a financial crisis brought on by the expensive peace that he had bought the year before from the Ghaznavids.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>171</sup> On this see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 9 vols. (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963), 4:170. Cf. Pellat, "al-Ṣāhib Ibn 'Abbād," 99–100. Ibn Taghrībirdī reports, however, that Fakhr al-Dawla gave Ibn 'Abbād even more power than he had under his brother Mu'ayyid al-Dawla.

<sup>172</sup> Ibn al-Athīr is amazed that 'Abd al-Jabbār, a public servant, had amassed such a fortune that he could pay off Fakhr al-Dawla. He comments (7:472): "Why did he not look to himself instead and repent for taking such a sum and amassing it without giving it away?"

According to Yāqūt, Ṣafadī and Abū Shujā', Fakhr al-Dawla fined 'Abd al-Jabbār the exorbitant amount of three million dirhams, which the Qādī raised by selling a thousand Egyptian garments. See Abū Shujā', 262; Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 2:335; Ṣafadī, 18:33. All three remark that Fakhr al-Dawla assigned Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jurjānī (Abū Shujā', 263) in 'Abd al-Jabbār's place as Qādī in Rayy (on Jurjānī see Jishumī, 380). 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān argues that Fakhr al-Dawla's fine was actually three thousand, not three million, dirhams. 'Uthmān, *Qādī al-quḍāt*, 32. However, the context of Abū Shujā's biography (and its agreement with Ṣafadī and Yāqūt) makes it clear that the amount was indeed three million. Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Khaldūn report that 'Abd al-Jabbār had to sell one thousand foreign garments (*ṭaylasāns*; on this term see E. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1863–93], 5:1866–7), and one thousand fine wool cloaks to pay off Fakhr al-Dawla. Ibn Kathīr describes the extortion payment as one thousand *ṭaylasāns* and one thousand suits of armor, but his version of the events is less accurate than that of others. He confuses, for example Fakhr al-Dawla with his nephew Bahā' al-Dawla in this affair. See his *K. al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994), 11:313.

<sup>173</sup> See Yāfi'i, 3:29; Abū Shujā', 262; Ibn al-Athīr, 7:472; Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibar*, 4:995; and 'Uthmān (*Qādī al-quḍāt*, 39–40) who states:

"فمصادرة القاضي لا تحتمل التفسير الذي ذكره بعضهم وهو أن سبيلها انتقام فخر الدولة منه لعقوقه

وإنكاره جميل ابن عباد إذا أن فخر الدولة بدأ بمصادرة ابن عباد وجنته ما نزال في بيت"

'Uthmān has a tendency to apologize for 'Abd al-Jabbār, emphasizing the reports of his asceticism and downplaying the reports of his greed. Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, 7:472; Ibn Hajar, 3:387. On Fakhr al-Dawla's appropriation of Ibn 'Abbād's fortune, see Abū Shujā' (p. 262), who reports that upon searching the house of Ibn 'Abbād, the Amīr found a bag filled with notes worth fifty thousand dinars.

<sup>174</sup> See Ibn al-Athīr, 7:466–7.

Is it possible, then, that Fakhr al-Dawla invented the account of ‘Abd al-Jabbār refusing to utter the *tarahḥum* to Ibn ‘Abbād? Indeed, such a refusal amounts to a public declaration that Ibn ‘Abbād did not die as a Muslim and does not merit heaven. This seems unthinkable for the Mu‘tazilī Qāḍī who owed his very success to the Vizier. ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s only modern biographer in Arabic, describes this incident as the one thing that “tarnishes the clarity of the connection” between the Vizier and the Qāḍī.<sup>175</sup> W. Madelung seems to doubt the report of this incident, calling it the work of “hostile sources.”<sup>176</sup> Yet the reports of this incident are too widespread to be written off easily, and nowhere in the classical sources is the accusation made that it is in fact a creation of hostile sources. On the other hand, there is material in those sources that explains why ‘Abd al-Jabbār may have acted in this fashion.

One commentator, Ibn Ḥajar, relates that ‘Abd al-Jabbār refused to pronounce the *tarahḥum* because Ibn ‘Abbād was a Rāfiḍī, a term used to describe different types of Shī‘ī or ‘Alid affiliation.<sup>177</sup> As I mention above, there is significant evidence that Ibn ‘Abbād was a Zaydī Shī‘ī. However, there is little reason to conclude that ‘Abd al-Jabbār would consider a Shī‘ī to be a non-Muslim, seeing that ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself had a reputation for ‘Alid leanings and many Shī‘ī students (v.s. on both points).

Certain contemporary scholars, meanwhile, argue that ‘Abd al-Jabbār refused Ibn ‘Abbād the *tarahḥum* due to the latter’s un-Islamic behavior. Qur’ān 9:84 orders the Prophet *not* to pray for, or even visit the grave of, those who worked against him. Although this verse is usually explained with reference to the Hypocrites of Muḥammad’s Medina, it nevertheless gave rise to a debate over when the funeral prayer should be withheld from a deceased Muslim.<sup>178</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār, it might be argued, took a strict stance on this matter and felt that Ibn ‘Abbād—whose excesses were well-known—did not merit the

<sup>175</sup> ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 37.

<sup>176</sup> Madelung, “‘Abd al-Jabbār,” 117.

<sup>177</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, in his biography of Ibn ‘Abbād, reports: “Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār said, regarding why he would not pray for [Ibn ‘Abbād], ‘I do not know how I would pray for this Rāfiḍī’” (1:416). Rāfiḍī is a term usually used for the proto-Shī‘a (i.e. ‘Alids) or the Imāmī Shī‘a, but it also has a particular connection with the Zaydī Shī‘a. See E. Kohlberg, “al-Rāfiḍa,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 8:386. Elsewhere (1:414) Ibn Ḥajar refers to Ibn ‘Abbād as a Zaydī.

<sup>178</sup> On this see G. Monnot, “Ṣalāt,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 8:931–2.



*tarahḥum*. Adopting this view, G. Monnot concludes that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s decision was not “une ingratitude caractérisée, mais l’acte logique d’un esprit rigoriste.”<sup>179</sup> Yet this second theory runs up against a report in the sources that Ibn ‘Abbād made a public repentance towards the end of his life,<sup>180</sup> and that ‘Abd al-Jabbār signed a document attesting to that repentance.<sup>181</sup>

The explanation of the *tarahḥum* incident may lie with Ṣafadī, who, as mentioned above, has an exceptionally detailed biography of the Qāḍī. According to him, ‘Abd al-Jabbār declared that Ibn ‘Abbād, “did not make a visible showing of his repentance (*lam yuḏhir taw-batahu*).”<sup>182</sup> In other words, ‘Abd al-Jabbār acknowledged that Ibn ‘Abbād made a public declaration of repentance but denied that he had followed his words with actions. Yet why would ‘Abd al-Jabbār, who as a Mu‘tazilī did not hold an exacting theology of repentance,<sup>183</sup> have taken such an exacting position with Ibn ‘Abbād, his benefactor?

His action, I believe, was the product of a personal rivalry with Ibn ‘Abbād. This rivalry was manifested when Ibn ‘Abbād publicly insulted ‘Abd al-Jabbār in 369/980,<sup>184</sup> in front of his entire *majlis* no less. Tawḥīdī was an eyewitness to this event and reports that Ibn ‘Abbād said to ‘Abd al-Jabbār:

<sup>179</sup> Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 17; Cf. ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 28ff.; Madelung, “‘Abd-al-Jabbār,” 117.

<sup>180</sup> According to Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn ‘Abbād addressed his entire *majlis* with the following words: “I give witness to God and to you that I have repented, for God’s sake, from each sin.” Ibn al-Jawzī adds that Ibn ‘Abbād named a house on this occasion the “House of Repentance.” Ibn al-Jawzī, 7:180.

<sup>181</sup> Ibn Kathīr, 11:315.

<sup>182</sup> Ṣafadī, 18:33.

<sup>183</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār personally held that failure to repent for a major sin did not mean that one had ceased to be a Muslim (‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 14:394). However, in general the Mu‘tazila (as opposed to the Ḥanābila) were concerned with action, as expressed in the Qur’ānic dictum that is one of their five pillars: *al-amr bi-l-ma‘rūf wa-l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*. Thus F. Griffel writes that for ‘Abd al-Jabbār acts, not belief, are subject to moral judgments: “Kein Muslim wird als Ungläubiger verurteilt, weil er falsche Glaubensüberzeugungen hat. Diese Toleranz gilt selbst für die schärfsten Gegner unter den Traditionalisten” (F. Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam* [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 157). It is important to add to this, however, the comments of M. Cook regarding the thought of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s student Shashdīw Mānkḍīm, author of *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*. Mānkḍīm considers beliefs to be acts (he uses the phrase *af‘āl al-qulūb*, lit. “actions of hearts”), which (in certain cases) can be perceived and, consequently, judged. See M. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 216–7.

<sup>184</sup> See Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib al-wazīrayn*, 66.



O Qāḍī! How is your state and your soul? How is your leisure, your social life? How are your sessions, your studies? How is your scratching and your ringing? How is your thrusting and your crushing? How is your tearing up and pounding [of meat]?

Now [Ibn ‘Abbād] could barely stop himself from this raving, due to his [emotional and sexual] agitation (*tahayyujuhu*) and passion, as well as [his own] great conceit and immoderation. Meanwhile [‘Abd al-Jabbār] al-Hamadhānī was like a mouse between the paws of a cat, tiny and cowering. With every breath he became more humiliated, more insignificant. This was due to his arrogance in court, yet depravity in his soul.<sup>185</sup>

More evidence for the rivalry between the two is found in a second account, this one related by Ṣafadī (and Kutubī):<sup>186</sup>

[‘Abd al-Jabbār] was described with a lack of attention for [others’] privileges (*huqūq*). The primary reason for this is that at first he would write to al-Ṣāḥib, at the heading of his books: “His servant, agent, and protégé (*ghirs*), ‘Abd al-Jabbār.” But when he saw his station with Ibn ‘Abbād, how [Ibn ‘Abbād] recognized his privilege and was responsive to him, he began to write: “His servant and agent and his protégé.” So Ibn ‘Abbād said to those in his *majlis*, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s place among us has increased. He titles his books with ‘the Mighty’ [*al-Jabbār*] and leaves out the rest of his name.”

So when al-Ṣāḥib died, [‘Abd al-Jabbār] said “I will not pronounce the mercy statement (*tarahḥum*) over him since he did not make a visible showing of his repentance.” The people slandered ‘Abd al-Jabbār for this and loathed him, after all of the good that al-Ṣāḥib had done for him.<sup>187</sup>

In this account, Ibn ‘Abbād interprets the fact that ‘Abd al-Jabbār no longer added his name to books as a sign of insolence; he compares ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s action to blasphemy, suggesting that ‘Abd al-Jabbār has forgotten that he is “‘Abd” *al-Jabbār*, “servant of the Mighty [i.e.

<sup>185</sup> Tawḥīdī, *Mathālib al-wazīrayn*, 68. Needless to say, Tawḥīdī’s rendition of Ibn ‘Abbād’s harangue of ‘Abd al-Jabbār seems exaggerated. We know that Tawḥīdī had every interest in vilifying Ibn ‘Abbād. Perhaps he was particularly interested in portraying him as an irascible and vindictive boss, since the latter dismissed Tawḥīdī from his service in Rayy. “From 367/977 he was employed by Ibn ‘Abbād as an amanuensis. In this case, too, he was anything but a success, owing, no doubt, partially to his own difficult character and sense of superiority (he is said to have refused to “waste his time” in copying the bulky collection of his master’s epistles), and was finally dismissed. He felt himself badly treated.” S.M. Stern, “Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 1:126.

<sup>186</sup> Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī’s biography of ‘Abd al-Jabbār is in his as yet unedited *‘Uyūn al-tawārīkh*. Uthmān quotes much of its contents in his *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 27ff.

<sup>187</sup> Ṣafadī, 18:33.

God],” and has begun to think of himself simply as *al-Jabbār* (one of the divine names). This is a heavy accusation, one that reveals just how bitter the rivalry between the two had become. Even Jishumī, who otherwise attempts to show that the Mu‘tazilī Vizier and the Mu‘tazilī Qāḍī were on the best of terms, preserves a record of the rivalry between the two figures. He describes an occasion on which Ibn ‘Abbād returned from travel. Upon his arrival, ‘Abd al-Jabbār was the only one who refused to stand for the Vizier.<sup>188</sup> It was likely this rivalry, then, that led to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s refusal to declare the *tarāḥḥum* for Ibn ‘Abbād.

‘Abd al-Jabbār paid a dear price for his refusal. With the loss of his position as Qāḍī al-Quḍāt in 385/995, ‘Abd al-Jabbār permanently disappeared from the Būyid political establishment.<sup>189</sup> His reputation as a teacher also seems to have suffered, perhaps because he became a *persona non grata* in Būyid regions. Whatever the reason, precious little is known of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s activity from this point on,<sup>190</sup> other than the fact that he continued to teach and write in Rayy, Iṣfahān and Qazwīn.<sup>191</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār died in 415/1025 in Rayy and was buried on his estate.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>188</sup> See ‘Uthmān, 31.

<sup>189</sup> G. Hourani suggests that ‘Abd al-Jabbār was later reinstated as Qāḍī al-Quḍāt (*Islamic Rationalism*, 6–7). He does not, however, point to any sources to support this suggestion, nor have I found any indication of this myself.

<sup>190</sup> The only extant work of ‘Abd al-Jabbār written after the *tarāḥḥum* incident seems to be *Faḍl al-‘itizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-mu‘tazila*. Madelung (“‘Abd al-Jabbār,” 118) estimates that ‘Abd al-Jabbār worked on this project between the years 390/1000 and 407/1017.

<sup>191</sup> ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 26. One report has him teaching in Qazwīn in the year 409/1019 (by which time he was over eighty). Among his students there was Muḥammad b. Abī l-Ḥasan al-‘Adlī. See Rāfi‘ī, 3:125; ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 26.

<sup>192</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Ṣafadī* and Yāfi‘ī report a death date of 414 (1023/24). Ibn al-Athīr, 8:142; Yāfi‘ī, 3:29; Ṣafadī, 18:31. Ibn al-Murtaḍā (p. 112) concludes that ‘Abd al-Jabbār died either in 415 or 416. Baghdādī (11:116) is more precise, relating: “‘Abd al-Jabbār died before I entered Rayy on my journey to Khurāsān. That was in the year 415. I calculate that his passing was in the beginning of the year.” Rāfi‘ī (3:125) places ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s death in the same year but in the fifth month, *Jumādā l-Dhahabī*, Subkī and ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥasan al-Isnawī (772/1370) give the eleventh month, *Dhū l-Qa‘da*, 415, which calculates to January/February 1025. Subkī adds that ‘Abd al-Jabbār was buried on his estate. Dhahabī, *Sīyar*, 17:245; idem, *Ta’rīkh al-islām*, yrs. 410–420:376; Subkī, 5:97; Isnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi‘iyya*, ed. ‘Abdallāh al-Jubūrī, 2 vols. (Baghdad: Ri‘āsat Diwān al-Awqāf, 1390–91), 1:355. This date is confirmed by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, 1:184. See also ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 27.

A note in the historical work of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-zamān*, reports that a *faqīh* named ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad died of a plague along with other *fuqahā’*. This cannot be ‘Abd al-Jabbār, since the death is associated with a plague that

### 2.3. 'Abd al-Jabbār's Works and Dating of the Tathbīt

Jishumī reports:

It is said that ['Abd al-Jabbār] composed 400,000 pages on every discipline, including compilation and instruction. His books are of various types. He has books on *kalām*, unprecedented in this genre of compilation, such as: *K. al-Dawā'ī wa-l-ṣawārif* (*Causes and Events*),<sup>193</sup> *K. al-Khilāf wa-l-wifāq* (*Difference and Agreement*), *K. al-Khāṭir* (*Notion*), *K. al-ʿIṭmād* (*Reliance*), *K. al-Man' wa-l-tamānu'* (*Hindering and Refraining*), *K. Mā yajūz fihi al-tazāyud wa-mā lā yajūz* (*What Does and Does not Permit Increase*) and many other similar [works].

He has books with precedents in their genre of compilation. Yet his writings are nevertheless unprecedented in their fair splendor, elegance, conciseness of locutions, quality of meanings and carefulness of proofs. This is the way with his well-known books and his many texts such as *al-Mughnī* (*Summa*), *K. al-Fi'l wa-l-fā'il* (*Action and Actor*), *K. al-Mabsūṭ* (*The Extended Work*), *K. al-Muḥīṭ [bi-l-taklīf]* (*Comprehensive Work on [Divine Imposition]*), *K. al-Hikma wa-l-ḥakīm* (*Wisdom and the Wise*), *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa* (*Commentary on the Five Principles*) and others like them.

He has (May God have mercy on him) commentaries which are unprecedented like *Sharḥ al-jāmi'ayn* (*Commentary on [Abū Hāshim's two works entitled] al-jāmi'*),<sup>194</sup> *Sharḥ al-uṣūl* (*Commentary on [Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī's] al-Uṣūl*),<sup>195</sup> *Sharḥ al-maqālāt* (*Commentary on [Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī al-Ka'bī's] Maqālāt*),<sup>196</sup> and *Sharḥ al-a'rāḍ* (*Commentary on al-A'rāḍ*).<sup>197</sup>

He has books that are supplements to the shaykhs, which he composed according to their fashion and in the manner of their books. Yet he adds beauty, quality, locution and meaning, such as *Takmilat al-jāmi'* (*Supplement to [Abū Hāshim's] al-jāmi'*) and *Takmilat al-sharḥ* (*Supplement to the Commentary*).

He has comprehensive and unprecedented works on the sources of law (*uṣūl al-fiqh*): *al-Nihāya* (*Limit*), *al-ʿUmad* (*Basic Issues*),<sup>198</sup> and *Sharḥ al-ʿumda* (*Commentary on al-ʿUmda*).

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occurred in the year 449. Moreover, a textual variant names the *faqīh* 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Muḥammad, not b. Aḥmad. See Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān* (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1422/2001), 12 (yrs. 447–452):74.

<sup>193</sup> See the quotation of this book in Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī's (d. 536/1141) *K. al-Mu'tamad fi uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. M. McDermott and W. Madelung (London: al-Hoda, 1991), 510.

<sup>194</sup> See the catalogue of Abū Hāshim's works in A. Badawi, *Histoire de la Philosophie en Islam*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1972), 1:167, nos. 1 and 4.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Badawi, 1:147, no. 4. It is also possible that this is a commentary on Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣṭī's *K. al-Uṣūl*. See van Ess, "Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣṭī," 14.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Jishumī, 367, n. 16.

<sup>197</sup> It is not clear who the author of the original *A'rāḍ* is. Ibn al-Nadīm attributes such a work to Ibn al-Rāwandī (p. 217), but it may refer to the *K. Fi l-a'rāḍ* of Abū l-Hudhayl. See van Ess, *TG*, 6:4.

<sup>198</sup> This work is also referred to in the *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 46.

He has books on criticism of opponents and their books. Therein he demonstrates the error of their statements, such as *Naqd al-lum'a* (*Criticism of* [Ash'arī's book] *al-Lum'a*)<sup>199</sup> and *Naqd al-imāma* (*Criticism of* [Ash'arī's book] *Fi l-imāma*).<sup>200</sup>

He has books that are answers to questions presented to him from distant regions to which he responded, such as *al-Ṭarmīyyāt* (from Ṭarm, near Qazwīn), *al-Rāziyyāt* (from Rayy), *al-Askariyyāt* (from 'Askar Mukram, in Khūzistān),<sup>201</sup> *al-Qāshāniyyāt* (from Qāshān), *al-Misriyyāt* (from Egypt), *Jawābāt masā'il Abī Rashīd* (*Reponses to Abū Rashīd's Questions*),<sup>202</sup> the *Naysābūriyyāt* (from Nīshāpūr) and *al-Khwārazmiyyāt* (from Khwārazm).<sup>203</sup>

He has books on questions which came before the shaykhs, to which they responded by valid (*ṣahīḥ*) or invalid (*fāsid*). He has discourses on them, such as his discourse on the questions that came before Abū l-Ḥusayn [al-Khayyāt], the questions that came before Abū l-Qāsim [al-Balkhī al-Ka'bī], and the questions that came before Abū 'Alī [al-Jubbā'ī] and Abū Hāshim [al-Jubbā'ī].

He has books on the difference [of opinion] on the limit of goodness, such as his book *Fi l-khilāf bayna l-shaykhayn* (*On the Difference between the two Shaykhs*),<sup>204</sup> and others like it.

He has books in which he speaks about the factions outside of Islam and others in which he makes the truth clear, such as *Sharḥ al-ārā'* (*The Commentary on* [Nawbakhtī's book] *al-Ārā'* [*wa-l-diyānā*]) and others like it.

He has books on the Qur'ānic sciences such as *al-Muḥīṭ* (*The Comprehensive* [cf. book above of same title]), *al-Adilla* (*The Proofs*), *Tanzīḥ* [al-Qur'ān] (*Purification* [of the Interpretation] of the Qur'ān) and *Mutashābih* (*The Ambiguous* [Qur'ānic verses]).

He has books on sermons such as *Naṣīḥat al-mutafaqqiha* (*Advice of the Jurists*) and *Shahādāt al-Qur'ān* (*Testimonies of the Qur'ān*).

Then he has books that include various disciplines. Some of their names have reached me and some have not. The best among them are of unsurpassed goodness, such as the book *al-Tajrīd* (*Abstraction*), *al-*

<sup>199</sup> Ibn Mattawayh refers to this book in his *Majmū' fi l-muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*, 1:351.

<sup>200</sup> See the catalogue of Ash'arī's works in Badawi, 1:267ff. Ash'arī's *Lum'a* is on p. 268, nos. 11–13. His *K. Fi l-imāma* is 271, nos. 15 and 26.

<sup>201</sup> A work of this title is attributed to Abū Hāshim. See Badawi, 1:167, no. 7.

<sup>202</sup> Abū Rashīd al-Naysābūrī (early 5th/11th), 'Abd al-Jabbār's student and successor who, according to Sezgin, took over the leadership of the Mu'tazila in Rayy after the Qādī's death. 'Uthmān describes him as a Baghdādī Mu'tazilī who embraced Baṣran Mu'tazilism under 'Abd al-Jabbār's influence. See Jishumī, 382–3; Sezgin, 1:626; 'Uthmān, *Qādī al-quḍāt*, 50.

<sup>203</sup> "People from all regions traveled to him and benefited from him." Ibn Qādī Shuhba, 1:184. See also 'Uthmān, *Qādī al-quḍāt*, 45, who speaks of the discussions that 'Abd al-Jabbār conducted, particularly with the Shī'a, on *kalām*.

<sup>204</sup> Sezgin suggests that this work is identical to another work attributed to 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Ikhtilāf fi uṣūl al-fiqh*. See Sezgin, 1:625.

*Makkiyyāt* (Meccan [Matters]), *al-Kūfīyyāt* (Kūfan [Matters]),<sup>205</sup> *al-Jumal* (The Clauses), *al-Uqūd* (The Contracts) and its commentary, *al-Muqaddimāt* (The Introductions), *al-Jadal* (The Debate), *al-Hudūd* (The Legal Punishments), and many others. It is impossible to mention all of his compositions.<sup>206</sup>

This work-list for ‘Abd al-Jabbār compiled by Jishumī is the most complete such list in classical sources.<sup>207</sup> A number of these works are referred to as well by ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s student Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044), who quotes passages from them in his *K. al-Muṭamad*, a work written before ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s death.<sup>208</sup> Abū l-Ḥusayn refers to *K. al-Dars*, *K. al-Sharḥ*,<sup>209</sup> *K. al-Umad* and *K. al-Nihāya*.<sup>210</sup> Ibn Taymiyya and Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657) refer to a *Radd ‘alā l-Naṣārā* of ‘Abd al-Jabbār.<sup>211</sup> Elsewhere Ibn Taymiyya refers to a work of ‘Abd al-Jabbār which he calls the *ʿĀlām al-nubuwwa*, but which in fact may be the *Tathbūt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* (see chapter 3, section 1). The historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) also refers to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *K. al-Umad* (and Abū l-Ḥusayn’s commentary thereon), listing it among the prototypical works of the Mu‘tazila.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>205</sup> These two works might belong to the genre mentioned above of answers addressed to groups from certain cities.

<sup>206</sup> The *Tathbūt* is absent from Jishumī’s work-list for ‘Abd al-Jabbār. Other works that are accepted as authentic ‘Abd al-Jabbār compositions are also absent from that list, including *Faḍl al-ʿitizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-mu‘tazila*. Jishumī, 368–9. Cf. the abridged list of Ibn al-Murtaḍā, 113, which is partially reproduced by Badawī, 1:201–2. For a more general consideration of the authenticity of the *Tathbūt*, see chapter 3, section 1.

<sup>207</sup> By compiling the records of all of the other sources, ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Uthmān records a work-list for ‘Abd al-Jabbār totaling sixty-nine books. See ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 55–72.

<sup>208</sup> See W. Madelung, “Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī,” 25–6. See also the Introduction to the *K. al-Muṭamad* (esp. pp. 18–19) for a description of the context in which it was written and of the author’s relationship to ‘Abd al-Jabbār. On Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī see also Schmidtke, “Neuere forschungen,” 398ff.

<sup>209</sup> Most likely *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*.

<sup>210</sup> See the index of *K. al-Muṭamad*, 1064–5, which attributes a *K. Sharḥ al-ʿumad* to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, although Abū l-Ḥusayn refers only to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *ʿUmad* and to his own *Sharḥ* thereof.

<sup>211</sup> ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 66. Ibn Taymiyya refers to the work in his *al-Radd ‘alā l-manṭiqiyyīn*. Yet since ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself never mentions a book of this title in his writings, it seems that this refers to the chapter with that title in *al-Mughnī*. Ḥājjī Khalīfa includes a “book” of ‘Abd al-Jabbār in his list of works written on the topic *al-Radd ‘alā l-Naṣārā* (he also names Jāḥiẓ as an author in this category). It is not clear, then, if he is referring to the chapter in the *Mughnī*, the *Crītique* or another work. *Kaṣḥf al-ẓunūn ‘an asāmi al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. G. Flügel, 7 vols. (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1842), 3:353.

Of all of these works attributed to 'Abd al-Jabbār, fourteen are known to be extant today in one version or another.<sup>213</sup>

The place of the *Tathbūt* among these works is evident from 'Abd al-Jabbār's remark therein (p. 168) that he is writing in the year 385 (995). This remark, which comes in the section that I refer to as the *Critique*, indicates that the *Tathbūt* was one of the last of 'Abd al-Jabbār's extant compositions to be written. It also indicates that 'Abd

<sup>212</sup> Among other things, Abū l-Ḥusayn quotes 'Abd al-Jabbār on the meaning of "radd," yet his comments are in the context of *fiqh*. See Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, 188. See also Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 1:817. The text has كتاب العهد, but the editor mentions a ms. variant with the correct title, كتاب العمد. N. Calder refers to this passage in, "Uṣūl al-fīkh," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 10:932.

<sup>213</sup> The following list is based on Sezgin (1:624–626) and Madelung ("'Abd al-Jabbār," 117), who names six works. I have corrected the titles, added translations and supplied information:

1. *Tanzīh al-qur'ān* (Purification [of the Interpretation of] the *Qur'ān*, written after 380/990, published Beirut, 1967).

2. *Tathbūt dalā'il al-nubuwwa* (published Beirut, 1966).

3. *al-Taklīf* ([Divine] Imposition), is not extant, but is commented on in *al-Majmū' fī l-muḥīt bi-l-taklīf* 'Abd al-Jabbār's student Ibn Mattawayh. The latter work was published in three separate volumes in (Beirut 1965, 1981, 1999), the first two of which are mistakenly attributed to 'Abd al-Jabbār. 'Abd al-Jabbār's work is also quoted by the above-mentioned Mu'tazilī Malāḥimī, p. 14.

4. *Faḍl al-ṛiṭzāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-mu'tazila* (Virtue of Mu'tazilism and the Generations of the Mu'tazila, written after 390/1000, published Tunis, 1974).

5. *Risāla fī l-kīmiyā'* (Letter on Chemistry). Peters, following 'Uthmān, finds the authenticity of this work questionable. See Peters p. 11, n. 37, and 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 72.

6. *Nizām al-qawā'id wa-taqrīb al-murād li-l-rā'id* (The Order of Principles and Approximation of the Goal for the Seeker) is extant in an adaptation of the work by Ja'far b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Salām (d. 573/1177) entitled *al-Amālī*.

7. *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa* (Commentary of the Five Principles [of the Mu'tazila]) has been partially preserved in the *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa* of Shashdīw Mānkdim. This work has been published by 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān (the editor of the *Tathbūt*) and incorrectly attributed to 'Abd al-Jabbār (Cairo 1965). Peters repeats this mistake, p. 13. According to D. Gimaret, this *Sharḥ* is a commentary on a work of the same title by 'Abd al-Jabbār, which in turn was a commentary on a work, also by 'Abd al-Jabbār, entitled *al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*. See D. Gimaret, "Les uṣūl al-khamsa du Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār et leurs commentaires," *Annales Islamologiques* 15 (1979), 50. A number of 'Abd al-Jabbār's Mu'tazilī predecessors wrote works on *al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, i.e. on the five cardinal principles of the Mu'tazila, including Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī, Ibn Khallād al-Baṣrī and Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī. On this see also Madelung, "'Abd al-Jabbār," 118. Sezgin, however, identifies the original *al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* as a work of Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. See Sezgin, 1:625.

8. *Ma's'ala fī l-ghayba* (Question on Occultation).

9. *al-Ikhtilāf fī uṣūl al-fīqh* (Difference in the Principles of Jurisprudence), which, according to Sezgin, is identical to the *K. al-'Umad* that Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī quotes extensively in his *K. al-Mu'tamad*.

al-Jabbār was writing the *Critique* under extraordinary circumstances: this was the very year in which the *tarāḥḥum* incident occurred and its consequences unfolded.

The year 385/995 was also a time of particular instability in Rayy and the surrounding areas. In 381/991, the Būyid Bahā' al-Dawla removed the caliph al-Ṭā'i' (r. 363/974–381/991) and put al-Qādir (r. 381/991–442/1031) in his place. The Turks and Daylamīs among the Būyid forces, however, refused to recognize the new caliph for some time, and the name of al-Ṭā'i' continued to be recited in the *khutbas* of Khurāsān for at least two years.<sup>214</sup> The unity and stability that marked the Būyid princedoms during the period of 'Aḍud al-Dawla was disappearing. In the year 384/994, as Bahā' al-Dawla was seeking to play his cards in the game of caliphal politics in Baghdād, Daylamī soldiers began to rebel against his uncle Fakhr al-Dawla in Rayy.<sup>215</sup>

Meanwhile, the Byzantine Empire, led by the Macedonian emperors, was in the midst of a military resurgence and was threatening Muslim possessions. In 361/962, Nicephorus Phocas wrested Aleppo from the Ḥamdānids and imposed a humiliating tribute on them, including a requirement that a cross be mounted from the highest minaret of the city. Similarly threatening was the rise of the Qarāmiṭa, a group that claimed to have ended the era of Islam, and supported that claim by attacking Mecca and pilfering the Black Stone of the Ka'ba in 317/930. The influence of the Qarāmiṭa spread throughout Iran, and their Ismā'īlī missionaries (*du'āt*) were especially active in Rayy, the city which Busse refers to as “das Zentrum dieser

10. *al-Mughnī* (*Summa*, written between 360/970–1 and 379–80/989–90); fourteen of its twenty parts are extant and have been published (Cairo, 1960–65).

11. *Mutashābih al-qur'ān* (*The Ambiguous Qur'ānic [Verses]*, written between 360/970 and 380/990, published Cairo, 1969).

12. *al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*The Reliable [Work] on the Principles of Religion*); its abridgment, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*Concise Work on the Principles of Religion*, written before 385/995), has been published (within *Rasā'il al-'adl wa-l-tawḥīd*, Cairo, 1971, 161–253).

13. *K. al-Dars* (*Book of Study*). Quoted in part by Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī in his *K. al-Mu'tamad*.

14. *K. al-Nihāya* (*Book of Limit*). Quoted in part by Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī in his *K. al-Mu'tamad*. On the meaning of *nihāya* as it applies to *kalām* and particularly to atomism, see R. Arnaldez, “Nihāya,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 8:25.

<sup>214</sup> G. Miles, *The Numismatic History of Rayy* (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1938), 174–5.

<sup>215</sup> Miles, 176.



Progaganda.”<sup>216</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār openly expresses his anxiety regarding the Qarāmiṭa in the *Critique*.<sup>217</sup> At the same time, to the East the rising cloud of the Ghaznavid Empire appeared on the horizon. Just a year before his death (and the writing of the *Tathbūt*), Ibn ‘Abbād coordinated a levy of soldiers to face the combined Ghaznavid armies of Sebūktigin (d. 387/997) and his son Maḥmūd.<sup>218</sup> Although Fakhr al-Dawla, as mentioned above, was able to buy off the Ghaznavid forces, Maḥmūd was installed in nearby Naysābūr. He undoubtedly cast a gloomy shadow over Rayy.

These were the conditions in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār wrote the *Tathbūt* and the *Critique* that it contains, a work that must be considered his most mature composition on Christianity. The *Mughnī* was completed five years earlier, the same year in which he wrote *Mutashābih al-qur’ān*. Moreover, from internal evidence it is clear that ‘Abd al-Jabbār had less information on Christianity when he wrote the anti-Christian section of the *K. al-Muḥīt bi-l-taklīf* (upon which Ibn Mattawayh based his *al-Majmū‘ fī l-muḥīt bi-l-taklīf*),<sup>219</sup> and *al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* (on which Shashdīw Mānkdim wrote his *Sharḥ*).<sup>220</sup> Therefore it seems likely that between the years 380/990, when he finished the *Mughnī*, and 385/995, when he wrote the *Critique*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār sought out extensive material on Christianity. The source of that material will be a subject of later chapters.

<sup>216</sup> *Chalif und Grosskönig*, 410. Cf. S.M. Stern, “The Early Ismā‘īlī Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania,” *BSOAS* 23 (1960), 56ff.

<sup>217</sup> “Then the situation continued to decline. All of the swords turned against Islam and its party died. Meanwhile *zandaqa* and heresy grew in might and domination and [the people] returned to the matters of *jāhiliyya*. Do you not see how the Qarāmiṭa and the Bāṭiniyya in al-Aḥsā [in eastern Arabia] attacked, maligned the prophets and annulled religious laws, how they killed pilgrims [to Mecca] and Muslims, seeking to annihilate them? They fled from the texts [of the Qur’ān], the Tawrāt and the Injil and turned instead to Zakīra al-Iṣfahānī al-Majūsī, saying, ‘This is truly the god’ and worshipping him. Their affair with him is reported and [well]-known” (pp. 106–7).

Zakīra was a Persian (Zikrawayh زكريه) who was proclaimed by the Qarāmiṭa as the Mahdī. He seems to have instituted Zoroastrian practices (hence the *nisba* Majūsī). He died in a battle with the ‘Abbāsids in 294/907, an event that put an abrupt ending to his apocalyptic realm. See W. Madelung, “Ḳarmatī,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 4:663.

<sup>218</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, 7:466–7.

<sup>219</sup> See *Majmū‘ fī l-muḥīt bi-l-taklīf*, 1:222–4.

<sup>220</sup> *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 291–8.



3. *Rayy*3.1. *Islamic Reports*

Today the ancient site of Rayy has been absorbed into the expanding metropolis of Tehran. Its ruins lie about forty-five kilometers to the south of the Iranian capital's center.<sup>221</sup> Yet 'Abd al-Jabbār's Rayy was itself a capital. The fourth/tenth century geographer Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Iṣṭakhrī (d. early 4th/10th) remarks that "in the Jibāl there is nothing greater than Iṣfahān, other than Rayy."<sup>222</sup> Abū l-Qāsim b. Ḥawqal (d. ca. 362/973), the Ismā'īlī geographer,<sup>223</sup> remarks: "After Baghdād no city in the East is more populated (*a'mar*) than Rayy, even if Naysābūr covers a wider area."<sup>224</sup> His comments match what is known of Rayy's political importance at the time.

During the reign of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785), who was raised in the city,<sup>225</sup> Rayy became the capital of the province of Jibāl,<sup>226</sup> beating out other large, important Iranian cities including Hamadhān and Iṣfahān. The city held a strategic position in the northeast corner of Jibāl, between the unstable mountainous region of Ṭabaristān to the north, the Turkish regions of Jurjān and beyond to the northeast and the ever-restless Khurāsān to the east. In 194/810, the caliph al-Amīn (r. 193/809–198/813) chose Rayy as the city in which the 'Abbāsīd *dirham* would be struck.<sup>227</sup> By 334/946, the Būyids had consolidated their rule over the region, and Rayy became

<sup>221</sup> *Synodicon Orientale*, ed. J.M. Chabot, *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la bibliothèque nationale* 37 (1902), 228. Cf. J.M. Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus novus* (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1993), 124.

<sup>222</sup> Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Iṣṭakhrī, *K. al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1927), 199. Cf. Abū 'Abdallāh al-Yāqūt, *Muṣjam al-buldān*, ed. Farīd al-Jundī, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.), 3:133.

<sup>223</sup> See A. Miquel, "Ibn Ḥawkal," *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 3:787.

<sup>224</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal, 371. Yāqūt (*Muṣjam al-buldān*, 3:133) attributes this statement to Iṣṭakhrī, yet it is not to be found in the latter's works. M. Le Quien attributes it to Ibn Ḥawqal in his *Oriens Christianus*, 2 vols. (Graz, Austria: U. Graz, 1958), 2:1291–2: "ut fide Ebn-Hawkel refert Abulfeda, etum et incolis advenisque ita frequentata, ut nulla in Oriente praeter Bagdadum habita fuerit populosior." Abulfeda refers to Abū l-Fidā' Ismā'īl b. 'Alī 'Imād al-Dīn (d. 732/1331), the Ayyūbid prince and geographer. Fiey also attributes this quotation to Ibn Ḥawqal, "Médie chrétienne," *Parole de L'Orient* 1/2 (1970), 378.

<sup>225</sup> Le Strange, 214.

<sup>226</sup> 'Uthmān is right in ascribing this event to the reign of al-Mahdī, but he mistakenly puts it in the year 141/758, seventeen years before al-Mahdī's reign. *Qaḍī al-quḍāt*, 12.

<sup>227</sup> Miles, 93–4.

the center of the repeated power struggles between the cousin princes.<sup>228</sup> Rayy's important location was also a factor in its repeated destruction.

Ibn Ḥawqal traveled to Jibāl at some point during the 350s/960s, just before the arrival of 'Abd al-Jabbār,<sup>229</sup> and noted:

The greatest city in this area is Rayy, which we have already mentioned. It is one parasang in length and a half in width. The [inner] city's buildings are made of clay, though bricks and plaster are also used. It has a fine, famous castle and gates such as . . . [list of gates, then of the markets]. It contains another fortified city in which there is a Friday mosque. Most of [the inner] city is destroyed, with construction on the outside.<sup>230</sup>

Ibn Ḥawqal's account of Rayy was enlarged and embellished by Abū 'Abdallāh al-Muqaddasī (d. after 380/990). Muqaddasī was aware of the Zoroastrian tradition that Rayy is one of the gates of the earth (although he does not identify it as Zoroastrian), and was fascinated by the city. "All mankind is drawn to it," he concludes.<sup>231</sup> Like

<sup>228</sup> In this year Rukn al-Dawla (d. 365/976) took possession of Rayy from the Sāmānīd Nūḥ b. Naṣr (d. 343/954), having been sent there by his brother 'Imād al-Dawla (d. 338/949). Thereafter his two sons—Fakhr al-Dawla (d. 387/997) and Mu'ayyid al-Dawla (d. 373/984)—struggled for control of the city, until Mu'ayyid's death in battle against Fakhr al-Dawla's Sāmānīd and Ziyārid allies. Upon Fakhr al-Dawla's death, the city was left in the hands of Sayyida, the mother of his son Majd al-Dawla, who was *de facto*, although not *de jure*, regent of the city. In 405/1014–5, the Būyid prince Shams al-Dawla (d. 412/1021), temporarily occupied Rayy, the only interruption of Sayyida's/Majd al-Dawla's rule until the fateful events of the Ghaznavid occupation in 420/1029. See Miles, 155ff.; C. Cahen, "Buwayhids," *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 1:1350–7.

<sup>229</sup> 'A. Miquel, "Ibn Ḥawkal," *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 3:787.

<sup>230</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal, 378–9. Ibn Ḥawqal uses the term *madīna* to refer to the inner, fortified area of Rayy where the mosque was located. The rest of Rayy he identifies as "al-Muḥammadiyya," a title honoring Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Mahdī, the third 'Abbāsīd caliph, who resided there as a child. Cf. Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-buldān*, 3:133–4; Le Strange, 214–5; W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, trans. S. Soucek (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 122.

<sup>231</sup> Muqaddasī, 285. Translation from *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*, trans. B.A. Collins (Reading: Garnet, 1994), 341. On Rayy in Zoroastrian cosmology, see Bosworth, "Rayy," 471. Later Muqaddasī describes the delights of Rayy:

Al-Rayy is an important town, delightful, distinguished; many glories and much fruit; the markets are spacious, the hostels attractive, the baths good, foods aplenty, little to hurt one, abundance of water, flourishing commerce. Learned people are the leaders, the public is intelligent, the women are good housekeepers; the stores are splendid. The weather is pleasing; it is an elegant, clean place. The people have beauty, intelligence, honour, refinement. Here are councils and schools; natural talents, handicrafts, granaries. There is generosity, and special attributes. The preacher is not wanting in jurisprudence, nor the leader in knowledge; the magistrate does not lack good repute nor the orator decorum. It is

Ibn Ḥawqal, however, Muqaddasī has little to say about the religious groups present in Rayy, with the exception of his comment that “the Imāms at the mosque differ, one day for the Ḥanafites, one day for the Shāfi‘ites.”<sup>232</sup>

Nothing at all is said in this literature of the Ismā‘īliyya, whose importance in Rayy is clear from other sources. This was, after all, Maḥmūd of Ghazna’s excuse for taking control of the city: “The city of Rayy is distinguished by its provision of refuge to the [the Bāṭiniyya] and by the calls of their missionaries to unbelief therein. They mix with the Mu‘tazilī innovators and the Shī‘ī (*rawāfiḍ*) extremists, who are opposed to the Book of God and the Sunna.”<sup>233</sup> In fact, Ismā‘īlī missionaries (*du‘āt*) had been working in Rayy from the middle of the third/ninth century.<sup>234</sup> By the beginning of the fourth/tenth century that mission had become quite significant, led by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934), whose *A‘lām al-nubuwwa* records a debate that he had with one of his fellow citizens, the philosopher Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/925 or 323/935), in Rayy.<sup>235</sup> The growth of the Ismā‘īliyya in Rayy seems to have alarmed ‘Abd al-Jabbār:

[They] began to deceive people secretly and to move them away from Islam and from faith with ruses, little by little, so that they did not sense anything. They spread about and expanded, while spreading [these things] in their realm. They aimed with their call at Daylam and at the Arabs and at all those who have done little research and speculation but have a great desire and concern for this world. . . . What a calamity is the departure of Islam and the death of its people, with the scarcity of people knowledgeable about it and its rules! (p. 107, ll. 10–13, p. 108, ll. 5–6).

The Zaydī Shī‘a, meanwhile, must have had a presence in Rayy. Daylam, a region to the north of Rayy on the other side of the Alburz Mountains, was largely converted to Zaydism, and there was a

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one of the glories of Islam, one of the chief cities of the lands. Here are elders, nobles, readers, Imams, ascetics, conquerors, high purpose. Here is ice and snow aplenty. The barley beer is famous, the cloth renowned, the preachers are expert.

Muqaddasī, 390–1. Trans. Collins, 347. Muqaddasī goes on to add: “But its water causes diarrhea and its melons kill.”

<sup>232</sup> Muqaddasī, 391. Trans. Collins, 347.

<sup>233</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntazam*, 8:38.

<sup>234</sup> S.M. Stern, “The Early Ismā‘īlī Missionaries,” 56ff.

<sup>235</sup> Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *A‘lām al-nubuwwa*, ed. S. al-Saway (Tehran: Royal Iranian Philosophical Society, 1977); See also P. Kraus, “Extraits du *kitāb a‘lām al-nubuwwa* d’Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī” *Orientalia* 5 (1936), 35–56, 358–378; S.M. Stern, “Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 1:125. Cf. Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-buldān*, 3:136, 137.

large number of Daylamī soldiers among the Būyid forces in Rayy.<sup>236</sup> It was their rebellion that caused Mu'ayyid al-Dawla to call for help from Maḥmūd of Ghazna in 419/1028 (v.s.). The nearby city of Qazwīn was also an important center of Zaydism.<sup>237</sup> Yet the Zaydiyya are not mentioned in the Islamic geographical literature, which paints an incomplete picture of the religious demography of Rayy.<sup>238</sup> Christians also find no place therein.<sup>239</sup>

### 3.2. *The Christians of Bēth Raziqayē and the Critique*

Yet Christian sources confirm that there was an important East Syrian Christian community in Rayy, a city referred to in the Syriac sources as *Bēth Raziqayē*.<sup>240</sup> M. Le Quien, author of the encyclopedic

<sup>236</sup> See V. Minorsky, "Daylam," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 2:192.

<sup>237</sup> 'Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 35.

<sup>238</sup> A passing reference to the religious groups of Rayy is made by Yāqūt, who visited the city in the early seventh/thirteenth century, several centuries after the death of Muqaddasī. By this time, Rayy had been repeatedly destroyed and had but a shadow of its former greatness. According to Yāqūt, the residents of Rayy had built their houses under the ground for protection (*Muḥjam al-buldān*, 3:133). Yet there were also reminders of the city's glorious past: "[Rayy] is of astounding beauty, built with ornamented baked bricks, shining and well placed, painted in blue . . . It was a great city, but mostly destroyed. I passed by its ruins in the year 617 (1220), when I was in flight from the Mongols (*al-tatar*)" (*Muḥjam al-buldān*, 3:132). The Spanish traveler Clavijo also comments on the lost glory of Rayy. He passed by its ruins, which still dominated the landscape, in 1403. See Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane*, trans. G. Le Strange (London: Routledge, 1994, reprint of the 1928 edition), 167. Elsewhere (*Muḥjam al-buldān*, 3:132), Yāqūt emphasizes the importance of the Shī'a in the city:

The people of the city were in three sects: Shāfi'is, who were the smallest, Ḥanafis, who were larger, and Shī'a, who were the great majority. For half of the people in this area were Shī'a. . . . Then tensions (*ʿaṣabiyya*) arose between the Sunnis and the Shī'a. The Shāfi'is and the Ḥanafis helped one another against [the Shī'a]. The wars between them went on for some time until there were not any Shī'a known to be left.

The relative importance of the Shī'a in Rayy is also evident in the *Tathbūt*. On the Imāmiyya see pp. 125–133, 245–299, 528–582; On the Ismā'īliyya see 106–8, 135–6, 582–661.

<sup>239</sup> Among the classical geographers, only Yāqūt might be excused from this charge by the fact that no Christians were left in his day. Fiey concludes that the last bishopric in Rayy had disappeared by 1219, a year before the arrival of Yāqūt. See Fiey, "Les communautés syriaques en Iran des premiers siècles à 1552," *Commémoration Cyrus, Actes du Congrès de Shirāz* (Tehran: n.p., 1974); Reprinted in J.M. Fiey, *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origines à 1552* (London: Variorum, 1979). 'Abd al-Jabbār's modern biographer, 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān, follows Yāqūt in dividing the residents of the city between Ḥanafis, Shāfi'is and Shī'a, while making no mention of the Christians. *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 13; Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-buldān*, 3:132.

<sup>240</sup> Pace B. Spuler's conclusion that Christianity only flourished in two areas of

catalogue of the Eastern Church, *Oriens Christianus*, lists *Bēth Raziqayē* among the Metropolitan seats of the East Syrian church.<sup>241</sup> In fact, Rayy was an important city long before the Christian era. In Zoroastrian cosmology, Rayy (Old Persian *Raghā*) is one of twelve sacred spots created by Ahura Mazda.<sup>242</sup> Later (a bit after the creation of the world) Rayy became an important city of Media, known to the Greeks as *ραγομα*.<sup>243</sup> It was through the Median dominance of eastern Iranian regions in the 7th–6th century BCE that the Zoroastrianism of those regions spread west into the Median homelands where *Raghā* was situated. Through this process, according to M. Boyce, Rayy became a sacred city of Zoroastrianism.<sup>244</sup> The city of Rayy also appears in the Bible, in the deuterocanonical Book of Tobit (4:1).

Christianity appeared early in Rayy. By AD 410 an East Syrian Bishop had been installed in the city.<sup>245</sup> David, Bishop of Rayy, was

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Iran: Fārs and Transoxania. See B. Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1952), 212. On this cf. Barthold, 122.

<sup>241</sup> He also mentions that its foundation was attributed to the Seleucids: “Hanc Seleucus Nicator instauravit et auxit, ex quo illius conditor putatus fuit: Alfarangi aevo urbs maxima erat, plusquam parasangam integram in longum, et dimidiam in latum patens, ait Golius, eleganter aedificata, et gemino intus rivo et aquaeductibus gaudet.” In English: “Nicator the Seleucid established [Rayy] and enriched it, and thus is thought to be its founder. In the age of al-Farghānī it was a great city, more than a parasang in length and a half parasang in width. Golius said that the city was elegantly built, blessed by its double canal and aqueducts.” Le Quien, 2:1291–2.

Nicator (d. 281 BC) is the founder of the Seleucid Kingdom. Al-Farghānī is the third/ninth century astronomer Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Farghānī, known to Europe as Alfarangus. Golius is Jacob Golius (AD 1667), the Dutch scholar who published an Arabic edition and Latin translation of al-Farghānī’s *Jawāmi‘ ʿilm al-nujūm wa-l-ḥarakāt al-samāwiyya*, published posthumously in 1669. See H. Suter and J. Vernet, “al-Farghānī,” *EF*<sup>2</sup>, 2:793; “Golius,” *La grande encyclopédie*, 31 vols. (Paris: H. Lamirault, 1886), 18:1178–9.

<sup>242</sup> Bosworth, “Rayy,” 471. Yāqūt informs the reader, curiously, that Rayy is described in the Tawrāt (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament) as “one of the gates of the Earth, the storehouse of creation.” Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 2:134. In fact, *Raghā* appears in the Bible only in the deuterocanonical book Tobit, and in an entirely different context. Most likely, Yāqūt has Zoroastrian doctrine in mind.

<sup>243</sup> *Syndicon Orientale*, 669. Yāqūt comments, “The buildings that are standing show that it was a great city. There are also ruins in the rural areas of Rayy.” Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 3:134.

<sup>244</sup> See M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>245</sup> This is the date of the East Syrian synod of Isaac, in the record of which it is stated that the bishops of *Bēth Madāyē* and *Bēth Raziqayē* were among those expected to later accept the definitions of the council. See *Syndicon Orientale*, 34 (French Translation, p. 273). Cf. Fiey, “Médie Chrétienne,” 378. See also Fiey, “Les communautés syriaques en Iran,” 281; Fiey, *Oriens Christianus Novus*, 124; A. Van Lant-

at the Synod of Dādīshō' in 424.<sup>246</sup> He is followed by Joseph, in 486, at the Synod of Acace.<sup>247</sup> In 544, the signature of Daniel (d. 554), bishop of Rayy, appears on the record of the Synod of Joseph.<sup>248</sup> In the year 161/778 (or 184/800),<sup>249</sup> the Nestorian Metropolitan Timothy I (d. 208/823) elevated Rayy to the seat of a metropolitan, a position that it would hold until the thirteenth century.<sup>250</sup> Le Quien identifies the first "Rāzī" Metropolitan as Abibus. His jurisdiction, and that of his followers, included not only Rayy, but also two important cities to its south: Qumm and Qāshān.<sup>251</sup> There are also references to two of Rayy's metropolitans in the ninth century: Thomas, who held the position in 238/853, and Mark, who was named metropolitan in 279/893.<sup>252</sup> The Metropolitan of Rayy during 'Abd al-Jabbār's time is not recorded.

Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that the East Syrian communities had shrunk dramatically by the year 385/995, the year in which 'Abd al-Jabbār wrote the *Critique*. H. Busse calculates that during Būyid times there were thirty Nestorian bishoprics and thirteen metropolitan seats within their princedoms.<sup>253</sup> J.M. Fiey reports that of all of these metropolitan seats, Rayy was in the fifth (or perhaps even in the second) rank. The metropolitan of Hamadhān, for example, was below that of Rayy in the East Syrian Church hierarchy.<sup>254</sup> There are no reports of a West Syrian (Jacobite) Christian community in Rayy; Le Quien does not identify any West Syrian church in the entire region. Fiey locates the closest West Syrian bishopric in Tabrīz

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schoot, "Bēth Raziqaye," *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, 27 vols. (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1935), 8:1238.

<sup>246</sup> See *Syndicon Orientale*, 43 (French Translation, p. 285). Cf. Fiey, "Médie Chrétienne," 379.

<sup>247</sup> See *Syndicon Orientale*, 60 (French Translation, p. 307). Cf. Fiey, "Médie Chrétienne," 379.

<sup>248</sup> See *Syndicon Orientale*, 109 (French Translation, p. 366). Cf. Fiey, *Oriens Christianus Novus*, 124.

<sup>249</sup> The first date is that given by Le Quien, (2:1291) and the second that by Fiey ("Médie Chrétienne," 380).

<sup>250</sup> Fiey, "Médie chrétienne," 380. Cf. H. Putman, *L'église et l'Islam sous Timothée I* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1975), 65.

<sup>251</sup> Fiey, "Médie chrétienne," 380.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>253</sup> Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig*, 453. In 1979 Fiey estimated that the Christians of Iran were approximately 170,000, of which 135,000 were Armenians, out of a total population of 34 million.

<sup>254</sup> Fiey, "Médie Chrétienne," 380.

(Ādharbayjān) to the West.<sup>255</sup> To the East he finds no noteworthy presence of West Syrian churches closer than Herāt and Zarang (Sijistān).<sup>256</sup>

In fact, by the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, the East Syrian church had become essentially the state-sponsored form of Christianity in all of the Būyid lands. This was both a blessing and a curse, as the Muslim authorities gradually took control of church affairs. It was the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Ṭā’i‘, and not the bishops, who made Mārī II Nestorian Katholikos in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s time,<sup>257</sup> as it was the caliph al-Muqtafi li-Amr Allāh (r. 530/1136–555/1160) who invested the Nestorian Katholikos ‘Abd Yeshū‘ III with his position.<sup>258</sup> Meanwhile, actual state administration was in the hands of the Būyids, who followed the occasional Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid practice of employing Christians in high places within the state hierarchy;<sup>259</sup> some reports have them placing Christians in charge of contingents of the armies.<sup>260</sup>

Generally, however, the situation for Christians as *dhimmīs* in the Būyid period was tenuous. The treatment of Christians is depicted in a diverse—if not confused—fashion in historical sources, a point

<sup>255</sup> Another important center of West Syrian Christianity was the city of Takrīt (in modern day Iraq, of recent renown). See S. Rissanen, *Theological Encounter of Oriental Christians with Islam during Early Abbasid Rule* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1993), 40.

<sup>256</sup> Fiey, “Les Communautés syriaques en Iran,” 281 and “Chrétiens syriaques du Horāsān et du Segestān,” *Le Muséon* 86 (1973), 96–102.

<sup>257</sup> Mārī came from a wealthy family of Mawṣil with influence in the caliphal courts. Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig*, 458.

<sup>258</sup> On this see L. Conrad, “A Nestorian Diploma of Investiture from the *Tadhkira* of Ibn Ḥamdūn: The Text and Its Significance,” *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān ‘Abbās on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. W. al-Qāḍī (Beirut: American University of Beirut/Imprimerie Catholique, 1981), 83–5.

<sup>259</sup> “Other decrees excluded non-Muslims from public office. On this point the official doctrine of Islam is unambiguous: the Qur’ān itself had established such exclusion by numerous injunctions not to take ‘the infidels as associates’. However, the facts are almost continually at odds with the precepts of the first caliphs, for the conquerors—being far-seeing politicians—understood the value of administrative continuity.” Y. Courbage and P. Fargues, *Christians and Jews under Islam*, trans. J. Mabro (London: Tauris, 1997), 24–5. Cf. A. Gabriel, *Die Erforschung Persiens* (Vienna: Holzhausens, 1952), 27ff.

<sup>260</sup> For a list of the most important Christians within the Būyid administration, see Spuler, 211, n. 2. Cf. also B. Landron, *Attitudes Nestorienne vis-à-vis de l’Islam* (Paris: Cariscript, 1994), 91ff. The closest advisor to ‘Aḍud al-Dawla was a Christian, Naṣr b. Hārūn. (It seems, however, that his Christian identity precluded him from officially becoming Vizier). See Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig*, 464. Cf. the more accurate analysis of Fiey, *Chrétien syriaques sous les abbassides*, CSCO 420 (1980), 166, 170. Naṣr, in 368/979, obtained permission from Aḍud al-Dawla to re-build churches that had been destroyed. See Fiey, *Chrétien syriaques sous les abbassides*, 166; Spuler, 212.



made by L. Conrad.<sup>261</sup> It is clear, however, that to be a first class member of society one had to become a Muslim. Moreover, social restrictions were not the only problems that Christians faced, as the mood of Muslim crowds emerging from mosques, or the schemes of a new ruler, often brought significant dangers to the Christian community, not always a "protected minority." While the Christian elite were used for their skills in government administration, others suffered not only the discriminatory measures of *al-shurūt al-ʿumariyya*,<sup>262</sup> but also occasional outbursts of rage against them. In 361/972, several years before 'Abd al-Jabbār became Qādī in Rayy, the Vizier of that city (and patron of Ibn 'Abbād at the time), Abū l-Faḍl, demanded that all worship in churches cease.<sup>263</sup> Meanwhile, reports of Christians leaving (and being deported from) Islamic lands and of Muslim mobs attacking churches, monasteries and convents multiply during this period. In 391/1001 the Būyids arrested Metropolitan John VI in Baghdād, demanding a large sum for his release.<sup>264</sup>

Anti-Christian sentiment in 'Abd al-Jabbār's day was certainly not mitigated by the setbacks that Muslims had recently suffered at Byzantine Christian hands. He complains that "Muslims have become unimportant in the eyes of the Byzantines," (p. 168, l. 9) and relates a number of anecdotes designed to show either the cruelty or immorality of the Byzantines.<sup>265</sup> Thus the social and political realities of 'Abd al-Jabbār's context likely encouraged him to write the *Critique*.<sup>266</sup>

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In 'Abbāsīd times the East Syrian Christian Faḍl b. Marwān held great authority under the caliph Mu'taṣim (r. 218/833–227/842). See B. Landron, "Les relations originelles entre chrétiens de l'Est (Nestoriens) et Musulmans," *Parole de l'Orient* 10 (1981–2), 222, and Ibn al-Nadīm (p. 141) who reports that Faḍl was Vizier under both Mu'taṣim and Ma'mūn.

<sup>261</sup> Conrad, 99–102.

<sup>262</sup> The "Conditions of 'Umar," attributed to the Umayyad 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 101/720). These include discriminatory measures such as wearing distinctive dress, prohibitions on weapons, mounts, on certain employment, on building new churches or rebuilding old ones, and on any outward sign (from crosses to bells) of Christianity. See C.E. Bosworth, "The Concept of *Dhimma* in Early Islam," *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York and London, 1982), 1:45ff.

<sup>263</sup> Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig*, 466.

<sup>264</sup> Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig*, 467. Busse (*Chalif und Grosskönig*, 466) argues that the rise in anti-Christian acts resulted indirectly from Muslim fears of the Byzantine threat on the Syrian frontier.

<sup>265</sup> It is certainly not coincidental that 'Abd al-Jabbār pauses his anti-Christian polemic on several occasions to attack the Ismā'īliyya, the other group enjoying military success. The Ismā'īlī Fātimids, whom 'Abd al-Jabbār describes as "enemies of the Muslims" (p. 168, ll. 8–9), took control of large parts of Syria in the 4th/10th century.

<sup>266</sup> I would not conclude, however, that the combative tone of the *Critique* is due



### 3.3. *Rayy in the Critique*

The details of that context can be gathered from some references in the text itself. At one point (p. 162), ‘Abd al-Jabbār describes the Egyptians as westerners, a description that reflects the perspective of someone from the eastern part of the Islamic world. Elsewhere (p. 159), he mentions that Helen, the mother of Constantine, was “in an inn (*funduq*) in Ḥarrān, a *funduq* is a *khān*.” The word *funduq* (from Gk. πανδοκεῖον) is a common Arabic term in the western Islamic world,<sup>267</sup> yet ‘Abd al-Jabbār, an Iranian himself, felt compelled to gloss *funduq* with the Persian *khān*, evidence that he was writing for an Iranian audience.<sup>268</sup> More evidence for this is found in his frequent references to Zoroastrianism (p. 105ff., 125, 169, 185, and passim) and his comparison of Constantine with the Persian king Ardashīr, the son of Papak (r. AD 224–241, p. 163).

One further reference identifies ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s perspective as that of a “Rāzī.” While addressing those who claim that the Syrian city of Ḥimṣ is free from scorpions due to a talisman in that city, ‘Abd al-Jabbār—who apparently had never visited this city—responds, “If there are no scorpions living in Ḥimṣ, then this is due to the work of God (Blessed and Most High)” (p. 178, l. 8). In proof of this claim he remarks that hardly any camels survive in the Byzantine territories. This cannot be due to the cold, he continues, since the Turks have many camels and live in a much colder climate. He then remarks: “Turks could barely stay in Rayy, since they would be listless [from the

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to this sectarian strife. Earlier anti-Christian works are no less hostile (pace Busse [*Chalif und Grösskonig*, 477], who comments that earlier polemics “herrschte aber ein ruhiger Ton, sehr im Gegensatz zu den sich mehrenden Tumulten nach der Jahrtausandwende.”). For example, Jāḥiẓ’s *al-Risāla fī l-radd ‘alā l-naṣārā*, written a century and a half before ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Critique*, is at once less academic and more hostile. Meanwhile, the best known Arabic *anti-Muslim* Christian polemic, the anonymous *al-Risāla ilā l-Hāshimī*, was written about the same time, long before ‘Abd al-Jabbār. See *Risālat ‘Abdallāh b. Ismā‘īl al-Hāshimī ilā ‘Abd al-Masīh b. Ishāq al-Kīndī wa-risālat al-Kīndī ilā l-Hāshimī* (henceforth: *Risālat al-Kīndī*), ed. A. Tien (London: n.p., 1880). Translated as *Apology of al-Kīndī*, trans. W. Muir (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1887). An anti-Muslim polemic is attributed to the Karaite Jewish scholar al-Qirqisānī (d. 4th/10th). See J. Finkel, “A *Risāla* of Jāḥiẓ,” 311, n. 3. Many anti-Muslim Christian polemics, of course, were written in Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Latin and other Christian languages.

<sup>267</sup> On the history of πανδοκεῖον/*funduq* (Latin *fundicum*) in the Byzantine Christian, Islamic and Latin Christian worlds see the excellent study of O.R. Constanble: *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). She mentions ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s reference to Helen working in a *funduq* on p. 101.

<sup>268</sup> On this cf. Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 140, n. 7.

heat]. If an Iṣfahānī were to travel to Rayy he should write his will [first].” (p. 178, ll. 12–14). ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s point here is that there are no camels in the Byzantine lands (as there are no scorpions in Ḥimṣ) due only to the decree of God. (He was apparently unaware of the difference between Bactrian and Arabian camels.) The example that he gives to prove his point reveals that he is a Rāzī writing for fellow Rāzīs.<sup>269</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that the historical evidence of East Syrian Christianity in Rayy is matched by internal evidence in the *Critique*. The text suggests that ‘Abd al-Jabbār was in conversation with a Syriac speaking Christian community around him. On page 146 (ll. 2–3), ‘Abd al-Jabbār supports an argument by referring to “the books, written in Syriac, of the church (*bī‘a*) present in the districts of Ahwāz and elsewhere in the districts of Iraq.” On 207 (ll. 16–7), he quotes a Syriac expression when describing Christian monks.

More to the point, ‘Abd al-Jabbār frequently uses terms peculiar to the Eastern Syriac (Chaldean) of the East Syrian Church. Among these is *fātūr* (p. 93, l. 13),<sup>270</sup> which is Syriac for table (*petūrā*), but is used in the East Syrian Church to refer to the altar.<sup>271</sup> He gives *sinhūdas* for “synod” (p. 94, l. 4), instead of *sinūdas* or *sīnūdas*, which shows the influence of East Syriac *sūnhedhūs*.<sup>272</sup> Elsewhere, ‘Abd al-Jabbār refers to Paul as *Fawlūs* (cf. Syriac *Pawlūs*) in lieu of the typical Arabic *Būlus*,<sup>273</sup> just as he refers to Pontius Pilate as *Fīlāṭus* (cf.

<sup>269</sup> Pace P. Crone (“Islam, Judaeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm,” p. 93, n. 199), who, for reasons connected to her larger argument regarding Judaeo-Christianity, seeks to locate the community that influenced the *Critique* in Mesopotamia.

<sup>270</sup> Read فاتور for فاتورة (ms. 43r).

<sup>271</sup> See Graf, *Verzeichnis arabischer kirchlicher Termini*, CSCO 147 (1954), 82, who refers to M. ‘Amrī, *De patriarchis nestorianorum*, 2 vols. (Rome: n.p., 1896), 2:94.

<sup>272</sup> See Graf, *Verzeichnis*, 62. Note also that ‘Abd al-Jabbār refers frequently (*Tahbūt*, 120, 174, 175, 202, 203, passim) to the Christian *jāthalīq* (from Gk. καθολικός), a title used in the East Syrian Church to refer to the Metropolitan (*muṭrān*) who had authority above all other Metropolitans. This form of the term appears above all in East Syrian/Nestorian texts, as it is influenced by the East Syriac *gātālīq*. See, for example, Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Fiḥ al-naṣrānīyya*, 2 vols., CSCO 161 (1956), 167 (1957), 1:27ff. In Melkite and Jacobite literature the title is usually given as *kāthūlīk*. See Graf, *Verzeichnis*, 95 and cf. 33. The East Syrian church designated its highest Metropolitan as *jāthalīq/gātālīq* from at least the sixth century. *Kleines Wörterbuch des christlichen Orients*, ed. J. Aßfalg and P. Krüger (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), 162.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. p. 98. This is a form typical of East Syriac. See, for example, the anonymous *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 5:2 (1950), 319, passim; Ibn al-Ṭayyib, 1:14, passim. The appearance in the *Critique* of the emphatic “ṣ” for “s” is a standard variation of the name. See Graf, *Verzeichnis*, 26.

Syr. *Ṕīlātūs*) instead of the typical Arabic *Bīlāṭus*.<sup>274</sup> On page 99 (l. 11), ‘Abd al-Jabbār refers to a Christian theologian as *Yāwānīs*, an Eastern Syriac/Nestorian form of the name John.<sup>275</sup> Moreover, he repeatedly uses *Īshūʿ* (إيشوع) to refer to Jesus (See pp. 100, 112, 142, 149, *passim*).<sup>276</sup> This form, which is quite unusual for an Arabic text, is based on the East Syriac form of the name Jesus: *Ishōʿ* (W. Syriac is *Yāshūʿ*). At one point (p. 100, ll. 4–5), ‘Abd al-Jabbār teaches the reader that *Īshūʿ* is Syriac for ‘Īsā (the Qur’ānic form of Jesus).

Moreover, ‘Abd al-Jabbār tellingly singles out the East Syrian Christians (Nestorians) in the *Critique*. After briefly describing Jacobite and Melkite doctrine on Christology, he asks, “So what do you Nestorians say?” (p. 96, l. 7). Elsewhere (p. 175, ll. 10–11) ‘Abd al-Jabbār again addresses the Nestorians in the first person, saying, “You say that the Melkites and Jacobites are misguided. Likewise the Nestorians do not please the Melkites and the Jacobites.” ‘Abd al-Jabbār also (p. 146, ll. 4ff.) refers to a letter written by ‘Abd Yashūʿ b. Bahrīz,<sup>277</sup> a Nestorian theologian.

In a variety of ways, then, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Critique* reflects the particular milieu in which it was written. At the same time, ‘Abd al-Jabbār addresses issues therein that are of general interest to the Muslim-Christian conversation, a point that will become evident in the following chapters.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. *Tathbīt*, p. 94, l. 11 and p. 99, l. 8. It is possible that ‘Abd al-Jabbār was influenced here by his native Persian and not by Syriac. Like Syriac, Persian has a “pā” consonant. However, the “pā” in Syriac is orthographically identical to the “fā,” while the Persian “pā” corresponds orthographically to the “bā,” made by simply adding two more dots to the consonantal skeleton.

<sup>275</sup> The West Syriac forms—*yūʿannīs* or *yūhanīs*—are closer to the Greek. See L. Costaz, *Dictionnaire syriaque-français* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1963), 409.

<sup>276</sup> On this point the edition is quite misleading. The editor has changed إيشوع in most cases to يسوع, the Christian Arabic form.

<sup>277</sup> The ms. (68r) has عبد يشوع بن بهريز. On Ibn Bahrīz see G. Graf, *GCAL*, 2:119. See also J.M. Fiey, “Ibn Bahriz et son portrait,” *Parole de l’Orient* 16 (1993), 133–137.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE *CRITIQUE*: REPUTATION, CONTENT AND STYLE

‘Abd al-Jabbār usually appears in modern scholarship as a model Mu‘tazilī. His work is valued not for its originality, but for what it catalogues of his school’s doctrine. According to J. Peters, ‘Abd al-Jabbār was “a true and good Mu‘tazilī: he knew the history of his school and its ideas and became the great ‘compiler’ of the Mu‘tazilī ideas as developed in former centuries by his great predecessors.”<sup>1</sup> G. Monnot finds ‘Abd al-Jabbār bereft of the originality of other scholars, lacking “la pénétration d’Ibn Ḥazm et l’objectivité d’al Bīrūnī” and “la curiosité intellectuelle du grand Shahrastānī.”<sup>2</sup> The idea of ‘Abd al-Jabbār as the “compiler” of the Mu‘tazila, a sort of theological librarian, is due in part to the traditional understanding of Mu‘tazilī history. It is often assumed that, with Ash‘arī’s split from the Mu‘tazila, the school suffered both in relevance and in originality.<sup>3</sup>

The portrayal of ‘Abd al-Jabbār as compiler is not wholly inaccurate. He indeed knew the history of his school and, in the *Mughnī*, frequently defers to his Mu‘tazilī predecessors. In the *Critique*, however, “curiosité intellectuelle” is ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s primary characteristic; he deconstructs Christianity with novel tactics, employing rhetorical and

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<sup>1</sup> Peters, 14. Compare the comments of G. Hourani, who concludes that the *Mughnī* “is not entirely ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s original creation, but develops a school tradition.” *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, 18. Hourani continues: “‘Abd al-Jabbār shows us a more immediate and richer background than had been known for the later Ash‘arite opponents of Mu‘tazilism, such as Juwaynī, Ghazālī and Shahrastānī. It is naïve to think of them as reacting against old Abū l-Hudhayl and his contemporaries—although Nazzām remained a good horse to flog. Their most formidable target was undoubtedly the developed Mu‘tazilite doctrine of the two shaykhs and their school, which came to full maturity in the writings of ‘Abd al-Jabbār.”

<sup>2</sup> Monnot, *Penseurs Muslmans*, 146, 148.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, S. Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe* (Paris: Franck, 1859), 334. Further references are given by Schmidtke, “Neuere Forschungen,” 386, n. 26. This assumption has been largely dispelled. As Schmidtke (p. 394) puts it, “Nun wurde deutlich, daß die Blütezeit der Mu‘tazila viel länger angedauert hat, als früher angenommen.”

logical strategies and reporting stories about Christians unmentioned in earlier texts. Hence the surprise that Stern had upon reading the *Critique*:

In another respect, too, it contrasts with the same author's systematic books on theology: it is no abstract exposition of doctrine, but is full of lively and idiosyncratic polemics against various contemporary trends of thought. . . . His book is a fund of rare information about the people he attacks, but is also made attractive by the original and acute arguments and observations which abound in it; that they stand side by side with naïve sophisms is not surprising in a work like this. 'Abd al-Jabbār appears as a more remarkable man than one would have thought from his scholastic books.<sup>4</sup>

Pines was also impressed, commenting: "When first taking cognizance of 'Abd al-Jabbār's treatise, I looked cursorily through the chapter . . . on Christianity, and found the subject-matter and the approach most peculiar; they bore little similarity to the ordinary Moslem anti-Christian polemics."<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, a twentieth century Muslim observer, al-Shaykh al-Kawtharī, considers 'Abd al-Jabbār's work to be unmatched in its proofs against heresies and other religions.<sup>6</sup>

In the present chapter I will present the reasons why this text made such an impression on modern scholars, discussing its contents, style and purpose. I will begin, however, by considering the impression that it made in an earlier era, on classical Muslim scholars.

### 1. *Reputation of the Tathbīt*

The *Tathbīt dalā'il al-nubuwwa* is extant today in a single manuscript, a unicum, located in the *Şehit Ali Paşa* collection (#1575) of the *Süleymaniye* library in Istanbul. The manuscript, which dates to the year 615/1218, consists of 313 folios in two volumes.<sup>7</sup> The first western scholar who

<sup>4</sup> Stern, "Apocryphal Gospels," 34.

<sup>5</sup> Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> "و لم نرم ما يقارب كتاب تثبيت دلائل النبوة للقاضي عبد الجبار في قوة الحجاج وحسن الصياغة في دفع شكوك المتشككين." al-Shaykh al-Kawtharī, Introduction to Ibn al-'Asākir, *Tabyīn kadhīb al-muflawī* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1399), 28. Quoted by A. 'Uthmān in the Introduction to the *Tathbīt*, ٢.

<sup>7</sup> See H. Ritter, "Philologika," *Der Islam* 18 (1929), 42; The first volume of the *Tathbīt* runs from folios 1–141 and the second from 142–313. The manuscript is quite clearly written, with the exception of the last ten folios, where large portions of the text are missing. This does not affect the *Critique*, however, which runs from

drew attention to the *Tathbūt* was H. Ritter. In 1929, he reported having seen the work in Istanbul, describing it as a “wichtiges Werk, welches eine ausführliche Auseinandersetzung mit den Sekten insbesondere den schiitischen enthält.”<sup>8</sup> Ritter did not catch the importance of the *Critique* within the *Tathbūt*, but his hint about the importance of the Shīʿī material of the work several decades later caught the attention of S. Stern, whose research focused on the Ismāʿīliyya. Pines, meanwhile, learned of the work from Stern (regarding which see the beginning of chapter one). All of this took place independent of the work of ʿUthmān, who published the *Tathbūt* just one year before Stern’s first article (although Stern had no knowledge of the edition before he wrote his second article).<sup>9</sup> Due to this rather remarkable series of events I became aware of the *Critique*, when I found a reference to the debate of Pines and Stern while researching an anti-Christian polemic attributed to Ghazzālī (d. 505/1111).<sup>10</sup>

None of these scholars ever questioned the authenticity of the Istanbul manuscript. ʿUthmān, writing elsewhere, shows great confidence in the authenticity of the entire Jabbārian corpus.<sup>11</sup>

The earliest quotation of material from the *Tathbūt* in Islamic literature, of which I am aware, is that of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/

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folio forty-two to folio ninety-nine. ʿUthmān has divided the volumes in his edition exactly as they are divided in the manuscript. His edition is generally accurate, although ʿUthmān makes some mistakes when it comes to Christian terminology. The explanatory notes on the *Tathbūt* are sparse and occasionally inaccurate; concerning the *Critique* they are at times quite misleading. On p. 159, for example, ʿAbd al-Jabbār identifies the Roman emperor who destroyed the Jewish temple as Titus (r. AD 79–81, Titus was actually the commanding general who subdued Palestine under Vespasian, r. AD 69–79, but he would later become emperor). ʿUthmān mistakenly concludes (p. 159, n. 1) that it was to this Titus that Paul addressed his biblical epistle. This mistake curiously reflects the influence of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s thought in the *Critique*, in which he describes in detail Paul’s attempts to win over Roman authorities (v.i.).

Translations of the text below include corrections to ʿUthmān’s text based on my reading of the manuscript. Note that in the printed edition references to the ms. are consistently off by one page, e.g. 40f (40r) should be 39b (39v) and 40b (40v) should be 40f (40r).

<sup>8</sup> Ritter, 42.

<sup>9</sup> See Stern, “ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 130.

<sup>10</sup> Ghazālī, *Réfutation excellente de la divinité de Jésus-Christ d’après les évangiles*, ed. and trans. Robert Chidiac, S.J. (Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1939), 48; *Al-Ghazālī’s schrift wider die Gottheit Jesu*, trans. Franz-Elmar Wilms (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966).

<sup>11</sup> “We did not attempt to categorize the works of al-Qāḍī according to those correctly or dubiously attributed to him. For we do not find any of his books doubtful [in authenticity] other than ‘The Letter on Chemistry’ (*Risāla fī l-kīmīyāʾ*).” ʿUthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 58.

1350) in his *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī aḥwibat al-yahūd wa-l-naṣārā*,<sup>12</sup> a polemic against Judaism and Christianity.<sup>13</sup> While Ibn al-Qayyim nowhere mentions ‘Abd al-Jabbār by name, he quotes repeatedly from the *Critique* in one concentrated section.<sup>14</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim’s interest in this work corresponds with the description of it by his contemporary Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), who in his *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā’ al-shāfi’iyyīn*, remarks:

[‘Abd al-Jabbār was] the Qāḍī of Rayy and its provinces. He was a Shāfi’ī by legal training and a leader of the Mu’tazila. He composed exceptional works in their discipline [i.e. *kalām*] and also on the sources of law (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) . . . the greatest of which is the book *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, which is in two volumes. It shows knowledge and insight.<sup>15</sup>

Like Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Kathīr was a resident of Damascus and a member of the Ḥanbalī circles around Ibn Taymiyya.<sup>16</sup> His high opinion of the *Tathbūt* is shared by another Ḥanbalī from Damascus, his student Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba in *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā’ al-shāfi’iyya*.<sup>17</sup> Both Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba refer to the work as *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, but there is little doubt that they are referring to the same work from which Ibn al-Qayyim is quoting.<sup>18</sup>

It is also important to note that Ibn Kathīr describes ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s book as a work in two volumes, for, as mentioned above, the only extant manuscript today is likewise in two volumes. Since this

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qīma, 1977).

<sup>13</sup> Pp. 141–6. I owe this reference to Stern (“Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in ‘Abd al-Jabbār,” 35, n. 1 and 39, n. 1), although the extent of the material that Ibn al-Qayyim uses (and its various locations in the text of the *Tathbūt*) is significantly more than what Stern reports.

<sup>14</sup> *Hidāya*, 141–43 borrows from *Tathbūt*, 149–50 and then 143; *Hidāya*, 144–5 borrows from *Tathbūt*, 99–103 (although the order in Ibn al-Qayyim’s excerpt differs); and *Hidāya*, 145 (ll. 20ff.)–146 borrows from *Tathbūt*, 111–3.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Imād al-Dīn Ibn Kathīr, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi’iyyīn*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1413/1993), 1:373. Cf. his less detailed comments in *K. al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 11:310.

<sup>16</sup> That ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s thought enjoyed a renaissance in seventh/fourteenth and eighth/fifteenth century Damascus is also reflected in the attention paid to the Qāḍī’s biography by other Damascene historians, including Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Shākir al-Kutubī, a contemporary and friend of Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. See chapter 2, section 2.1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, 1:184.

<sup>18</sup> There is no reason to expect that these authors would refer to the text as the “*Tathbūt*” and not as the “*Dalā’il*,” for ‘Abd al-Jabbār never gives an explicit title, but simply describes his work as a book “confirming (*Tathbūt*) the proofs (*dalā’il*) of prophecy (*al-nubuwwa*).” Note also that no other works on *dalā’il* are attributed to ‘Abd al-Jabbār.



manuscript dates to 615/1218, the century before the *Dalā'il* became well-known in Damascus, it is possible that these scholars read the same folios that remain today.

Ibn Taymiyya, the common teacher of Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Kathīr, himself refers to the *Tathbīt*, which he likewise names *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, in his *Minhāj al-sunna*.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, in a statement included in the *Majmū' fatāwā*, Ibn Taymiyya refers to works on *alām al-nubuwwa* ("signs of prophecy") by Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Māwardī.<sup>20</sup> The *Alām al-nubuwwa* of Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Māwardī (d. 434/1043) is extant and well-known (on this text see chapter 4, section 3.1).<sup>21</sup> No work of that precise title is attributed to 'Abd al-Jabbār, however, which suggests that Ibn Taymiyya is referring to the *Tathbīt*. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya makes this reference in a section on works of the *mutakallimūn* against Christianity and Judaism,<sup>22</sup> which suggests that he is specifically interested in the *Critique*. This latter suggestion would make sense in light of Ibn Taymiyya's well-known interest in anti-Christian polemic.<sup>23</sup> This interest was shared by Ibn al-Qayyim, author of the *Hidāya*, and Ibn Kathīr, author of a work encouraging *jihād* against Christians entitled *al-Ijtihād fī ṭalab al-jihād*.<sup>24</sup> It is possible, then, that it was the *Critique* that made the *Tathbīt* a popular work among Ibn Taymiyya's circle.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna*, 2 vols. (Bulāq: al-Maṭba'at al-Amīriyya, 1322), 1:9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' fatāwā*, 11:316.

<sup>21</sup> Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1408/1987.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Taymiyya discusses the contents of the Bible in this section. One of the works that Ibn Taymiyya places in the group with 'Abd al-Jabbār's composition is the *Radd 'alā l-Naṣārā* of al-Qurṭubī, most likely Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272).

<sup>23</sup> He first appeared on the public scene to argue for the strict punishment of a Christian who was accused of insulting the Prophet Muḥammad. This event led to his writing of *K. al-Ṣarīm al-maslūl 'alā shātim al-raṣūl*. See H. Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 3:951. He also wrote a massive work against the Christians (*al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-masīḥ*). This work contains many of the same themes as the *Critique*, such as the importance of Constantine and the Council of Nicaea. See *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Nīl, 1323/1905), 3:3ff. See also Fritsch, 48–9. Ibn Taymiyya was generally quite familiar with 'Abd al-Jabbār's thought. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar ta'arūf al-'aql wa-l-naql*, 11 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kunūz al-Adabiyya, 1990), 2:159; 3:159; 5:8, 248; 8:99–101. N.b. 5:247–8 where Ibn Taymiyya mentions 'Abd al-Jabbār (and his Mu'tazilī predecessors Abū 'Alī and Abū Ḥashim al-Jubbā'ī) and refers to Christian doctrine. Cf. also Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā al-ḥamawiyya al-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamza (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumay'ī, 1419/1998), 255–6; idem, *Bughyat al-murtād*, ed. Sa'īd al-Laḥḥām (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1990), 415ff.; idem, *Daqā'iq al-tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Jalaynad, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1398/1978), 1:70.

<sup>24</sup> On this see H. Laoust, "Ibn Kathīr, 'Imād al-Dīn," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 3:817.



Outside of this circle, the Shāfi'ī *muḥaddith* from Cairo, Sirāj al-Dīn 'Umar b. al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401), also mentions the *Tathbīt*. In fact, he describes 'Abd al-Jabbār as "the Mu'tazilī Qāḍī of Rayy, author of *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* among other works, who died in 415."<sup>25</sup> Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1080/1670) likewise singles out 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*.<sup>26</sup> This text had gained a reputation as 'Abd al-Jabbār's most notable work.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. Subject Matter of the *Tathbīt* (See Appendix 2)

Perhaps it is due to the difficulty of classifying the *Tathbīt* that such a notable work has gone unnoticed for so long. The title, *Tathbīt dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, seems to indicate that this is a work on *dalā'il* (or *ḥujaj*, *a'lām*, *khaṣā'is*), a catalogue of proofs (*dalā'il*) that verify the prophethood of Muḥammad. This is indeed a distinct genre within Islamic literature, one which had developed substantially by 'Abd al-Jabbār's day.<sup>28</sup> Initially, *dalā'il* works consisted of *ḥadīth* reports of Muḥammad's apologetic miracles, those miracles that verify his claims of prophethood (on this question see ch. 3, section 3.1). Yet later on *dalā'il*

<sup>25</sup> Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *al-'Aqd al-mudhhab fī ṭabaqāt ḥamalāt al-madhhab*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Baydūn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1417/1997), 77.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 8 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsi, 1351), 3:202.

<sup>27</sup> A great deal of internal evidence confirms 'Abd al-Jabbār's authorship of the *Tathbīt*. A note therein dates its composition to 385/995 (p. 168, l. 10, a date that corresponds to a similar statement earlier in the *Tathbīt* [p. 42, ll. 4–5]. This correspondence, incidentally, witnesses to the integrity of the work as a whole.) According to 'Abd al-Jabbār's biography he should have been in Rayy at this time; the text includes evidence that this was in fact the case (on this see chapter 2, section 3.3). The dating of the text to 385/995 also puts the composition of the *Tathbīt* towards the end of 'Abd al-Jabbār's active writing career. This matches neatly the fact that the *Critique* shows significant advances in knowledge over 'Abd al-Jabbār's other anti-Christian writing, while preserving some of its fundamental characteristics. Among these characteristics are references to Mu'tazilī scholars, including: Abū 'Abdallāh al-Baṣrī (p. 198, l. 16), Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Khallād (p. 198, l. 15), Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (p. 198, l. 14), Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (p. 198, l. 15), Jāhiz (p. 148, l. 1, 5; p. 198, l. 12), Abū Ja'far al-Iskāfī (p. 148, l. 6; p. 198, l. 13) and Nazzām (p. 148, l. 1).

<sup>28</sup> For a list of known *dalā'il* works that precede the *Tathbīt* (twenty-two in number), see the introduction to Abū Bakr Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Firyābī's *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, ed. Umm 'Abdallāh b. Maḥrūs (Beirut: Dār Tayba, 1980), 7ff. The first of these is *Āyāt al-nabī* by 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā'inī (d. 215/830). 'Abd al-Jabbār's Baṣran Mu'tazilī school played a fundamental part in the development of Islamic doctrine on *dalā'il*. See R. Martin, "Role of the Baṣra Mu'tazilīh in Formulating the Doctrine of the Apologetic Miracle," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 39 (1980), 175–189.

works extended beyond the apologetic miracle, a fact evident from the *Tathbīt*, where proofs for the prophethood of Muḥammad are drawn from other genres, including *tafsīr* (“exegesis”), *ta’rīkh* (“history”) and *kalām*. Thus ‘Uthmān is partially correct when he categorizes the *Tathbīt* as a work “of ḥadīth and sīra.”<sup>29</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār opens the *Tathbīt* with the statement: “This is the book confirming the proofs of the prophecy of our Prophet Muḥammad, God’s Messenger (God’s blessing and peace be upon him), the indications of his miracles, the appearance of his signs *and the refutation of whoever rejects this*” (p. 5, ll. 4–6). Thus he makes it clear from the beginning that there is an organic connection between *dalā’il* and polemic. The affirmation of Islamic doctrine entails a refutation of non-Islamic beliefs. For this reason ‘Abd al-Jabbār continues by describing Muḥammad’s triumph over other religions:

He appeared in Mecca, declared the Jews unbelievers and washed his hands of them. Thus [he did] with the Christians and the Byzantines [*rūm*]. He washed his hands of them. Thus [he did] with the Persians and the Zoroastrians. He washed his hands of them. Thus [he did] with the Indians. He washed his hands of them. Thus [he did] with his people, the Quraysh, and the Arabs. He washed his hands of them. He denounced their gods and declared their forefathers unbelievers and their religions to be in error. He muddled their religions and scattered their masses (p. 5, l. 8–6, 1).

‘Abd al-Jabbār returns to this point in the course of the *Critique*:

Do you not see that the Prophet (God’s blessing and peace be upon him) came to declare the Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians unbelievers, to wash his hands of them, shed their blood, capture their offspring and declare their property permissible [to be taken by Muslims] (p. 128, ll. 10–12)?

<sup>29</sup> ‘Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 60. The *Tathbīt* roughly follows the career of Muḥammad, like a *sīra*. Pp. 8–91 of the *Tathbīt* is a traditional exposition of Muḥammad’s *dalā’il*. ‘Abd al-Jabbār considers the various miracles attributed to him (e.g. p. 46, the *isrā’*, “night journey,” p. 55, the splitting of the moon, etc.), in addition to Muḥammad’s miraculous predictions (p. 44, of the *futūḥ*, “Islamic conquests,” p. 52, of the men who would die as polytheists). This leads into the *Critique* (pp. 91–210). ‘Abd al-Jabbār then discusses the question of the *imāma* (leadership) and argues for the legitimacy of Abū Bakr’s caliphate (pp. 210–312). Thereafter, he returns to the theme of *dalā’il* within the *sīra* of Muḥammad (pp. 235–527), focusing largely on *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the occasions of revelation). The final section (pp. 527–661) comes back to the question of the *imāma* and includes a polemical section against the Ismā’īliyya (pp. 582–654), focusing on the Qarāmiṭa.

Indeed, Muḥammad's refutation of Christianity, according to 'Abd al-Jabbār, is one of the apologetic signs that verifies his prophethood. He makes the same point in the introduction to the *Critique*:

Another chapter on [Muḥammad's] signs and marks: His report about the Christians and Christian teachings (p. 91, ll. 10–11).

This reference to Muḥammad's miraculous report about Christianity is itself a recapitulation of a Qur'ānic apology. At one point the Qur'ān (16:103) defends the Prophet against the accusation that his proclamations came not from God but from a person with a foreign tongue. Elsewhere, while revealing the story of the miraculous birth of Jesus, the Qur'ān (3:44) insists that this account is "from reports of the unseen, which We reveal to you." The Qur'ān also has Jesus chastise Christians for corrupting his religion (Q 3:51–2, 5:116–8, 19:36).<sup>30</sup>

In introducing the *Critique*, I am compelled to focus my attention on certain areas. Not only is the work quite sizeable (120 pages in the printed edition), but it includes remarkably diverse material when compared to earlier works such as 'Alī al-Ṭabarī's (d. 240/855) *K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*<sup>31</sup> and Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq's *al-Radd 'alā l-naṣārā* (the former being focused on scriptural proofs and the latter on theological ones). Furthermore, 'Abd al-Jabbār does not proceed with the logical order of 'Alī al-Ṭabarī or Warrāq. He jumps from one topic to another, returning to subjects that the reader might think have long been concluded. Thus it would not be especially helpful to introduce the topics of the *Critique* sequentially as they appear in the text (although I present them in Appendix 2 for the reader's reference). Nor is it possible in the present work to do justice to all of the topics that 'Abd al-Jabbār discusses therein; I have largely passed over, for example, his description of religions other than Islam and Christianity.<sup>32</sup> I focus instead on the four most prominent themes of

<sup>30</sup> As T. Khalidi puts it, Jesus "is the only prophet in the Qur'ān who is deliberately made to distance himself from the doctrines that his community is said to hold of him." T. Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 12. Khalidi concludes, "In sum, the Qur'ānic Jesus, unlike any other prophet, is embroiled in polemic."

<sup>31</sup> 'Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla* (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1982).

<sup>32</sup> For example, he reports anecdotes about Manicheanism and Hinduism, in order to counter the Christian apologetical argument that their religion is validated by the fact that so many have accepted it, although it is so demanding:

Now the Manichean religion is stricter than Christianity. They forbid eating animals, riding them, or injuring them in any way. They even forbid killing beasts

the *Critique*: the composition of the Bible, the contents of the Bible, church history and Christian practice.

### 2.1. *On the Composition of the Bible*

‘Abd al-Jabbār holds to the standard Islamic view that the Bible in the hands of the Christians is not the Injīl, the true revelation given to Jesus, but rather a later falsification thereof. This view is usually described with the term *tahrīf* (or, less frequently, *tabdīl* or *taghyīr*), whether in reference to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament or the New Testament.<sup>33</sup> The idea of *tahrīf* is the very foundation (Goldziher calls it the *Kempunkt*) of Islamic thought on Christianity (and Judaism, for that matter). While the precise term *tahrīf* does not appear in the Qur’ān, the related verb *yuharrifūna*, “they corrupt” does.<sup>34</sup> However, it is not clear from the Qur’ānic context what exactly this verb entails. The word *tahrīf* is etymologically related to *ḥarf*, “letter,” and so it might be assumed that it refers to changing letters, or by extension, words. This is the meaning given to the term in the *ḥadīth* that is the *locus classicus* for the concept:

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of prey, such as snakes and scorpions, and simply bear their injuries. They forbid the keeping of possessions. They require more fasts and prayers than the Christians. They forbid marriage and all sensual pleasures entirely. Their religion should be a thousand times more correct than Christianity.

The Indians demand numerous acts of worship and great asceticism. The most ascetic Christian monk does not even approach them. Their religion requires them to kill themselves and even burn themselves alive. If their leader dies, not only do they burn him, they burn his loved ones, friends, disciples and wife with him. Her father and mother and family will [burn] her. Now Christianity has none of this. So the religion of the Manicheans and the [Indians] should be more correct than the teachings of these Christian sects (p. 187).

Elsewhere in the *Critique* ‘Abd al-Jabbār enters into specific refutations of Judaism (p. 132) and especially Zoroastrianism (pp. 125, 179, 191, *passim*) that have no relation to his anti-Christian polemic. Note also his narrative of Alexander the Great and Aristotle creating a path across the water (p. 177, in the section on talismans), a narrative that is closely related to the Alexander romance literature, and thus indirectly to the Qur’ānic narrative (sūra 18) of Moses and al-Khiḍr (or al-Khaḍir). These sections, which are rich in detail and precise references, deserve to be the subject of a separate study.

<sup>33</sup> On “*tahrīf*” see H. Lazarus Yafeh, “Tahrīf,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 10:111–2 and especially Goldziher, “Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen ahl al-kitāb,” *ZDMG* 32 (1878), 345–6, 348ff. See also di Matteo “Il tahrīf od alterazione della Bibbia secondo i musulmani,” *Bessarione* 26 (1922), 64–111, 223–260; J.-M. Gaudeul and R. Caspar, “Textes de la Tradition musulmane concernant le *tahrīf*,” *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980), 61–104.

<sup>34</sup> See 4:46 and 5:13. Cf. also 2:75.

O community of Muslims, how is it that you ask the People of the Book? Your book, which was brought down upon His Prophet, is the most recent information about God. You read an unadulterated book. God has related to you that the People of the Book exchanged that which God wrote, changing the book with their hands.<sup>35</sup>

The standard interpretation of *taḥrīf*, then, is that the Christians rewrote the revelation given to Jesus. Yet another attitude to Christian scripture developed as Muslim authors began to cite the Bible in support of their arguments. According to this attitude, some parts of the Bible do indeed contain the authentic teaching of Jesus. The interpretation alone has been falsified. This second approach is sometimes referred to as *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* “corruption of the meaning” (or *taḥrīf al-taʾwīl*), as opposed to *taḥrīf al-ḥarf* “corruption of the letter” (or *taḥrīf al-lafẓ*, *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*). Thus ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, in his introduction to his *al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā*,<sup>36</sup> remarks “With the help of God Most High, I will interpret the words—which [the Christians] have explained in a way contrary to their meanings—as I describe their *taḥrīf*.”<sup>37</sup>

The more famous Ṭabarī, Abū Jaʿfar, mentions both types of *taḥrīf* in his commentary on Qurʾān 3:78.<sup>38</sup> Yet the concept of *taḥrīf al-*

<sup>35</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1420/1999), 2:182. On this see also I. Goldziher, “Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen ahl al-kitāb,” 344.

<sup>36</sup> See also the work of pseudo-Ghazzālī, *al-Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyat ʿĪsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-injīl*, which, as the title implies (*The Splendid Refutation to the Divinity of Jesus through the Clarity of the Gospel*), is based on the principle that the Christian gospels themselves demonstrate the Islamic teaching of Jesus. Pseudo-Ghazzālī gives every indication of accepting the Christian gospels as Scripture, even though he quite directly accuses Christians of corrupting the Injīl, a corruption which therefore must be considered *taḥrīf al-maʿnā*: ثم أن اقتصرنا على بيان هذا الأمر الواضح الذي ارتكبوا فيه التحريف. Ghazālī, *Réfutation excellente*, 48. See also H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzālī* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 460–477; L. Massignon, “Le Christ dans les Évangiles selon al-Ghazali,” *Revue des études islamiques* 6 (1932), 525.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, “Ar-Radd ‘alā-n-Naṣārā” (henceforth: ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*), ed. I.-A. Khalifé S.J. and W. Kutsch S.J., *Mélanges de l’université Saint Joseph* 36 (1959), 120. A new version of this text has recently been prepared by S.K. Samir. In his *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī describes the illogical interpretation of the Christians as a type of *taḥrīf* in addition to the work of the “translators and scribes.” ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 193. See also the comments of Jāḥiẓ in his *Radd* (p. 324 of Finkel’s translation) where he argues that the problem with the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is not the content but the translation.

<sup>38</sup> Qurʾān 3:78 has: “There is a group of them who distort the Book with their tongues (*yakwūna alsinatahum bi-l-kitāb*).” Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī offers a number of traditions on the interpretation of this verse. Two of them interpret this verse simply by saying, “They corrupt [the Book] (*yuharrifūnahū*).” Three other traditions explain that “the Jews, the enemies of God, corrupted (*harrafū*) the Book of God. They added new things to it and claimed that this was from God.” These *ḥadīths*

*ma'nā*, it must be pointed out, is almost without exception used only for the sake of argument, in order to show that the Christians have betrayed their own scripture. It is a strategic tactic, not a medium of constructive exegesis or theological speculation.<sup>39</sup>

While Muslim authors almost universally reject the authenticity of the Bible, very few of them are willing to speculate about how this book was written and what happened to the Islamic scripture that it replaced.<sup>40</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār is the exception. He not only affirms that *tahrīf* took place; he also attempts to describe how, when and why *tahrīf* took place.<sup>41</sup>

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imply that *tahrīf* entails the actual adding of words. Another tradition is similar: "This [refers] to the Jews, who would add to the Book of God what God did not send down." A final tradition, which Ṭabarī places towards the end of the entry (as he usually does with traditions that he finds the least cogent) applies this verse to "a group of the People of the Book. . . . This [refers] to their corruption (*tahrīf*) of the subject of [the Book]." Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* (henceforth: Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*), ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Bayḍūn, 12 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1420/1999), 3:321–2. This last view, clearly the minority approach, is what is meant by the term *tahrīf al-ma'nā*.

<sup>39</sup> Notice the rather remarkable instance where Jāḥiẓ introduces a quotation from the Hebrew Bible with "*qāla Allāhu 'azza wa-jalla*," as though he were quoting Qur'ān. See J. Finkel's introduction to "A Risāla of al-Jāḥiẓ," 311. Ḥasan b. Ayyūb (d. late 4th/10th) also introduces a quotation from the Hebrew Bible with the same invocation: Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, "Risāla," in Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:340. A similar approach to the Bible is taken by Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm in his *Radd*. See I. di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm," (henceforth text of *Radd* therein referred to by reference to author: Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm) *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 9 (1921–2), 301–64. A more exceptional case is Ibn Khaldūn, who remarks that *tahrīf* by the Jews and Christians was unlikely due to the respect that Jews and Christians have for Scripture. On this see Lazarus-Yafeh, "Taḥrīf," 111. See also D. Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7 (March 1996), 1, 30ff.

The reticence of Muslims to give any sort of scriptural authority to the Bible is not only due to content, but also to form. The very form of the Bible is foreign to the Islamic concept of scripture, as the Qur'ān implies that the Tawrāt of Moses and the Injīl of Jesus (or the *zabūr* of David, the *ṣuḥuf* of Abraham) are scriptures similar in structure to the Qur'ān: a single coherent book, God's first person message to one people in one tongue (see, e.g., Qur'ān 3:3). Yet the Christian Bible is not like the Qur'ān; it is a multi-volume book written over centuries by different authors, in different lands and in different languages.

<sup>40</sup> See Baarda, 232, who quotes the Jacobite Syriac author Dionysius Bar Ṣalībī (d. 566/1171) defending Christianity against Muslim accusations of *tahrīf*.

<sup>41</sup> Goldziher was unaware of the *Critique* when he wrote, "Da stellt sich nun heraus, dass die Hauptvertreter der muhammedanische Theologie nicht einmal bezüglich der Grundfrage: wie man sich jene Verdrehung und Fälschung vorzustellen, und was man darunter zu verstehen habe, eines Sinnes sind." I. Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen ahl al-kitāb," 364.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s primary account of the Bible’s corruption describes the Christians as a group among the Jews who, with the collusion of the pagan Romans, changed the Injil out of their greed for power:

So know that the religion of Christ and the religions of the Messengers (peace be upon them) were not changed and substituted all at once, but rather one portion after another, in every age and period, until the change became complete. The party of truth continually grew smaller. The party of wrong grew larger until they prevailed and the truth died because of them.

Now after Christ, his followers conducted their prayers and feasts with the Jews [*yahūd*] and the Israelites [*banī Isrāʾīl*] in one place, in their synagogues [*kanāʾisihim*], despite the conflict between them over Christ. The Romans were ruling over them and the Christians would complain about the Jews to the Roman rulers, showing them how weak they were and asking for compassion. So [the Romans] had compassion on them. There was much of this until the Romans said to them, “There is a contract between us and the Jews, that we will not change their religion. Yet if you leave their religions, separate yourselves from them, pray to the East as we do, eat what we eat, and permit what we permit, we will aid you and make you mightier. Then the Jews would have no way over you. You would become stronger than them.” They said, “We will do it.” The [Romans] said, “Go, bring your companions and your book.”

So they went back to their companions and informed them of what took place between them and the Romans, saying, “Bring the Injil and come so that we might go to [the Romans].” But their [companions] said to them, “You have done wretchedly! It is not permitted for us to give the Injil to the unclean Romans. By agreeing with the Romans, you have left the religion. It is not permitted for us to mix with you. Rather, we must wash our hands of you and prevent you from getting the Injil.” So a severe conflict occurred between them.

[The Christians] returned to the Romans and said to them, “Assist us against our companions before assisting us against the Jews! Get our book from them for us.” [The companions] took cover from the Romans and fled from the land. So the Romans wrote to their agents around Mawṣil and the Arabian Peninsula and thus they were sought. A group of them showed up and were burned. Another group was killed (p. 152, l. 6–153, 4).<sup>42</sup>

Note that ‘Abd al-Jabbār uses the term *rūm* to refer both to the Romans of Jesus/Paul/Constantine’s time and to the Byzantines of his own day.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the translation of Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 14ff.



This is typical of Islamic sources, where the term can refer to either.<sup>43</sup> This is how the term is used by ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Nestorian Christian source (see chapter 3, section 2.3), who in the Creed names Pontius Pilate “*al-rūmī*.” ‘Abd al-Jabbār occasionally mixes up his Roman history, as when he states that the apostle Paul was sent to Constantinople to visit the king of the *rūm* (p. 157). Despite this, I have translated *rūm* as either Roman or Byzantine according to the historical period to which ‘Abd al-Jabbār is referring.

According to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, then, the followers of Christ and the Jews initially worshipped together. When a conflict occurred between them over Christ, a deputation of the followers of Christ went to the pagan Romans seeking help and made a deal with them. The Romans proposed that they would help the followers of Christ if they would leave Jewish practice and embrace Roman practice. Yet when this deputation returned to their companions, they found the latter violently opposed to the deal. Not only this, the companions refused to allow the deputation access to the Injīl. In response, the deputation returned to the Romans, and, forgetting their initial conflict with the Jews, sought the help of the Romans against their former companions. The latter fled the scene, only to be pursued by the Romans, who tracked some of them down and killed them, although the narrative leaves open the possibility that some escaped alive.

Thus the followers of Christ are split into two groups: the delegation and the companions. The members of the delegation are, according to the logic of the account, proto-Christians, those who will abandon the true religion of Christ. The companions are the Muslim followers of Jesus,<sup>44</sup> who hold onto his religion and his scripture (i.e. the Injīl) despite the persecution of the former. This picture is based

<sup>43</sup> See C.E. Bosworth, “Rūm,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 8:601. Yāqūt attempts to help the confused reader on the subject:

There are two Romes (*rūmiyyatāni*). One of them is in the land of the Byzantines (*bi-l-rūm*). The other is one of those that was built by, and named after, a king. As for the one in the land of the Byzantines, it is the city of administration and the seat of learning of the Byzantines. . . . [As for the other], it is to the northwest of Constantinople, at least a fifty day journey away. It is today in the possession of the Franks, while its king is said to be the king of the Germans. It is there that the pope lives, to whom the Franks are obedient (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 3:113).

<sup>44</sup> To a Muslim, it must be remembered, there is strictly speaking no such thing as a pre-Islamic or post-Islamic era. Islam is the eternal religion; it has no beginning and no end. All of the prophets and their followers were Muslims, from Adam to Muḥammad. As Ibn Taymiyya puts it, “all of the prophets and their communities were Muslims, believers, monotheists. God has never accepted any religion other than Islam.” *al-Radd ‘alā l-manṭiqiyyīn* (Lahore: Idārat Tarjumān al-Sunna, 1396/1976), 290.



on Qurʾān 61:14, which describes how one group (*tāʾifa*) of the *banū isrāʾīl* believed (*āmanat*) in the message of Jesus and one group disbelieved (*kafarat*).<sup>45</sup>

The fact that ʿAbd al-Jabbār refers to the followers of Christ as *banū Isrāʾīl* may be thought to support Pines' Judaeo-Christian thesis. In fact, this appellation reflects ʿAbd al-Jabbār's Qurʾān-mindedness. The Qurʾān speaks about the *yahūd*, the term that ʿAbd al-Jabbār uses for "Jews," in negative terms (see Q 5:82), usually for the Jews of Muḥammad's day. Yet with *banū isrāʾīl* the Qurʾān refers in some cases specifically to the followers of Christ, as in Q 61:6.

This narrative serves as a reply to the contentions of Christian apologists in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's day, such as Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, who argued that Christianity is validated (and, implicitly, Islam invalidated) by the fact that it was not established by political coercion or compulsion.<sup>46</sup> Here ʿAbd al-Jabbār asserts that Christianity was indeed established by coercion. What is more, the very nature of Christ's religion was changed in the process. In order to gain power, the Christians had to remove the heart from their religion, making a deal with the Romans to put pagan practices in the place of the divine law. This narrative, then, is a *theologumenon*, a theological argument.

In order to build this *theologumenon*, ʿAbd al-Jabbār expands upon an apologetical theme that appears repeatedly in *sīra* and *tafsīr* literature: the survival of isolated groups and individuals who, while fleeing persecution, preserved the Islamic teaching of Christ and his Injīl. Among these is the figure of Baḥīrā, the monk who, from his cell near the Syrian town of Buṣrā, saw the young Muḥammad pass by in a caravan with his uncle Abū Ṭālib and recognized him as the Prophet predicted in his scriptures. According to Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767), he "looked at [Muḥammad's] back and saw the seal of prophethood (*khātam al-nubuwwa*) between his shoulders in the very place described in his book."<sup>47</sup> Baḥīrā is one of those Muslim followers of Jesus to whom the Qurʾān refers when it states (5:82b–3):

<sup>45</sup> On this cf. also Q 42:13–14.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, the argument of Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, *Risāla*, in *Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munajjim, Ḥunayn b. Ishāq et Qustā b. Lūqā*, ed. S.K. Samir, *PO* 40:4 (1981), 178. On this topic, see chapter 5, section 2.4.5.

<sup>47</sup> The narrative is filled with symbolic elements. At the time of his encounter with Baḥīrā, Muḥammad is twelve, the age at which Jesus taught the teachers in the temple of Jerusalem (Lk 2:42–9). Meanwhile, the seal of prophecy (which in the Qurʾān is a symbolic phrase) refers here to a physical mark, a mole between Muḥammad's

“You will find that the [group] closest in affection to those who believe are those who say, ‘We are Naṣārā.’ This is because there are priests and monks among them who are not arrogant. If they hear that which was revealed to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflow with tears from the truth they have recognized. They say, ‘Lord, we believe. Count us among the witnesses.’” The early *mufas-sir* Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) declares that this passage refers to forty monks in Muḥammad’s time who still maintained the true (Islamic) religion of Jesus, thirty-two of whom were in Ethiopia and eight in Syria. He names Baḥīrā among the latter.<sup>48</sup>

Often considered to be among these true believers is another Syrian monk, sometimes given the name Naṣṭūr,<sup>49</sup> as well as Waraqa b. Nawfal, the cousin of Khadija, first wife of Muḥammad. According

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shoulder blades. This narrative is itself an exegesis (Wansbrough refers to it as a historicization, making history of a non-historical scriptural passage) on the Qur’ānic phrase *khātam al-nabiyyīn* “seal of the prophets” (Qur’ān 33:40). See Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muḥammad*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 80; Ibn Sa’d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. E. Mittwoch, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1909ff.), 1:99–101; Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 1:1123. Ibn Sa’d (p. 100) has Baḥīrā say to Abū Ṭālib, Muḥammad’s paternal uncle and chaperon on his trip to Syria, “We find your nephew in our books. His affair will be great.”

<sup>48</sup> Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, ed. ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Shihāta, 4 vols. (Cairo: Mu’assasat al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), 1:235. In other cases I quote from the Beirut (Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2002) reprint, but it is missing this specific page. Muqātil’s orthodoxy is often doubted by later Muslim scholars. More recently, western scholars have questioned the authenticity of his *Tafsīr*, yet van Ess has argued convincingly in favor thereof. See the detailed section on Muqātil in his *TG*, 2:516–32. Cf. also the theories of Thaḥalabī on this verse in his *Tafsīr*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1422/2002), 4:99. Jāhiz (*Radd*, 14) comments on this verse: “In this very verse is the greatest proof that God did not specify these Christians [i.e. the Nestorians] nor those who are like them, the Melkites and the Jacobites. Rather He specified the likes of Baḥīra and those monks whom Salmān was serving.”

<sup>49</sup> I refer here to the account of the young Muḥammad’s journey to Syria with Khadija’s servant Maysara as related by Ibn Sa’d (1:83 and 1:101–2). As in the account of Muḥammad and Baḥīrā, when the caravan reaches Buṣrā they encounter a monk who recognizes Muḥammad as a prophet. Other similarities with the Baḥīrā account exist: the monk adjures Muḥammad by swearing to the Meccan goddesses *al-Lāt* and *al-Uzzā*, for which Muḥammad rebukes him. Once again, this monk finds Muḥammad mentioned in his “books.” In this case, the monk does not recognize Muḥammad’s prophethood due to a cloud that covers Muḥammad’s head, or a tree that bends its branches to shade Muḥammad, as in the Baḥīrā narrative, but rather because Muḥammad sits under a tree where no one but a prophet has rested (Ibn Sa’d, 1:101), or, in a second version, because of a redness in his eyes (Ibn Sa’d, 1:83). In both versions Ibn Sa’d refers to this monk as Naṣṭūr, perhaps due to Melkite or Jacobite anti-Nestorian sentiment. See also S. Gero, “The Legend of the Monk Baḥīrā,” *La Syrie de Byzance à l’Islam* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1992), 48–9, nn. 10 and 11.

to one tradition, Waraqa was a Christian who would write down the Injīl in Arabic (or, according to another tradition, in Hebrew).<sup>50</sup> It is Waraqa whom Khadīja asked for help when Muḥammad reported his first prophetic experience on Mt. Ḥirā'. He confirmed the authenticity of that experience, saying: "Surely, by Him in whose hand is Waraqa's soul, thou art the Prophet of this people. There hath come unto thee the greatest *nāmūs*,<sup>51</sup> who came unto Moses."<sup>52</sup> The fact that Baḥīrā and Waraqa are cut from the same literary cloth is shown by a variant of this account, where Khadīja turns not to Waraqa but to Baḥīrā for help.<sup>53</sup>

Among this group as well is Salmān al-Fārisī.<sup>54</sup> Salmān, according to the standard narrative, was a zealous Zoroastrian who, while still in his native Persia, heard the prayers of a group of Syrian Christians and prayed with them for a day.<sup>55</sup> He returned home and announced to his family that he had changed his religion, for which his father bound him with chains. Yet Salmān escaped and followed the Christians back to Syria. There, however, he became deluded with Christianity due to a bishop who was stealing from his flock (a fact that Salmān revealed to the unsuspecting community upon the bishop's death). Yet Salmān found the next bishop to be a virtuous man and became his close disciple. On his deathbed, this good bishop

<sup>50</sup> See *Ṣaḥīḥ* Bukhārī, 3:331; *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim, 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1421/2000), 2:180–1.

<sup>51</sup> A word related to the Greek νόμος (likely through the Syriac *nāmūsā*), "law." See M. Plessner, "Nāmūs," *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 7:953 and especially J. Wansbrough's discussion of *nomos* (law, esp. Mosaic Law) and the *nāmūs* in this report. See Wansbrough, 131ff. This pericope is thus a recasting of the biblical narrative of Moses descending from Mt. Sinai with the law.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Ishāq, trans. Guillaume, 107.

<sup>53</sup> This is in the account preserved in the *sīra* of Sulaymān al-Taymī (d. 2nd/8th), as recorded by Suhaylī. See A. Sprenger "Aus Briefen an Prof. Fleischer," *ZDMG* 7 (1853), 414; Ibn Hajar, *al-Iṣāba fī tamayyiz al-saḥāba*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, 13 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyya, 1969–77), 6:399. See also Gero, "The Legend of the Monk Baḥīrā," 50, n. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *al-Sīra al-nabawīyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqā, 2 vols. (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1419/1999), 1:214ff.

<sup>55</sup> According to other versions of the Salmān narrative, he hears a man praying from a book and weeping. Salmān is so moved by the scene that he asks this man about the book. The latter responds that it is the Injīl that God sent to Jesus. Salmān inquires further and ultimately "submits to God" (*aslama li-llāh*). The verb that is used here, *aslama*, is usually used to describe one becoming a Muslim. The implication is clear: the religion of the Injīl is Islam. For a more in-depth analysis of the Salmān story, see J. McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 106ff. On the meaning of "islām," see W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: New American Library, 1964), ch. 4.

confided to Salmān that most Christians had left the true faith of Christ.<sup>56</sup> He also told Salmān where to find one who had not, declaring: "My dear son, I do not know anyone who is as I am. Men have died and have either altered or abandoned most of their true religion, except a man in Mawṣil, so join him."<sup>57</sup> Salmān then moved on to this second true believer in Mawṣil. Ultimately,<sup>58</sup> he found his way to Mecca and then to Medina, where he met Muḥammad and became a Muslim. As with Baḥīrā, he recognized Muḥammad as the true prophet predicted in the scriptures by the seal of prophethood on his back.<sup>59</sup>

The connections between these narratives and 'Abd al-Jabbār's account quoted above are not hard to find. 'Abd al-Jabbār's description of Mawṣil as a city of refuge for the companions of Jesus is influenced by the Salmān narratives,<sup>60</sup> and perhaps by those on Zayd b. 'Amr,<sup>61</sup> just as his mentioning of the Arabian Peninsula is influenced by the accounts of Muḥammad's encounters with Muslim followers

<sup>56</sup> Accounts like this one accomplish two different tasks at the same time. First, they help explain why the actual scripture of the Christians, and their understanding of Jesus, is so different from the Qur'ān and what it has to say about Jesus. Second, these accounts distance Christians from the *naṣārā* who are spoken about in positive terms in the Qur'ān. Qur'ān 2:112, for example, seems to imply that Christians might be indeed admitted into heaven: "Nay, but whoever submits his will to God, being a good-doer, his wage is with his Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow." Arberry's translation (The Qur'ān here switches from third person singular to plural in the middle of the verse. Most likely this is because the last sentence is a formulaic refrain; Cf. 2:38, 62). This sentiment is qualified by the ending of the *ḥadīth* in which the story of Salmān is contained. Muḥammad explains to Salmān: "Whoever dies in the religion of Jesus and dies in submission to God (*islām li-llāh*) before hearing me will be fine, but whoever hears me today and does not believe in me is already doomed" (See McAuliffe, 106).

<sup>57</sup> Ibn Ishāq, 1:216; translation from Guillaume, 96. Cf. Ḥusayn Muḥib Miṣrī, *Salmān al-fārisī* (Cairo: Dār al-Anglū al-Miṣriyya, 1973), 48, 106.

<sup>58</sup> This next true believer in Jesus, also on his deathbed, sends Salmān to another in Naṣībīn. This latter also dies, but not before sending Salmān to another in 'Ammūriyya. This final true believer relates to Salmān that a new prophet is about to arise in Arabia.

<sup>59</sup> Ibn Ishāq, 1:220.

<sup>60</sup> Stern points out that one ms. tradition of Ibn Ishāq's *Ṣīra* contains a marginal note identifying the faithful Christians that Salman encounters with the fugitives from a persecution that Paul carried out. See "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 180. Crone, meanwhile, argues that the Salmān story retraces the historical genesis of the Judaeo-Christians. See P. Crone, "Islam, Judaeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm," 90, esp. n. 179.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn Ishāq reports several traditions about Zayd, whom he names as one of the four pre-Islamic Meccans (among whom he also includes Waraqa) who abandoned polytheism and sought out the true religion of Abraham. Zayd's search takes him through Mawṣil. See Ibn Ishāq, trans. Guillaume, 103.

of Jesus there (like Waraqa) who confirmed his prophethood. These narratives provide ‘Abd al-Jabbār with an entry into his account of how Christ’s religion was changed.

One final point regarding ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account must be emphasized. The fundamental argument of the account, that Christians have sold the true religion in an evil deal, is based firmly in the Qur’ān:

God made a covenant with those to whom the Book was given, that they make it clear to people and not conceal it. But they cast it behind their backs, buying with it that which has little value; that which they bought is wretched (Q 3:187).

Thus ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s narrative, for all of its creativity, is firmly based in Qur’ān and *sīra*. In the continuation of that narrative, the proto-Christians, deprived of the true Injīl, look to the Tawrāt as a model of scripture:

Those who made a deal with the Romans gathered and consulted about how to replace the Injīl, since it had passed out of their hands. They came to the opinion that they would produce an Injīl, saying, “The Tawrāt is only genealogies (*mawālīd*) of the prophets and histories of their lives.<sup>62</sup> So we will construct a gospel accordingly. Let each one of us mention that which he memorized from the formulations of the Injīl and from what the Christians say about Christ.”

So one group wrote a gospel. Then after them, another group came and wrote a gospel. They wrote a number of gospels, yet omitted much of what was in the original. There were a number of them who knew many matters that were in the correct Injīl and they concealed them in order to establish their leadership.

In [the true Injīl] there was no mention of the Cross or the crucifixion (p. 153, ll. 4–12).<sup>63</sup>

Through this narrative ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues that the multiplication of gospels occurred after the disappearance of the true Injīl. This multiplicity makes a sharp contrast with the perfect oneness of the Qur’ān. According to the standard account of ‘Uthmān’s codification

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<sup>62</sup> *Mawālīd* is the plural of *mawlid*, technically a noun of place (*ism makān*), but used primarily as a noun of time (*ism zamān*) to denote the time of birth. See Lane, 8:2967. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s use of this word might be influenced by the Syriac *mawlādā*, which definitely contains the sense of generation and, by extension, biography. This is the term used in the Peshitta to introduce the biographies of the patriarchs and their families (see Gen. 2:4, 5:1, 10:1, *passim*), translating the Hebrew *tōledōth* (See J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], 257).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. translation of Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 15–6.

of the Qurʾān, the caliph was moved to action when one of his generals, Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān, came to him and declared, “O Commander of the Faithful, inform this community what to do before we are divided in our reading like the Jews and the Christians.”<sup>64</sup> While the Qurʾān was perfectly preserved in one version, the Christian gospels multiplied, becoming ever more distant from the true Injīl, as a picture loses its clarity when it is photocopied, then its copy is copied, and so on. Eventually, ‘Abd al-Jabbār relates elsewhere, there were eighty versions of the gospel.<sup>65</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār continues by pointing out that none of the gospels are in Hebrew, which he assumes to be the language of Christ.<sup>66</sup> This, he argues, is a sign that the Christians are hiding something:

Furthermore, there is no gospel in the language of Christ, which he and his companions spoke: Hebrew, the language of Abraham the close friend [of God] and the rest of the prophets, the language which they spoke and in which the books of God descended to these and other Israelites. God addressed them [in Hebrew], but the Christians abandoned it. The [Muslim] scholars (*al-ʿulamāʾ*) say to them, “O community of Christians, your turning from the Hebrew language, the language of Christ and the prophets before him (peace be upon them) to other languages, so that no Christian recites these gospels in the Hebrew language during his [religious] duties, is a trick and a plot as you flee from scandal.”

The people say to them, “The abandonment of [Hebrew] occurred when your first companions sought to beguile [others] with their accounts, to trick them by disguising the lies that they put there and to cover up the schemes they used to gain leadership.”

This is because the Hebrews were the *ahl al-kitāb* and the party of knowledge in that era. So these individuals changed the language, or rather abandoned all of it, so that the party of knowledge would not understand their teachings and their intention to cover up [their lies] and so that they would not be scandalized before their group could gain power and their [scheme] be completed.

So they abandoned [Hebrew] for many languages that Christ and his companions did not speak, and which are spoken by people other

<sup>64</sup> Bukhārī, 3:344.

<sup>65</sup> *Tathbīt*, 153.

<sup>66</sup> I have discussed this matter in the first chapter (section 1.2), arguing that it is a logical deduction for a Qurʾān-minded Muslim theologian to think that the true Injīl was in Hebrew. Notice also the comments of S. Griffith: “The suggestion of some Muslim scholars that [the Injīl] was originally in Hebrew is an obvious conclusion for them to draw from the data contained in their own divine revelation.” “The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century,” *Studia Islamica* 69 (1985), 130.

than *ahl al-kitāb*, those who do not know the Books of God or His laws, such as the Romans, Syrians, Persians, Indians, Armenians, and other barbarians.<sup>67</sup> Thus they camouflaged and tricked in order to cover up their defects and achieve the object of their desire. They sought leadership through this small group, taking advantage of religion.

If that were not so, they would have adhered to the language of Abraham, of his offspring and of Christ, by whom the demonstration (of religion) was established and to whom the Books were sent down. In order to confirm evidence to the Israelites and the unbelievers of the Jews, it would have been more proper to address them in their own tongue. They should have engaged [the Israelites] in discussion in their language, so that they would not have been able to refuse. Know this, for it is a great source (p. 153, l. 15–154, 14).<sup>68</sup>

While ‘Abd al-Jabbār does not explicitly make a comparison, he here holds up the Christian gospels to the standard of the Qur’ān and finds them terribly wanting. This strategy comes from the fact that his own apologetical system is based on the authority of the Qur’ān. As he himself explains, “We do not claim signs or miracles. Rather [the sign], as everyone knows who has heard the reports, is the Qur’ān” (p. 181, ll. 17–8). According to the Qur’ānic standard, scripture is only valid in its original language. The fact that the gospels are no longer in that language (according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār) is a sign of their invalidity. More to the point, the Christians did not leave the original language of the Injīl by accident or misunderstanding but by a plot of their leaders, who, having some idea of the true Injīl, sought to cover up their departure from it in order to gain power. This is a theme to which ‘Abd al-Jabbār will frequently return.

After the original gospel was suppressed, ‘Abd al-Jabbār continues, the Christians wrote their gospels in an obviously imperfect fashion. This point becomes ever clearer the more one looks into the history of how the Christian gospels were written:

There were fewer and fewer [gospels] until only four gospels of four individuals remained. [Each] individual made a gospel in his age. Then another came after him and thought it imperfect, so he made a gospel which according to him was more correct than the gospel of his predecessor . . . (p. 153, ll. 12–15).

[The gospels] agree on some subjects but not on others. Their contents differ. They are made up of anecdotes about groups of men and women from the Jews, Romans and others, who say this and do that.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:143, where he mentions that the Christians claim to have the gospels in three languages.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. translation of Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 16–8.



Yet there are many impossibilities, wrongs, absurdities, obvious lies and demonstrated contradictions in them, even though people have followed [the book] and set it apart. However, whoever reads and contemplates it will know [its errors]. There is something in [them] of the speech of Christ, his commandments and some reports about him.

John (*Yūḥanna*) made one of the gospels. Then Matthew made one. Then after those two Mark came and was not pleased with the two gospels. Then Luke came after them and was not pleased with the gospels and so he made another gospel. Each one of them held that his companion, who came before him and made a gospel, got some things right but failed in regard to other things and that another [gospel] would be more judicious and correct. For if the one before him had got it right and hit the target, then there would be no need for him to make a gospel in addition to that of his companion. For none of these gospels is a commentary on another, as is made by one who comes later and comments on the book of one who came before, relating [the original] discourse on the face of the [new book] and then commenting on it. Know that [each author] presented his gospel due only to the shortcomings of another (p. 154, l. 19–155, 9).<sup>69</sup>

Here ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues that the fact that these multiple gospels were neither written all at once, nor written as commentaries on earlier gospels (a practice that was familiar to ‘Abd al-Jabbār),<sup>70</sup> indicates that the very authors of the gospels recognized the shortcomings of their predecessor’s work. The Christians themselves realized that they held a problem in their hands.

## 2.2. *Biblical Passages in the Critique (See Appendix 3)*

While ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s evaluation of the composition of the Bible is entirely negative, his evaluation of its contents is ambiguous. On one hand, he argues that the Bible does not reflect the actual revelation given to Jesus and points to contradictory material within the Bible to prove this. On the other hand, he uses the Bible to defend Islamic beliefs about Jesus, implicitly relying on its authority as a scripture.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Cf. translation of Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 18–9.

<sup>70</sup> Among the commentaries that are attributed to ‘Abd al-Jabbār are *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, *Sharḥ al-jāmi‘ayn*, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl*, *Sharḥ al-maqālāt* and *Sharḥ al-a‘rād*. See chapter 2, section 2.3.

<sup>71</sup> This is an approach seen with various Muslim writers on Christianity. As D. Thomas comments, “This procedure [of citing proof texts from the Bible] was very common in the early Islamic period, and while it shows some reserve about the authority of the Bible on the part of the Muslim polemicists it nevertheless shows readiness to employ it as a weapon in the right place.” “The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic,” 31.



In one case he relates: “[Jesus] said, *God’s blessing be upon him*, ‘the speech that you hear from me is not my own but rather His who sent me. Woe to me if I say something of my own accord’” (p. 112, ll. 7–8).<sup>72</sup> The benediction “God’s blessing be upon him” suggests that ‘Abd al-Jabbār believes Jesus really said this. Not surprisingly, the benediction occurs only before this one passage, a passage that lends itself easily to an Islamic reading. Indeed, the statement “who sent me” (Ar. *alladhī arsalanī*) seems to imply that Jesus was a messenger (*rasūl*), which is proper Islamic doctrine.

The key to understanding ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s approach to the Bible, then, is contained in the term which I mentioned above: *theologumenon* (theological argument). ‘Abd al-Jabbār uses the Bible neither to make comparisons nor to make theological speculations, but rather to construct arguments that show the invalidity of Christianity. His acceptance or rejection of the authority of the Bible depends on each particular *theologumenon*.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s interest in the Christian scripture is not exceptional for a Muslim polemicist.<sup>73</sup> Yet the enormous quantity of biblical material in the *Critique* is unseen in earlier polemical works, including ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s own earlier anti-Christian writings.<sup>74</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār not only quotes extensively from all four gospels, he cites other New Testament material, most frequently Acts (which he

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Jn. 14:24, 12:49. In referencing, I indicate “v.” when the passage is an accurate quotation and “cf.” when it is not.

<sup>73</sup> “Yet we would be wrong to think [the Bible] was not used at all, or that no Muslim in early times bothered to investigate it as a source of argument. The evidence of surviving polemical texts shows that many authors had some notion of verses which would support their case.” Thomas, “The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic,” 30. Three earlier writers whose work is extant also use the Bible frequently in their polemic. Two of them converts from Christianity: ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī and Ḥasan b. Ayyūb. The third is the Zaydī Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī.

<sup>74</sup> The number of citations may be categorized roughly as follows: Gospel of Matthew: 24; Gospel of Mark: 6; Gospel of Luke: 10; Gospel of John: 17; Acts of the Apostles: 4; Romans: 1; I Corinthians: 3; Galatians: 1; I Timothy: 1; I John: 1; Genesis: 1; Exodus: 2; Unknown: 13. In several cases (e.g. Luke 6:5, see *Tathbīt*, 103 and 117) ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes the same verse more than once. This I count as only one citation in the list above. Note also that many of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s quotations are of passages that appear in two or all three of the synoptic gospels (e.g. from the narrative of Jesus’ baptism—Mt 3:16, Mk 1:10–1, Lk 3:22—which ‘Abd al-Jabbār relates in *Tathbīt*, 101 and 199). I have classified them according to the version closest to that of the *Tathbīt*. Thus the above list is not a precise tabulation; it serves simply to give a general idea of which biblical books are most represented in the *Critique*.

identifies as *K. Afrāksis*,<sup>75</sup> from the Greek—Πράξεις Ἀποστόλων and the Syriac *prakh̄ses d-shlīḥē*) but also the epistles of Paul and of John. He even gives one quotation that seems to be influenced by the Book of Revelation.<sup>76</sup> Finally, he includes several quotations from books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, namely Genesis and Exodus. In two other places, ‘Abd al-Jabbār claims to be quoting from Isaiah in passages that find no close biblical equivalent.<sup>77</sup>

The diversity of biblical material in the *Critique* is matched by the diverse methods in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār uses this material, depending on the particular *theologumenon* that he is constructing. I note seven different methods:

1. ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes the Bible with great accuracy when it seems to him that the biblical text itself contradicts Christian claims. Such is the case when he quotes Mt 5:17–9 (or Lk 16:17) to show that Jesus did not intend to abrogate the Mosaic Law:

In a sentence, Christ came to revive the Tawrāt and to establish it. He said, “I have come to you only to act in accordance with the Tawrāt and the commandments of the prophets before me. I did not come to nullify but to complete. For with God it is easier for the sky to fall upon the earth than to nullify anything from the law of Moses.<sup>78</sup> Whoever nullifies anything from that will be nullified from the kingdom of heaven” (p. 149, l. 19–150, 3).

Elsewhere ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes Mt 23:1 to the same effect:

It is in [the gospel] that Christ said to his companions, “The priests and the rabbis sit upon the seat of Moses and make legal decisions for you. Accept their legal decisions but do not act according to their deeds. For they talk but they do not do” (p. 144, ll. 2–4).

‘Abd al-Jabbār also quotes Jn 4:19–21 to affirm that Jesus is only a prophet:

In the gospel a Samaritan woman addresses him, “I see that you are a Prophet. Our fathers would worship only on this mountain, yet you

<sup>75</sup> *Tathbūt*, 150. Read افراکسس for افراسکس (ms. 70r); Cf. Stern, “Account,” 133, n. 4.

<sup>76</sup> This is a reference to the “morning star” (Latin *lucifer*). See *Tathbūt*, 121 and Revelation 22:16. Cf. Isaiah 14:12 and II Peter 1:19.

<sup>77</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 120, 195.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 327; ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 202.

[people] say, 'The only place in which one must worship is Jerusalem (*ūrushalīm*).'" Christ said to her, "O woman believe me,<sup>79</sup> his followers will not worship the Lord on this mountain or in Jerusalem" (p. 197, l. 18–198, 1).

Undoubtedly, the Muslim reader would understand from this passage that Jesus was predicting the coming of Muḥammad, who would worship not in Jerusalem but in Mecca. 'Abd al-Jabbār, however, does not mention this interpretation. In fact, he is generally silent on biblical predictions of Muḥammad, a topic about which other Muslim scholars speak at length.

2. In other cases 'Abd al-Jabbār reproduces the biblical text accurately for the sake of a larger argument, not for the effect of the immediate passage. This is the case with his use of Mt 12:9–12. This passage fits into his previous argument that Jesus did not intend to abrogate the Mosaic Law, but merely to affirm it:

Matthew mentions in his gospel that when Christ healed the paralyzed<sup>80</sup> man, the Jews said to him, "Is it permitted to heal on the Sabbath?" He said to them, "If one of you had a ram that fell into a well on the Sabbath, you would try to get him out, and a person is better than a ram" (p. 196, ll. 12–14).<sup>81</sup>

'Abd al-Jabbār concludes: "So he allowed them to do a benevolent action on the Sabbath. But if he were declaring the Sabbath licit, he would have said so and brought that forth, instead of making an argument" (p. 196, ll. 14–5). Elsewhere 'Abd al-Jabbār quotes Mt 24:20 to show that Jesus intended that the Mosaic regulations regarding the Sabbath would remain in effect after him:

Matthew mentions in his gospel: Christ informed of the tribulation and exodus that would come upon his companions. Then he said to them, "Pray to God and implore Him that your fleeing and exodus be not on the Sabbath day and not in winter" (p. 197, ll. 5–7).

Meanwhile, 'Abd al-Jabbār argues on several occasions that when Christ called God "father" and himself "son of god," he did so only in the most metaphorical sense, meaning essentially "master" and "servant." This is evident, 'Abd al-Jabbār contends, from the fact that Christ also exhorted his followers to call upon God as their

<sup>79</sup> Read صدقني for صدقت (ms. 93v: صدقني).

<sup>80</sup> Read امثل for اشل (ms. 93r).

<sup>81</sup> On the Sabbath see Qur'ān 2:65, 4:154, 7:163, 16:124.

father. The title of “son of God” cannot be understood to indicate divinity, lest all of the followers of Christ be seen as gods:

O community of Christians, you remember that Matthew related in his gospel that Christ said, “Blessed are you, community of righteous people, you will be called sons of God.”<sup>82</sup>

Matthew said in his gospel, “Christ said to the people, ‘Your heavenly father is one alone.’”<sup>83</sup>

They say, “Christ would say in his prayer, which he prayed to teach the people, ‘Say: Our father, who is in heaven. Your name is holy.<sup>84</sup> Your power is great. May your command be carried out<sup>85</sup> in the heavens and earth. What you request is not impossible for you. What you intend is not kept from you. So forgive us our sins and our faults and do not torture us in the fire.’”<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, according to the statement of the Christians, all of them should be gods and lords. Rather, know that the name “father” in that language<sup>87</sup> refers to “master” and “possessor” (p. 120, ll. 5–13).<sup>88</sup>

3. ‘Abd al-Jabbār uses the biblical account of Jesus’ baptism in a similar fashion, except that here he implicitly rejects the account. ‘Abd al-Jabbār cites the account of Jesus’ baptism only to show the absurdity of the Bible, for it suggests that Jesus, who is God according to the Christians, left his mother open to the charge of fornication (Mt 3:17, Mk 1:11, Lk 3:22):

People thought that Christ was the son of Joseph until John baptized him in the Jordan and a voice came from heaven, [saying]: “This is my son in whom I am pleased.”<sup>89</sup> They say, “So we know that he is the son of God Most High, not the son of Joseph the Carpenter.” They say, “This was after Christ reached thirty years.” People had no doubt that [Christ] was the son of the carpenter until this voice came, according to the claim of the Christians. So what stupidity, lowliness and defamation of the wisdom of God could be greater than this? According to them he is the Lord of the Worlds, yet he allowed his servants to vilify his mother (p. 199, ll. 3–9).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Mt 5:9; Cf. Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 321; Rāzī, 143.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Mt 5:48, 23:9. Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 145.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:109 and Jāhīz, *Radd*, 25, for the first two sentences of this prayer.

<sup>85</sup> Read نافع for نافذ (ms. 56r).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Mt 6:9–13. Cf. Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 328 (partial version p. 323).

<sup>87</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār clearly has Hebrew in mind here, based on his statement earlier on p. 120: “Some people have said that ‘son’ in the Hebrew language (which was the language of Christ) refers to a righteous servant, an obedient, sincere friend, while ‘father’ refers to a master, possessor and director.”

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Ibn Mattawayh, 1:222.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 144; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:336.

This perspective reflects the distinctive Islamic tradition about Mary's life. In the Bible Mary's marriage to Joseph is legitimate; in fact, it serves to protect her from suspicions of fornication. Yet in Islamic tradition Joseph, if he appears at all, is usually described as a cousin of Mary and her fellow servant in the Temple.<sup>90</sup> The position of Mary is thereby rendered more precarious. Most accounts relate that she was raised under the watchful eye of her uncle Zakariyyā (the husband of her mother Ḥanna's sister, Ishbā' or Elizabeth), who in the biblical account (Lk 1) is a priest of the Temple.<sup>91</sup> Thus the question of vindicating Mary from suspicions of fornication is rendered more important from the Muslim point of view.

In the above passage, 'Abd al-Jabbār makes a *theologumenon* by arguing that the Bible, in contrast, does not vindicate Mary from suspicions of fornication. It even suggests that Jesus (whom the Christians consider "Lord of the Worlds" *rabb al-'ālamīn*, a Qur'ānic epithet for God) did not take the time to exonerate her. This statement again reveals 'Abd al-Jabbār's Qur'an-mindedness. For in the Qur'an (19:24–33) it is the baby Jesus who exonerates his mother from suspicions of fornication by miraculously speaking to a crowd.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> See, e.g., Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 1:724ff. An important exception to this occurs with the early *myfassir*, Muqātil b. Sulaymān, who writes: "The Jews cast accusations of fornication on Mary (peace be upon her) with Yūsuf b. Māthān, who was the son of her paternal uncle, and to whom she was engaged. Mary was the daughter of 'Imrān b. Māthān." Muqātil b. Sulaymān, 1:420.

The biblical 'Imrān (Hebr. 'Amrām), incidentally, is not the father of Mary mother of Jesus (as he is in Qur'an 3:35), but the father of Moses, Aaron and Mariam (Mary). The fact that elsewhere (Q 19:28) Mary the mother of Jesus is referred to as the sister of Aaron (a reference often explained as indicating kinship only) suggests that the Qur'an has conflated or confused the two Marys.

<sup>91</sup> In other Islamic accounts Elizabeth is reckoned to be Mary's sister. Thus Zakariyyā (Zechariah) would be her brother-in-law. On this, see A. Wensinck and P. Johnstone, "Maryam," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 6:630.

<sup>92</sup> Qur'an 19:24, according to Arberry's translation, is: "But the one who was below her (*min tahtihā*) called to her, 'Nay, do not sorrow; see thy Lord has set below thee a rivulet (*tahtaki sariyyā*).'" A new reading for this verse has been proposed by C. Luxenberg, using the insights of Syriac. If one reads the text with the Syriac preposition *men*, instead of the Arabic *min*, there is a temporal aspect implied, namely "immediately." The Arabic *taht* here (which, if one dot is removed, would read *naht*) could be read as Syriac *naht* or "lowliness." Similarly, *sariyyā*, if understood not as (the otherwise unknown) Arabic noun meaning "stream," but rather as the Syriac verbal adjective *sharyā*, would give the meaning "legitimate." In the end, the verse gains a new and *à propos* reading, "He called to her immediately after her lowliness. Do not be sad. Your Lord has made your lowliness legitimate." That is, Mary need not be distressed that her pregnancy appears illegitimate, for the Lord has made it otherwise. See Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000), 102–121.

In the *Critique* (p. 100, l. 17), ‘Abd al-Jabbār reports that Christians claim Jesus spoke from the womb of his mother, but deny he spoke from the cradle (p. 199, l. 1), that is, as a child. The latter miracle corresponds to that reported in the Qur’ān, for which reason Jāḥiẓ (*Radd*, 24) argues against the Christian rejection of it. This Qur’ānic account seems to be based on a narrative that appears in several apocryphal gospels, including the Arabic Infancy Gospel and the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew.<sup>93</sup> The Christian tradition of Jesus speaking from the womb is unfamiliar to me (although ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s report may be a confusion with the report of John the Baptist leaping in the womb in Lk 1:44); some Muslim commentators argue that Q 19:24, which has Jesus speaking from below [Mary] (*min taḥtiha*), refers to Jesus speaking in the womb.

‘Abd al-Jabbār also uses Matthew’s report of the genealogy of Jesus in the context of a similar argument. Here, however, he argues that the biblical report of Mary’s marriage implies that she was not a virgin:

He says in his gospel, “This is the genealogy of Jesus<sup>94</sup> Christ.” He says, “Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary from whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.”<sup>95</sup> So look at how they verify that Joseph is her husband (p. 199, ll. 17–20).<sup>96</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār uses the Bible in the same way in the context of a totally separate argument. This is his version of Acts 11:4–9, where Peter, through a vision, learns that he has been mistaken in following the Jewish dietary law. ‘Abd al-Jabbār recounts this passage quite faithfully, emphasizing the point that this event occurred after the death of Jesus. Here again ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s purpose in this exegesis is to build a *theologumenon*: Peter must have been following the *sunna* of Jesus until this point, the example which Jesus set during his life. By claiming to have authority greater than the Prophet’s *sunna* Peter

<sup>93</sup> See *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:408–9 and 411–2, respectively.

<sup>94</sup> Read *اشوع* for *ياشوع* (ms. 94v).

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Mt 1:1, 16.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār follows this up with the account of Jesus in Nazareth (Mt 13:53–7, Mk 6:1–6, Lk 4:16–30), in an additional effort to show that the Bible leaves Mary open to the charge of fornication:

Matthew mentioned in his gospel: “Christ met with the Jews and spoke to them in parables. When he was done with these parables, he turned and entered his city. When he taught in their synagogues they were amazed, saying, ‘From where does this one get such wisdom? Is he not the son of Joseph the carpenter? Are not his mother, who is called Mary, and his brothers Jacob, Simon, Judas and all of his sisters among us? So where did he get all of this?’ They began to look down at him, disdain him and vilify him. Christ said to them, ‘A prophet is always looked down at in his city’” (p. 200).

shows himself to be a liar and blasphemer. Thus the following account serves both to prove that Jesus did indeed enjoin the Mosaic Law regarding food and to vilify Simon Peter for neglecting that precedent:<sup>97</sup>

They say: Simon Peter<sup>98</sup> had a dream. A sheet, attached by its four sides, descended from heaven to the earth, in which were all of the beasts, all the four-legged creatures, reptiles<sup>99</sup> of the earth, birds of the sky and animals of the sea. He heard a voice that said, "Get up, Simon. Get up, slaughter and eat." Simon said, "Absolutely not, O Lord, for I have never eaten anything impure." The voice returned again and said to him, "Do not declare impure what God has made pure."<sup>100</sup> Now Simon saw this, according to them, after the death and rising of Christ. We say: Simon has witnessed that Christ forbade this and declared it impure.

This confirms your scandal, for [Jesus] came only to complete, not to change or to abrogate (p. 194, l. 21–195, 7).

4. In other cases ‘Abd al-Jabbār accurately reproduces biblical passages that he does not accept and which find no place in a larger argument. Presumably his intention here is simply to alert the Muslim reader to the possibility of Christians bringing these verses up in a disputation to prove their claims:

They might say, "Matthew mentions in his gospel that [Christ] said to his disciples, 'Travel through the earth and baptize the servants [of God] in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'"<sup>101</sup> They also might say that [Christ] said, "I was before Abraham,"<sup>102</sup> and similar things (p. 114, ll. 10–12).

Notice also ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s use of Genesis 1:

Regarding that which is in the Tawrāt where God says, "We want to create humankind according to our shape, like us,"<sup>103</sup> they intend and say, "This address is by a group. You hear how He says, 'We want,' not

<sup>97</sup> Cf. also Fritsch, 144–5, who discusses how later polemicists criticized the Christian abolition of dietary laws.

<sup>98</sup> شمعون صفا, "Simon Cephas," an appellation related to the Syriac *shēm’on kēfā*. See Pines, "Gospel Quotations," 259. Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 186.

<sup>99</sup> Read زواحف for زخارف (ms. 92r).

<sup>100</sup> V. Acts 11:4–9.

<sup>101</sup> V. Mt 28:19. Cf. Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:353; Nāshi’ al-Akbar, *K. al-Awsaṭ*, 82; Bāqillānī, *K. Tamhīd al-awā’il wa-talkhīṣ al-dalā’il*, ed. ‘Imad al-Dīn Aḥmad Ḥaydar (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1414/1993), 121; Māturīdī, *K. al-Tawhīd* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1970), 53.

<sup>102</sup> V. Jn 8:58. Cf. Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:342.

<sup>103</sup> V. Genesis 1:26.

'I want to create humankind like me.' Know that the gods are plural and that they are in shape and form like the form of people" (p. 115, ll. 11–15).<sup>104</sup>

Christians use this verse to justify both the Trinity and the Incarnation, since the divine voice is plural and it affirms that there is an analogy between Creator and creature. In the Qur'ān man is not described as *imago Dei*, although Adam is designated (2:30) as the representative (*khalīfa*) of God.

5. In certain cases 'Abd al-Jabbār more or less accurately reports a biblical passage, yet the context of that passage is changed to fit his larger argument. This is the case with his version of a pericope appearing in all three synoptic gospels (see Mt 16:13–6, 20; Mk 8:27–30; Lk 9:18–21):

The Christians have written in their gospels that Jesus said to his companions: "What do the people say about me?" They said, "Some say that you say that you are Elijah. Some say that you are John the Baptist." He said, "You are my companions, what do you say about me, and who am I to you?" They said, "According to us you are the Christ." He said, "Do not say this" (p. 142, ll. 11–14).

The Christian gospels have Jesus asking his disciples to keep the fact that he is the Christ a secret. With a subtle change, 'Abd al-Jabbār (or his source) has Jesus deny being the Christ entirely. Of course, Jesus is the Christ (*masīḥ*), at least in name, in the Qur'ān as well, so the point is not to reject this fact, but rather to show the incoherence of the Christians and the falsehood of their gospels.

Compare 'Abd al-Jabbār's version of Lk 16:18, a passage where Jesus declares that those who divorce become guilty of fornication. 'Abd al-Jabbār, in line with his argument that Jesus did not abrogate or change the Mosaic Law, attributes this decree to Paul. He implies that Paul came up with it in order to ingratiate himself with the Roman authorities:

It is a regulation of the Romans that a man is not permitted to marry more than one woman. They may not be separated by divorce, old

<sup>104</sup> Note in this regard a tradition recorded by Ibn Ishāq in his *sīra* about an argument used by the Najrānī Christians in their debate over the Trinity with the Prophet Muḥammad. They argued, according to Ibn Ishāq, from the principle that "God says: We have done, We have commanded, We have created and We have decreed, and they say, If He were one he would have said I have done, I have created and so on." Ibn Ishāq, trans. Guillaume, 271–2.



age or any type of fault. No one other than her is permitted to him until she dies. The Roman women detest the religions of the Israelite prophets for permitting divorce and allowing that a man may marry as many as he can support. So it was said to Saul, "Are you from a people of this way?" He said, "No. A man is not permitted more than one woman, just like the decrees of the Romans"<sup>105</sup> (p. 157, ll. 13–19).

‘Abd al-Jabbār makes a similar move with Jesus’ decree (Mt 15:11; Mk 7:15) regarding the moral nature of purity. Again, he blames this mistaken doctrine on Paul and the Romans:

The Romans ate pork. So [Paul] said, "It is not forbidden. Nothing which enters the inside of a person is forbidden. Only lies, which exit him, are forbidden" (p. 158, ll. 4–5).

In this category as well falls ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s use of I Corinthians 7:14. Here it is not a case of ‘Abd al-Jabbār attributing a biblical statement of Jesus to Paul. He simply puts a biblical statement of Paul in the context of his argument. Paul’s decree on the permissibility of marrying a non-believer is another aspect of his sycophantic manner of winning the Romans’ approval:

The Romans also married pagans<sup>106</sup> and the rest of nations, which the Israelites do not do. So the Romans spoke to Paul about this and he said, "Marry the believing woman with an unbelieving man for she will purify him. He will not make her impure and their child will be pure" (p. 158, ll. 15–17).

6. In other cases ‘Abd al-Jabbār (or his source) alters not only the context of a biblical passage but the passage itself to make it fit Islamic doctrine in general or his particular *theologumenon*. A noteworthy example of this is ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s transformation of Acts 15:1.<sup>107</sup> The biblical text describes a group of Christians who maintained the necessity of circumcision: "Then some men came down from Judaea and taught the brothers, 'Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be saved.'" ‘Abd al-Jabbār finds here evidence of the true followers of Jesus, the Muslim followers of Jesus. Accordingly, he expands on the passage to imply that these followers affirmed that which ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself affirms about Jesus’ teaching:

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Mt 19:3–9, Mk 10:2–12.

<sup>106</sup> Read *الوثنيين* for *والوثنيين* (ms. 74r).

<sup>107</sup> On this, cf. also Galatians 2.

In their book which is known as *The Book of Acts*<sup>108</sup> it [is written] that “a group of the Christians left Jerusalem and went to Antioch and elsewhere in Syria. They called the people to the practice of the *Tawrāt*, to forbid [eating] meat slaughtered by those who were not from their people, to circumcision, to establish the Sabbath, to forbid pork and that which the *Tawrāt* forbade them” (p. 150, ll. 10–14).

Elsewhere ‘Abd al-Jabbār transforms, and combines, two different biblical pericopes:

Among the remarkable matters in that which they have preserved about Christ is that he (peace be upon him) said to them: “You will come to me on the day of resurrection. The inhabitants of the earth shall be assembled around me, standing to my right and my left. I will say to the sons of the left, ‘I was hungry and you did not feed me, naked and you did not cover me, sick and you did not care for me or treat me, imprisoned and you did not visit me.’ They will answer by saying to me, ‘When, O master, were you sick, naked, hungry or imprisoned? Were we not prophets in your name? Did we not heal the sick in your name? Eat and drink in your name?’ I will say to them, ‘You mentioned my name, but you did not witness to me truthfully. Get away from me O workers of crimes!’ Then I will say to the sons of the right, ‘Come, O you righteous ones to the mercy of God and to eternal life.’<sup>109</sup>

There is no one who eats, covers and treats the sick or eats or drinks in the name of Christ, or does this for Christ except for these Christian sects. So this is a clear text of [Christ’s] washing his hands of [the Christians] and his enmity towards them (p. 194, ll. 8–19).<sup>110</sup>

The frame of this passage is the eschatological vision of Mt 25:31–46. Yet ‘Abd al-Jabbār (or his source) has woven into it Mt 7:22–23 (7:21 is part of this pericope but has been purposefully left out).<sup>111</sup> This section is the key to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s argument, for it seems to show that Christ’s intent here is specifically to reject those who called on his name, i.e. the Christians.

<sup>108</sup> Read *افراسكس* for *افراسكس* (ms. 70r); Cf. Stern, “Account,” 133, n. 4. Cf. also ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 52.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:331–2.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. translation of Pines, “Gospel Quotations,” 201–2.

<sup>111</sup> Mt 7:22–3: “When the day comes many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name?’ Then I shall tell them to their faces: ‘I have never known you; away from me, all evildoers!’” Mt. 7:21: “It is not anyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

Compare the more subtle change in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version of Mt 20:28.<sup>112</sup> The biblical version reads: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version accurately reproduces only the first half of the sentence: “I did not come to be served but rather I came to serve” (p. 112, ll. 9–10).<sup>113</sup>

Somewhat less subtle is the change that occurs in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version of Lk 2:42–9, the narrative of the adolescent Jesus in the temple. In the canonical text Jesus astounds the teachers with his knowledge, and when his mother asks where he was, he replies pointedly, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Lk 2:49). In ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version, however, Mary finds him on a road, not in the temple. When she questions him on his whereabouts, the boy responds simply, “I was in Jerusalem, learning” (p. 200, l. 11).

Two final examples, perhaps the most obvious, show the extent to which passages change according to the exigencies of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *theologumenon*. First, there is the case of Jesus rebuking Peter for not understanding why the Son of Man must suffer, die and rise again (Mt 16:23, Mk 8:33). In Mark’s version, Jesus exclaims: “Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do.” ‘Abd al-Jabbār, however, reports simply: “It is in [the Injīl] that Christ passed by Simon Cephas and said to him ‘O Satan’” (p. 144, l. 11). Thus ‘Abd al-Jabbār has Jesus unconditionally reject Simon Peter, the foundation of the Christian Church.

The second example is related to a scene in John’s version of the crucifixion (Jn 19:26–7), in which the crucified Jesus tells the beloved disciple to take Mary as his adopted mother. In ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version something else entirely goes on:

In the Injīl [it is related that] Christ was standing near the place of the crucifixion. Mary, the mother of Christ, came to the place. The one being crucified looked at her and said, while he was upon the wood, “This is your son.” He said to Christ, “This is your mother.” Mary

<sup>112</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 122; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:352.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Mk 10:45. Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 127. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version of Jn 17:3 reveals a similar transformation. The biblical version reads: “And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” ‘Abd al-Jabbār changes the object of knowledge from “Jesus Christ” to the fact that God “sent Jesus” (presumably as a messenger): “For perpetual life it is necessary only that people witness that you are the One, True God and that you sent Jesus Christ” (p. 112, ll. 1–3).

took him by his hand and led him among the group [of people] (p. 143, ll. 9–12).<sup>114</sup>

With this pericope ‘Abd al-Jabbār affirms and explains the Qur’ānic statement (4:157) that the Jews did not crucify Jesus. This pericope also matches ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s description of the crucifixion, according to which another person was crucified in the place of Jesus, in two different passages.<sup>115</sup>

7. Finally, in at least one case ‘Abd al-Jabbār cites a Qur’ānic phrase as though it were a statement of Paul, although he does not explicitly claim that it is biblical. ‘Abd al-Jabbār has Paul address the Romans, saying: “Circumcision is not necessary for you. It is only necessary for the Israelites since they are a nation whose foreskin is in their heart” (p. 158, l. 3).<sup>116</sup> The reader familiar with the Bible might find this statement reminiscent of passages like Jeremiah 4:4 and 9:26, which speak of the “circumcision of the heart,” or Romans 2:29, which defines true circumcision as that of the heart. Notice especially Acts 7:51, in which Stephen accuses the Sanhedrin of being uncircumcised “in heart and ears.”

In fact, this quotation comes from Qur’ān 4:155 (which is evidently based on the preceding passages), part of a larger pericope (including the verse on the crucifixion) that describes the unfaithfulness of the Israelites:

Due to their breaking of the covenant, to their disbelief in the signs of God, to their wrongful killing of the prophets, and to their statement, “our hearts are uncircumcised,” God has sealed their disbelief. Thus only a few of them will believe.

### 2.3. Church History

If ‘Abd al-Jabbār uses the Bible in a number of different ways, he uses Church history to construct one basic *theologumenon*: Christians aban-

<sup>114</sup> S. Pines acknowledges that “this text is possibly a falsification of the Gospel according to John XIX:26–27,” but then he goes on to add, “But admitting this, the falsification may go back to the pre-Islamic period.” S. Pines, “Notes on Islam,” 140.

<sup>115</sup> *Tahbūt*, 121–2, 137–40.

<sup>116</sup> Compare the remark found in the work of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s older contemporary, the Shī‘ī Ibn Shu‘ba (d. 381/991), who reports a narrative, from al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (d. 260/874), in which God says to Jesus: “O Jesus, say to the deceitful Israelites, ‘You wash your faces and sully your hearts.’” Ibn Shu‘ba, *Tuhaf al-‘uqūl*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-A‘lamī (Beirut: al-Mu‘assasat al-‘Alamiyya li-l-Maṭbu‘āt, 1389/1969), 381.

doned the religion of Jesus out of worldly motives and embraced paganism in its place. As ‘Abd al-Jabbār puts it: “If you scrutinize the matter, you will find that the Christians became Romans (*tarawwamū*) and fell back to the religions of the Romans. You will not find that the Romans became Christians (*tanaṣṣarū*).”<sup>117</sup> To make this point, ‘Abd al-Jabbār scripts a brief history of Christianity. One of the central figures in his drama is Paul:

This Paul was a wicked and evil Jew. He pursued evil and assisted the evil, anxious to cause disorders [*fitan*]. He sought leadership and dominion and used every kind of trick to achieve it.

When he was a Jew, he was called Saul and he worked against the Christians. Then he left Jerusalem and was absent for a long time. Then he returned to Jerusalem and began to support the Christians against the Jews. He said to them, “Say this. Do this. Separate [from the Jews] and approach the gentiles, the enemies of the Jews.” (p. 156, ll. 4–9).

[The Jews] took him to an official of Caesar, the king of the Romans ([the Jews] were at that time subject to the Romans).<sup>118</sup> They said to him, “Do you know this Saul?” He replied, “Of course, I know of his evil and that he spreads deceptions among the people.”<sup>119</sup> So they said to him, “He has claimed this and that” (mentioning to him what he said).

The Roman became infuriated with him and ordered that he be stretched out to be beaten. So [Paul] said to him, “Would you beat a Roman?” He replied, “Are you a Roman?” He said, “Yes, I follow the religion of Caesar, king of the Romans. I am innocent of Judaism.”<sup>120</sup> The [official] was forced to stop, since [Paul] took refuge in the religion of the king.

The [official] said, “Here is a boat to take you to Constantinople. If you are Roman and of the Roman religion, then go there, if it is as you say.” [Paul] said, “I will do [it]. Dispatch me to the land of the Romans!” So he went to Constantinople and dwelled among the Romans. He attached himself to the king and incited the Romans against the Jews. He reminded them of the enmity [of the Jews] towards them, of what the Israelites had done to them and of whom among them they had killed. He instilled among them fear of the evil of the Jews, and made them feel that they were not secure from [the Jews’] state and their rising up against them. He also mentioned to them the many possessions [of the Jews].

Among the practices of the Romans is that their women do not veil themselves before men. The wife of the emperor rides in the proces-

<sup>117</sup> *Tathbūt*, 158; Cf. 168. Baarda (p. 223) describes ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s view as “een graduele hellenisering.”

<sup>118</sup> *maghlūbīn ma’a l-rūm*. lit. “conquered *with* the Romans.” See my discussion of this point in a note below (chapter 5, section 3).

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Acts 24:5.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Acts 22:25.

sion of the king with an uncovered face. Thus she addresses the people, giving orders and prohibitions. Paul approached her and spoke to her about the affair of the Jews (p. 156, l. 19–157, 14).

He took the name Paul, which is a Roman name, to get closer to them. The Romans severely hate circumcision of men and women<sup>121</sup> and detest those nations that do it. They spoke to Paul about that and he said, “Yes, it is as you consider it. Circumcision is not necessary for you. It is only necessary for the Israelites since they are a nation whose foreskin is in their heart” (p. 157, l. 22–158, 3).

The Israelites do not eat [meat] slaughtered by idolaters, or by those who are not *ahl al-kitāb*, but the Romans do. So Paul said that they were correct in this. He became popular among them in everything and did not oppose them in anything.

At that time, the Roman religions were spread about. Most of them magnified the planets and believed that they brought life and death, benefit and hardship. They had temples and sacrifices for them. Some of them were of the Greek religion (*ḏīn al-yūnānīn*), [holding] that the planets are living, are reasonable, provide [benefit] and are lords. They believed in the efficacy of magic. In short, all of their religions were invalid, weak and wrong.

Paul would mention to them Christ’s virtue and asceticism, that his supplications were answered and that he brought the dead to life. They would meet with him and listen to him, yet he was a wicked trickster.<sup>122</sup>

The Romans prayed towards the rising sun. They did not hold the necessity of ritual cleansing or washing for a major impurity or for menstruation. [Nor did they] take care about urine, feces or blood; they did not consider them impure (p. 158, ll. 5–15).

So Paul tore himself away from the religions [sic] of Christ and entered the religions of the Romans. If you scrutinize the matter, you will find that the Christians became Romans (*tarawwamū*) and fell back to the religions of the Romans. You will not find that the Romans became Christians (*ṭanaṣṣarū*) (p. 158, l. 19–158, 21).

Now Paul was struck<sup>123</sup> in his leg with elephantiasis, even though he claimed that he could treat and heal illnesses. So the king ordered that he be slapped, his beard be shaven, and that he be crucified. [Paul] said to them, “Do not crucify me vertically like our Lord Christ was crucified. Rather, crucify me horizontally.” The king who did this to Paul was called Nero.<sup>124</sup> So Christianity languished in the Roman lands and was broken up (p. 160, ll. 7–11).<sup>125</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār has Paul go to Constantinople instead of Rome, perhaps since he knew Constantinople to be the Roman capital. He may also have

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Jāhīz, *Radd*, 21.

<sup>122</sup> Read *محتالاً لا خبيثاً* for *محتالاً خبيثاً* (ms. 74r).

<sup>123</sup> Read *اصاب* for *اصحاب*; Cf. Stern, “Account,” 141, n. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Read *بيرن* for *نيرن* (ms. 75r).

<sup>125</sup> Cf. translation of Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 137ff.

been influenced by the report in Acts 23 that Paul was taken in Roman custody to Caesarea, the city of the Emperor (as Constantinople was the city of the Emperor Constantine).

Paul, then, in order to win support,<sup>126</sup> changed the divine religion of Jesus. This basic topos, that the followers of Jesus changed his religion for selfish motives, appears in the account of biblical origins above and appears again in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s narrative on Constantine. In fact, the last sentence of the Paul narrative above (“So Christianity languished in the Roman lands and was broken up”) is a segue to the Constantine narrative. The execution of Paul, and the loss of political influence for the Christians, led to the decline of Christianity. This sets the stage for the rise of a second character, one who uses trickery and political power to re-establish Christianity. Only this character would not operate by ingratiating himself to the emperor. He was the emperor:

The sons of Bilāṭus [or Baylāṭus] ruled after him, until the rule came to his son Constantine. He [acted] outwardly according to the Roman religions, even though his mother, Helen, fed him with the love of the Cross. He practiced Christian practice and [followed] that which they said about Christ.

Now leprosy had appeared in his body, and the Romans did not allow someone with leprosy to rule. This worried and concerned him, so he concealed it. He was consumed in suppressing the Romans and turning them away from this opinion of repudiating the rule of a leper.

The nations were raiding them at the same time, including the Bulgarians<sup>127</sup> and the barbarians. He aligned his troops according to

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<sup>126</sup> Elsewhere, to show the degree to which Paul accomplished his goal, ‘Abd al-Jabbār relates: “According to [the Christians], Paul is more lofty than Moses, Aaron, David and all of the prophets. When his letters and speeches are read in the church, they stand, venerating and exalting him and his words. They do not do this for the Tawrāt, which according to them is the speech of Christ, who wrote it for Moses, sent him to his creatures, split (Read *فلق* for *خلق* [ms. 70v]; Cf. Stern, ‘Account,’ 134, n. 2.) the sea for him, and transformed a stick into a snake for him. [They do not do this] during the [reading of the] gospels, in which is the speech of Christ” (p. 151).

There is some reflection here of Eastern Church ritual, in which the epistles of Paul are regularly read before the Gospel, while the Old Testament is not. However, it would not be the case that worshippers would stand in reverence for the reading of Paul’s epistles but not for the Gospel. cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār comments on p. 98: “Paul has said, and he is above the prophets according to them. . . .”

<sup>127</sup> Read *برجان* *سرجان* (ms. 75v), cf. Stern, “Account,” 142, n. 3; *Taḥbīt*, 165. *Buḡjān* is the name given in Islamic sources to the Turkic people who set up a state in the northern Balkans along the Danube. In this way they are distinguished from the *bulghār* who were from the same ethnic background as the former group but established a state along the Volga River. See I. Hrbek, “Bulghār,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 1:1304–5.

the temples of the planets. He called for the elders of the Romans and those well versed in the Roman religions, dispatching them against their enemies. Yet he did not [aid] them with deception or spies as those who control troops do. So what they reviled took place. They were killed or routed.

[Constantine] now made a show of sadness and distress and said, "We set up and aligned according to the temples of the planets that you revere and our fathers magnified before us, and to which we have sacrificed. Yet we have not seen them benefit or profit us." He continued to manage them in this way, repeating this statement, that one should not worship something that did not benefit him. [He said], "This is a time of need and severe crisis, and these planets are not defending us. We must reflect and worship that which will benefit and defend us." Then he said, "There is a woman here who has dreamed of someone saying to her, 'You will be victorious with this,' and he brought out to her a Cross."

It happened that the commander of the army that was raiding them died and they withdrew. So [Constantine] and those of his view and inclination said to them, "This is due to the blessing of the Cross." It was a practice of the Romans to put crescents, and those things like the crescent, on their banners, seeking the blessing of the moon and the planets, for the moon is the slowest of the planets in its motion. They took them down and put in their place Crosses. Thus they remain even to the present. Then [Constantine] began, in his management, to move the Romans away from revering planets to revering Crosses.

There were many philosophers in their land. They magnified the planets, which they claimed were living and rational. They were overbearing to the people and conceited with the kings, claiming to be the elite of the elite. Yet they earned no living and were used to inactivity, relying on the possessions of the people. They corrupted the youth and anyone who listened to them, whether king or commoner. They claimed [to have] spells and talismans, with which they could bring benefit or harm, and that they knew hidden things by the workings of the planets. They amazed [people] with their engineering and crafts.

Now this Constantine was a wicked, calculating man, who patiently scrutinized matters, greatly concerned for his rule and the matter of his citizens.<sup>128</sup> So he scrutinized the matter of these philosophers and what they claimed regarding planets and talismans. He found it entirely invalid, and found these people to be tricksters, deceivers and corrupters. So he began to kill them in groups, to burn their books and to bring down their temples. He continued to do until Athens,<sup>129</sup> which was the city of philosophers, was free of them. No one remained except for farmers, tanners and dyers. He made the temples of the planets into churches, and settled the monks in them, saying "These unfortunate

<sup>128</sup> There is a sentence missing from the edition here. See Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbâr's Account," 143, n. 2.

<sup>129</sup> Read اُثِينَة for اُثِينَة (ms. 76r).



ones are more deserving than those ignorant deceivers and liars.” He gave authority over to the monks and the common people everywhere. He burned every book of medicine and engineering that appeared. He attacked those who followed the opinions of the philosophers, washing his hands of them and working against them.

His mother Helen was happy with this, as were the monks and the Christians. She used [monks] in every place, making them informers and helpers for her son. She took the upper hand with them.

Constantine made an outward [show] of revering Christ and the Cross. Yet he established the Roman religions as they were. Thus with praying to the East and other things that have been mentioned.

He removed nothing other than the worship of the planets. He added nothing other than the magnification of Christ, the declaration of his lordship and the magnification of the Cross. Yet this was not strange to the Romans. For one who believes that the planets (which are inorganic, dead things) are lords giving out benefit and harm, is like one who says that a person (who was not only living, sensible and discerning but is also said to have brought the dead to life) is a god who created the planets with his father and [his father’s] wife. This is easy for westerners.<sup>130</sup> Do you not see how the Egyptians believed in the divinity of Pharaoh, that he was their only god? (p. 160, l. 11–p. 162, l. 12).<sup>131</sup>

The Constantine narrative is a variation on a theme. Whereas Paul is a “wicked and evil Jew,” Constantine is a “wicked, calculating man.” Paul “sought leadership and dominion,” while Constantine was “greatly concerned for his rule and the matter of his citizens.” Paul was struck by elephantiasis, Constantine by leprosy. Paul was influenced by the wife of the emperor, Constantine by his mother (the wife of the emperor). And their wicked schemes had the same result: the Romans did not become Christians. The Christians became Romans.

This figure of the false leader, who compromises the religion of Jesus by accepting the traditions and beliefs of those whose favor he seeks, is a fundamental *topos* in the *theologumenon* of ‘Abd al-Jabbār. This commonality exists not only between Paul and Constantine, but even more distinctly so between Paul and Mani:

On Paul: “One of their kings became aware of Paul. He scrutinized [Paul’s] activities, inquired about him, and learned that he was a devi-

<sup>130</sup> Seen from the perspective of ‘Abd al-Jabbār in Iran, the Egyptians were indeed westerners.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Qur’ān 5:116. Cf. translation of Stern (of this whole account), “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 142ff.

ous deceiver who sought this world and leadership. So he brought him in. . . . The king ordered that he be slapped, his beard be shaven, and that he be crucified" (p. 160, ll. 2–4, 9–10).

On Mani: "One of the Persian kings took him to examine him and to investigate his affairs. He was a liar and a deceiver,<sup>132</sup> seeking leadership and to come closer to the Persians and the Zoroastrians with whatever they were fond of, in order to give them that which is other than the religion of Christ. So they killed him, just as the king [killed] Paul" (p. 170, ll. 11–13).

With this passage it is evident that 'Abd al-Jabbār is developing a philosophy of religious history behind the *Critique*. Religions other than Islam are cultural creations. They are the products of self-interested religious leaders who, in order to win support, changed the religion of God to make it attractive to a particular culture. They abandon the precedent that their prophet set for them and follow instead the arbitrary will of human culture. This philosophy of religious history is distinctly Islamic. The basic duty of believers is to imitate the life of the Prophet. According to 'Abd al-Jabbār, the Christians themselves admit that they have failed to do this:

By my life, Christ did not act in any way like us his whole life long. The same goes for his disciples after him, in what<sup>133</sup> they required from the law of the Tawrāt. Yet one who came after them transmitted to us, and said to us that Christ said, "Act after me according to what you see" (p. 193, ll. 11–13).

In Christian tradition, of course, the idea of *imitatio Christi* is not that expressed in this passage, which is instead the Islamic idea of *sunna*. Imitation of Christ, in Christian tradition, is a spiritual and moral notion, not a practical one. It is not clear if 'Abd al-Jabbār fully grasps this distinction, if he has fully seen the Christian religious vision or if, alternatively, he has learned only enough about Christianity to show its invalidity. Indeed, fundamental Christian concepts such as redemption and divine charity find no place in the *Critique*. Is it because 'Abd al-Jabbār has not heard of them or because he does not find them useful for his purposes? It is hard to imagine that he was completely ignorant of them, since he has such detailed knowledge of other aspects of Christianity.

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<sup>132</sup> Read مَمْرُق for مَمْرُق; Cf. Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 67, n. 18. This is the same term that 'Abd al-Jabbār uses to describe Paul, *Tathbūt*, 160.

<sup>133</sup> Read فَمَا for فَمَا (ms. 91v).

Notice, for example, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account of the Christian Creed, which he relates at the beginning of the *Critique*:

They declare a devotion which they call the Creed, which was established in Nicaea within the land of the Byzantines. This took place about three hundred years after Christ (peace be upon him), when Constantine, the Roman emperor (the son of Fīlāṭus) whose mother was Helen of Ḥarrān (the inn-keeper), gathered them in order to make them decide about their faith and then impose it upon the people. So they forced [the Creed] upon [the people] and killed those who opposed it.

At [Nicaea] about two thousand men gathered. They made a decision but then rejected it. Then three hundred and eighteen men gathered, whom they call the Fathers. They made a decision that they call a synod. They agreed upon this Creed,<sup>134</sup> which is the fundamental basis for all of their sects. None of them is considered to have faith without it.<sup>135</sup> It is:

“We believe in God;

The one Father, the creator of what is seen and unseen;<sup>136</sup>

And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, first born of his Father. He is not made (*maṣnūʿ*); true god from true god, from the substance (*jawhar*) of his Father; by whom the worlds were brought to perfection and everything was created; who, for our sake, the company of people, and for the sake of our salvation, descended from heaven, became incarnate through the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. The Virgin Mary became pregnant with him and gave birth to him. He was taken, crucified, and killed before Pilate (*Fīlāṭus*) the Roman (*al-rūmī*). He died, was buried and rose on the third day as it is written. He ascended to heaven and sat to the right of his Father. He is prepared to come another time to judge the dead and the living.

We believe in one Lord the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth who comes from his Father;<sup>137</sup> the life-giving Spirit;<sup>138</sup>

And in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; in one holy, apostolic and catholic (*jāthaliqīyya*)<sup>139</sup> community; in the resurrection of our bodies; and in eternal life unto ages of ages.”<sup>140</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Read *تسبيحة* for *تسبية* (ms. 43v).

<sup>135</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 123.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 45.

<sup>137</sup> The *Critique*, like most early Eastern Christian texts, does not have the *filioque* (and from the Son) here. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Mughnī* (5:81), however, does. See S.K. Samir, “Une allusion au filioque dans la ‘réfutation des chrétiens’ de ‘Abd al-Gabbār,” *Studi albanologici, balcanici, bizantini e orientali* (Florence: Olschki, 1986), 361–7.

<sup>138</sup> Read *محيية* for *محيية* (ms. 43v).

<sup>139</sup> The form *jāthaliqīyya* reveals the influence of Eastern Syriac (Chaldean) used by Nestorian churches. See Graf, *Verzeichnis*, 95 and cf. 33.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 123, 136–7; ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:81, which cor-

So consider this explanation and this elaboration, this disclosure of their declaring [God] three (*tathlīth*) and assimilating (*al-tashbīh*) [Him]. [Consider] how they believe that God has the essence of arranged and produced beings, in [His] descent, ascent, birth and otherwise (p. 93, l. 16–95, 2).

Although ‘Abd al-Jabbār connects this Creed with the Council of Nicaea, it is more developed than the Creed established there. It resembles instead what is often called the “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.” Even then, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version has a number of significant variations from the orthodox version.<sup>141</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār also refers here to Constantine as “son of Filāṭus” (cf. Bīlāṭus above), although Constantine’s father was named Constantius Chlorus.<sup>142</sup> This name may come from confusion with Pontius Pilate or from an attempt to associate the two.<sup>143</sup> It might also show the influence of a Christian tradition where Constantine’s father is named as Valtianus.<sup>144</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār gives a second account of the formation of the Creed at the conclusion of his Constantine narrative:

So he gathered around him about two thousand of their leaders to make decisions about some issues in the Creed.

Yet among this group were some who objected and said, “The word of God is created” (This word of God was Christ). [Among these] were Arius, Macedonius, Eunomius and Apollinaris (?),<sup>145</sup> and their companions. They said, “The Word is created. The speech of God and His statement is one of his creations.” They caused an uproar and the whole matter was dropped without affirmation.

Then, after that, three hundred and eighteen men gathered in Nicaea, among the lands of the Byzantines, and made the Creed that we have mentioned.<sup>146</sup> They brought it to Constantine who took it and implemented it and forced it upon the people. He killed those who did not

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relates closely to Warrāq, *al-Radd ‘alā l-tathlīth*, 66–70 (cf. also 72); Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:319.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum iussu atque mandato Societatis Scientiarum Argentoratensis*, ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1914ff.), 1:1:7, pp. 65ff.

<sup>142</sup> Most Arabic sources have قسطنس. See, e.g., Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, 137.

<sup>143</sup> See pp. 94, 99, 137, 139, passim where فيلاطس refers to the latter. Elsewhere (p. 159) ‘Abd al-Jabbār identifies Constantine’s father as بيلاطس, the more common Arabic form for Pilate. See Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 140, n. 6. Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 194, who also has فيلاطس.

<sup>144</sup> The Syriac account of Mārūtā has *a.l.n.ṭ.i.n.u.s.* (a variant has *w.l.ṭ.i.n.u.*) (bar Qūstōs). *The Canons Ascribed to Mārūtā of Maipherqaṭ*, CSCO 439 (1982), 21; English trans. CSCO 440 (1982), 16.

<sup>145</sup> The ms. reads اولوفريانوس (77r); See Stern, “Account,” 145, n. 1.

<sup>146</sup> See passage quoted above, pp. 93–5 of *Tathbūt*; Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 138; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:319.

accept it. Thus everyone had to outwardly accept it, for fear of the sword. They invalidated any other affirmation . . . (p. 162, l. 19–163, 8).

Constantine continued to rule for fifty years, busy killing those who refused to revere the Cross and to declare that Christ was Lord so that [this doctrine] became certain and authoritative. He designated it to the kings after him. He insisted on this with them and designated it to them, saying: “This is preferable to revering planets and to the views of the philosophers.” He passed this doctrine on to his children, commanders and friends and gave the kingdom to his sons.

The Byzantines describe [Constantine] as strict and astute. He is to them like Ardashīr son of Bābak,<sup>147</sup> the king of Persia, to the Persians. His sons rose after him to rule and enforced his doctrine (p. 163, l. 16–164, 1).

It is no surprise to see Arius (d. 336) here, a figure who often appears in Islamic anti-Christian polemics.<sup>148</sup> His belief that the Logos was created indicated to Muslim polemicists that Arius (like Nestorius) professed a doctrine similar to Islamic monotheism: “According to them, [Arianism] is among the monotheistic sects.”<sup>149</sup> Moreover, the fact that Arius’ doctrine was suppressed by the political powers of the Roman Empire corresponds with the topos in the *Critique*, described above, of the persecuted Muslim followers of Jesus. ‘Abd al-Jabbār accurately follows Christian sources, including East Syrian sources,<sup>150</sup> in grouping with Arius both Macedonius (d. ca. 360) and Eunomius (d. ca. 395). The latter’s Christology is very similar to that of Arius. Eunomius maintained that the Father is distinguished (from the other

<sup>147</sup> Read بابك for بابل (ms. 77v); Cf. Stern, “Account,” 145, n. 7. Ardashīr, son of Papak (the son of Sāsān; r. AD 224–241) founded the Sāsānian Empire and made Zoroastrianism the state religion of the Empire. See N. Söderblom, “Ardashir I,” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, 12 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1909), 1:774.

<sup>148</sup> Arius also appears in the polemics of Warrāq, Nāshī’ al-Akbar and Ḥasan b. Ayyūb. See Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 282, 296. Christian writers, too, have traditionally associated Islam with Arianism. For them, of course, Muḥammad’s teaching is not a new affirmation of right monotheism but a continuation of the heresy of Arius, who developed his own doctrine when he found the idea of the Incarnation scandalous. An association can also be made between the fashion in which these two figures promulgated their messages. Arius’ movement grew in popularity due to his work *Thalia* (“banquet”), which was written in verse that it might be memorized by the uneducated; the Qur’ān, too, is in verse (although later Muslim dogma distinguishes it from poetry) and its appeal, needless to say, transcended educated circles. See, e.g., W. Barry, “Arianism,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1st edition, 15 vols. (New York: Robert Appleton, 1907–12), 1:707.

<sup>149</sup> Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 296.

<sup>150</sup> See, for example, the record that Mārūtā (d. ca. 420) preserves in Syriac of a Synod of the eastern Church held in AD 410, in Seleucia-Ctesiphon: *The Canons Ascribed to Mārūtā of Maiphergat*, ed. A. Vööbus, CSCO 439 (1982), 26; English trans. CSCO 440 (1982), 22.

two persons of the Trinity) by the quality of ἀγέννησια, “uncreatedness” or “unbegottenness.”<sup>151</sup> There is also a connection between Arianism and the thought of Macedonius. Whereas Arius was anathematized for denying the uncreatedness of the second person of the Trinity, Macedonius was anathematized for denying the uncreatedness of the third, the Holy Spirit.<sup>152</sup> The place of Apollinaris (d. 390) in this group is less easily explained.<sup>153</sup>

#### 2.4. *Christian Practice*

The substantial material in the *Critique* on Christian practice is of an entirely different form. It consists of anecdotes about Christians contemporary to ‘Abd al-Jabbār and stories that those Christians told among themselves. This material is therefore important for the perspective it gives on fourth/tenth century East Syrian Christianity. Yet behind it lies the same basic *theologumenon*: that Christians have left the religion of Christ.

The Christians, according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, developed religious practice for themselves under the influence of those around them. They have even borrowed certain practices from Muslims:

<sup>151</sup> W. Moore, “Eunomianism,” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 5:575.

<sup>152</sup> See F. Loops, “Macedonianism,” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 8:226.

<sup>153</sup> Apollinaris was in no way a friend of Arianism, but rather its bitter opponent. If Arius was heterodox for emphasizing the createdness of the divine Christ, Apollinaris was so for emphasizing the divinity of the human Jesus. He argued that “the Logos and the man Jesus are really one being. Christ was not two separate persons, but Divinity and manhood joined inseparably in one person. And we adore this person without making distinctions, because in Him even the human nature is actuated, and so made Divine, by the Logos that guides it.” A. Fortescue, “Apollinarism,” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1:607. Is it possible, then, that Apollinaris is not the referent here? The ms. (77r) is quite unclear on this name, reading *ūlūfriyānūs* (اولوفريانوس). Stern gets Apollinaris from this (See Stern, “Account,” 145, n. 1). Yet elsewhere the orthography of this name is quite different: افولنارس (Nāshi’ al-Akbar, *K. al-Awsaf*, 81) or بلنارس (Warrāq, *al-Radd fī l-ittihād*, 209). Who else then, could be the referent here?

It may be Origen (Ar. اوروجيانس). While the orthography of his name also does not match that of the ms., Origen would be a more appropriate candidate. He is often considered to be a forerunner to the other three figures mentioned in this passage, inasmuch as he qualified the divinity of Jesus Christ, speculating in *De principiis* that the divine *Logos* joined only to the soul of Jesus but not to his body. (To what extent this is a fair representation of Origen’s theology is unclear, as he writes in a speculative, if not experimental, fashion. See W.R. Inge, “Alexandrian Theology,” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1:316). Origen was himself anathematized at the Second Council of Constantinople (533). Cf. on Arius and his relation to Origenist thought, B. Studer: *Trinity and Incarnation*, trans. M. Westerhoff (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1993), 103–4.

Now the Byzantines (*al-rūm*) are the basis of these three Christian sects. Then the Jacobites, the companions of Jacob, branched off. Then after the Jacobites the Nestorians, the companions of Nestorius [branched off], who differ regarding the fast. Those who are in Iraq do not fast for half of every day like the Byzantines. They—I mean those who are in Islamic lands—break the fast<sup>154</sup> after the [Muslim] afternoon prayer [*ṣalāt al-ʿaṣr*] (p. 164, ll. 13–17).

It is no surprise to see ʿAbd al-Jabbār divide the Christians into this tripartite scheme. This is a model seen, with some variation, throughout Islamic writings on Christianity in this period. More peculiar is ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s observation that Christians in Iraq do not break their fast at midday but at *ṣalāt al-ʿaṣr*. Might this be simply ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s, or another Muslim’s, confusion in seeing Christians gather to eat in the afternoon when in fact their fast ended at noon, as is standard practice in the eastern Church? This is unlikely, as he makes it quite clear that he is aware of Christians who break their fast at noon (the *rūm*).

Elsewhere ʿAbd al-Jabbār relates a second account which is also intended to show that Christians invent religious practice:

This is among the things that they did recently, and in Islam [i.e. the Islamic lands], in the ʿAbbāsīd state. This is like what the Bishop of Samarqand did when he forbade his people [to eat] fowl (*firākḥ*), for he claimed that the Holy Spirit descended in a dove. So they received this from him and made it religion (p. 175, ll. 1–4).

This report seems credible in light of the fact that Samarqand is named as a seat of a bishop in the list of Eastern Syrian Church dioceses made by Elijah of Damascus in the year 900.<sup>155</sup> The bishop’s biblical justification for the decree also seems reasonable.

No overt polemical tone or comments appear in the two preceding reports, nor is there any obvious sign of a polemical re-working of the content. ʿAbd al-Jabbār appears to be faithfully passing on material that he received from Christian sources (and using it in a larger argument). Other reports, however, seem to be distorted or exaggerated, including an account of Christian confession. Here ʿAbd al-Jabbār develops one of his basic polemical themes: the greed and corruption of the Christian clergy:

A remarkable thing in their religion is when the sinner says to the priest or the monk, “Provide for me forgiveness and repentance. Bear my sins.”

<sup>154</sup> Read *ينظرون* for *ينظرون* (ms. 77v).

<sup>155</sup> See Fiey, “Les communautés syriaques en Iran,” 290–1.

The [the priest] sets a payment for him according to the extent of his wealth or poverty. Then the priest spreads out his garment, takes the payment and then says to the sinner, "Come now and mention to me your sins, sin by sin, so that I may know them and bear them."

So, whether this [person] is a man or woman, king or pauper, he begins to mention what he has done, one by one, until he says, "This is all of it."

Then the priest says to him, "[The sins] are great, yet I have borne them and forgiven you. So rejoice." He might also gather up the garment by its sides, place it on his back, and say, "What could be heavier than the sins in this garment!?"

Among what is handed down about them and well known about them is that a woman confesses her sins to a priest, saying, "A man penetrated me on such and such a day." So he inquires how many times and she tells him.

Then he says to her, "Inform me, is this man a Christian or a Muslim?" She might say, "A Muslim." He considers this greater and will raise the payment for her. If she pays. . . .<sup>156</sup> If she does not, he becomes angry and bursts out, saying, "The Muslims have fornicated with her. Now she wants me to forgive her but only gave me so much!" So she pays him, and adds to it, to make him content. This is their religion that they consider strict. They claim that it is the religion of Christ. But this could not be his (God's blessing be upon him) religion.

It has been said to one of their priests, "What kind of repentance is this?" He said, "We have no choice but to ask them about their sins and nourish them with forgiveness. If we did not do that and did not take money from them, the churches would be impoverished."

You will find that few of them fear the torture of the next world, for they believe that Christ killed himself to preserve them from sins and torture and that he is sitting at the right of his father. His mother is sitting there to the left. If sins come up, she receives them and says to her son, "O son, ask your father, the Lord, to forgive them." According to them, [Christ] forgives them and asks his father to forgive them (p. 190, l. 13–191, l. 17).

The image of a priest bearing the sins of the penitent in the cloak upon his back (as Jesus bore the sins of the world with the Cross on his back), is such an accurate reflection of Christian theology that there may well be an authentic report behind this account.<sup>157</sup> At the same time, this account is shaped by common polemical themes,

<sup>156</sup> There is a word missing here in the ms. (90v).

<sup>157</sup> C. Mousses describes two different rituals of reconciliation (*takhsa d-hūssaya*) in the modern East Syrian Church, neither of which are closely related to that described by 'Abd al-Jabbār. See C. Mousses, *Les livres liturgiques de l'église chaldéenne* (Beirut: Imp. La Photo Presse, 1955), 109, 114–5, 149–52.



including the sexual depravity of Christian women and the greed of Christian clergy.<sup>158</sup>

Another of these themes is the place of Mary (and Jesus) in the way of God, as the final sentence pokes fun at the Christian doctrine of intercessory prayer. It also relates to a particular argument that ‘Abd al-Jabbār builds in the *Critique*, a defense of the reasonableness of Qur’ān 5:116. In this verse God states: “O Jesus son of Mary, did you say to the people, ‘Take me and my mother as gods, apart from God?’” ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s argument is a response to Christian apologists, who, according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself, point to this verse and say, “This is a lie. For we said about [Christ] that he is a god but we did not say about his mother that she is a god” (p. 145, ll. 3–4).

‘Abd al-Jabbār takes great pains to build a number of retorts to this affront. He points out that the Qur’ān nowhere *explicitly* says that Christians believe that Mary is a god (p. 145). He cites a Syriac letter where a Nestorian accuses a Jacobite of holding this doctrine (p. 146). Finally, in the passage above he describes the Christian “pantheon,” as it were. According to him, Christians portray Mary on “the throne, sitting to the left of the Lord, the Father of her son, and her son is on His right” (p. 146, ll. 15–6). That is, they do in fact treat her as a god. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s approach to this question seems to have won him some distinction, as Ṣafadī mentions it in his biography of the Qādī.<sup>159</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār again portrays the Christian clergy as greedy in a second anecdote:

Yet the clever Christians say, “These signs and miracles are only tricks of the Metropolitans and monks, who detest work and flee from labor.” They call them, in the Syriac language, “‘*āriq*<sup>160</sup> *mā’nāthā*,” which refers to one who becomes a monk and persists in religion in order to eat others’ possessions and to have repose from labor.

<sup>158</sup> Anti-clericalism is, to a certain extent, an Islamic dogma. The institution of monasticism is rejected in two well-known prophetic *ḥadīths* (extant in Ibn Ḥanbal’s *Musnad* but not in the six canonical Sunnī collections). As anti-clericalism appears in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s fourth/tenth century polemic, it appears also in the fourteenth/twentieth century Qur’ān translation of Yūsuf ‘Alī. In one Qur’ānic passage that praises priests (*qassāsīn*) and monks (*ruḥbān*), 5:82, ‘Alī translates these terms as “Men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world.” Other Qur’ānic passages (e.g. 9:31–4) contain biting criticism of monks.

<sup>159</sup> Ṣafadī, 18:32.

<sup>160</sup> Read عازق for عازق (ms. 98v).

Now the monks, whenever they are quarreling about what they take, say to one another, "The Christians prefer you to us, giving you more than they give us. Yet in what way are you preferable to us? All of us have fled from work and are only praying for the Christians . . ." (p. 207, l. 14–208, 1).

A monk may come to the Metropolitan with this type [of complaint] in order to get support from him. The Metropolitan will say to him, "You are determined to flee from work, you are an '*ʿāriq ma'nāthā*.'" [The monk] might cry and say to him, "Father, it is not permitted for you to say this to me." The Metropolitan will say to him, "My brother, don't try this with me, for I know the profession. Let us give our deception to others. We know each other and the profession is one. I am an '*ʿāriq ma'nāthā*' like you, so don't cry" (p. 208, ll. 5–10).

The curious phrase '*ʿāriq ma'nāthā*' is a corruption of Syriac. The first term, '*ʿāriq*,' is a Syriac masculine singular active participle meaning "the one fleeing." The second term is not as easily explicable. The Syriac term '*ma'nāthā*,' the plural of which is '*ma'nyāthā*,' means "familiar intercourse" or, secondarily, "chant, antiphon."<sup>161</sup> If the primary meaning of '*ma'nāthā*' is accepted, the phrase would convey more or less the meaning that this humorous account does: that Christian monks flee from work and speak of their dark secret only to each other, saying "Let us give our deception to others." If the secondary meaning of '*ma'nāthā*' is preferred, then an equally plausible reading could be made: that these monks flee from work to chant their prayers all day.

Either way, the point of 'Abd al-Jabbār's anecdote is clear: that the Christian clergy have fooled the Christians into following their wayward guidance, since in the end it is a good business. Again this is an argument with deep roots in the Qur'ān. Qur'ān: 9:31 relates: "They take their teachers and monks as lords apart from God and Christ son of Mary;"<sup>162</sup> Qur'ān 9:34, which 'Abd al-Jabbār quotes (p. 152, ll. 1–3), has: "O Believers! Many rabbis and monks wrongly devour the possessions of people and block them from the way of God. As for those who treasure gold and silver and do not spend them in the way of God, announce to them a painful punishment."

Also in the category of Christian practice are five miracle stories that appear towards the end of the *Critique* (pp. 202–6). 'Abd al-

<sup>161</sup> See Graf, *Verzeichnis*, p. 107; Payne Smith, 289.

<sup>162</sup> The standard Muslim reading puts God in the genitive and Christ in the accusative, so that the verse reads "They take their teachers and monks and Christ son of Mary as lords apart from God."

Jabbār reports these narratives in order to show what the Christians use for *dalā'il* ("proofs") of their religion. To 'Abd al-Jabbār (as to Voltaire centuries later), the very fact that the Christians had to call on such extraordinary tales is itself evidence that they have no firm grounding for their doctrine. One example should suffice to illustrate the point:

Another monk came to them, crying. They said to him, "Who are you and what made you cry?" He said, "Pray for me because my affliction is great." It was said to him, "Mention it, my son." So he said, "I do not understand my situation and I do not know what to say." They said to him, "In any case, tell us your affliction. Inform us of your state."

So he said, "Did Father George not die?" It was said to him, "Who is George?" He replied, "The one of such and such a monastery and such and such a hermitage." They said, "We do not know him," (although there might have been one of them who said, "I have heard of him"). So [the visiting monk] said, "Has [news of] his signs and miracles reached you?" They said, "Speak to us of them."<sup>163</sup> Tell us about them." So he said, "I cannot mention them to you. Clearly you are not Christians but the opposite of Christians. If you really were Christians you would know about him and about his signs and proofs." So they asked him [again] to mention them but he declined and refrained [from doing so].

Yet they continued to ask him until he informed them that such and such a king sent for and summoned [Father George], and then said to him, "Leave this religion and I will give [wealth] to you, honor you and make you a partner in my reign." Yet he declined. The king imprisoned him in a secure, constricted prison. Then [the king] asked the prison guard to [present] him, but [the latter] did not find him in the prison, for which the guard took every kind of abuse from the king, who said to him, "You let him go!" and dispatched messengers seeking him. They found him in his hermitage and brought him to the king. [The king] said to [Father George], "Inform me about the prison guard, is it he who let you go?"

He replied, "No, Christ brought me out. He opened the doors for me and blocked [the guards] from seeing me." The king said to him, "Now I will imprison you. Go ahead and tell Christ to let you go." So he imprisoned him in a secure prison behind locked doors of iron. Then [the king] sought him but did not find him, so he sent [messengers] to his hermitage. There he was. [The king] brought him back and said to him, "Who let you out?" [Father George] said to him, "Christ." [The king] returned him to the prison, bound him and weighed him down with iron, increasing the security. Then he demanded [Father

<sup>163</sup> Read *حَدَّثَنَا بِهَا* for *حَدَّثَنَا بِهَا* (ms. 97r).

George] but did not find him in prison, yet the doors and the locks were as they were, and he found the bonds. [The king] sent out [messengers] seeking [Father George]. They found him in the hermitage and brought him back.

The king was furious with what had taken place with him and how he had been embarrassed time and time again. He ordered that [Father George] be beheaded and buried. On the following day, the day of his burial, they found him at his hermitage. This was told to the king. He sent out and had [Father George] brought before him. He cut him into pieces. He was carried out and buried. But when it was the next day he found [Father George] in his hermitage. This was said to the king. He sent and had him brought and cut him into pieces. He asked for fire, burned him and ordered that his ashes be thrown into the sea. On the next day they found him in his hermitage. The king sent and had him brought to him. He apologized to [Father George] and became a Christian.

So the [visiting] monk said, "All of this occurred to [Father George] while I was with him. I witnessed what the king did to him. Yet for something like this I do not cry or emphasize my affliction. More severe than this is your ignorance and negligence. It is as though you are not Christians and have not heard of Christianity." He cried and they believed him and apologized to him for their negligence and ignorance about this man and what happened to him (p. 205, l. 3–206, 14).

Later ‘Abd al-Jabbār returns to this account to report that even the Christians themselves find it illogical, since it shows Father George performing a greater act than Christ:

One of them said, "If we were sincere with ourselves we would know that this one is a liar and [his story] has no basis. For Christ, the master of George, was chained up once, and did not return and did not accomplish something similar. So how could George accomplish this, when he does not measure up to [Christ] in patience and vision?" He made the others laugh (p. 209, ll. 7–10).

It seems undeniable, due to its detail, that ‘Abd al-Jabbār heard the Father George story from Christian sources. Indeed, it has much in common with the miraculous escapes of the apostles from prison in Acts of the Apostles (chs. 5, 12, 16).<sup>164</sup> Yet it strikes me as quite

<sup>164</sup> See Acts 12. Another account in this section of the *Critique* also seems to have biblical origins. It describes how God provided meals of bread and fish to two monks stranded on an island (*Tathbūt*, 202–3), and thus seems to be related to the biblical accounts of Elijah being fed by an angel in the desert (I Kings 19) and Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fish (Mt 14, 15, Mk 6, 8, Lk 9, Jn 6) as well as to the Qur'ānic account of Jesus' calling down a table full of food from heaven (Q 5:111–4).

unlikely that he really heard “one of them” reject its validity, at least with the explanation provided above. For there is nothing in Christian doctrine which would suggest that the followers of Christ are incapable of performing signs greater than him. On the contrary, the Bible suggests that they will perform such signs (Matthew 21:20–2). ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s logic is instead consistent with Islamic doctrine, which maintains that no one might perform a sign greater than that of a prophet. Indeed, ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself affirms that there could be no miraculous signs after the death of Muḥammad since prophecy has disappeared from the earth.<sup>165</sup>

In any case, the recourse to such miracles is a common Christian apologetical strategy, which ‘Abd al-Jabbār seeks to counter in the *Critique*.<sup>166</sup> In “al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā” of the *Mughnī*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār

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<sup>165</sup> “This is out of the question for us, since we reject that anyone after the prophets could [produce] a sign or a miracle. We do not claim signs or miracles. Rather [the sign], as everyone knows who has heard the reports, is the Qur’ān, and that which came with it” (*Taḥbīt*, 181).

<sup>166</sup> In disputation with Muslims, Christians would often seek to turn the religious contest from a test of whose religion was more rational to a test of which religion had produced miracles. ‘Abd al-Jabbār is obviously wary of this strategy. Compare the report of the Egyptian scholar Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285), who describes how he met a number of Christian leaders at a public park in Cairo and challenged them to give a logical presentation of their religion. The Christian leader excuses himself from this task:

[The Christian leader] said, “[Christ] did not request from us a description but the Lord Christ asked us to believe. We are not obliged to do that which he did not oblige us to do. It is not part of our religion.” He continued only with silence, tradition [*taqlīd*], and a refusal to examine what is valid and what is wrong, as I have presented to you.

Qarāfī, *al-Ajwiba al-fākhira*, ed. Bakr Zakī ‘Araḍ (Cairo: Kuliyat Uṣūl al-Dīn, 1986), 66. This is perhaps an exaggerated depiction of Christian beliefs on the subject, but it is not utterly without basis. Many orthodox Christian thinkers maintain that Christianity may be logically defended but not logically *proven*, since it is based, ultimately, on a miracle. That is, the faith is so sublime that it is above human conception, and yet, being true, it cannot be proven false. Notice the comments of Thomas Aquinas:

First of all I wish to warn you that in disputations with unbelievers about the articles of the Faith, you should not try to prove the Faith by necessary reasons. This would belittle the sublimity of the Faith, whose truth exceeds not only human minds by also those of angels; we believe in them only because they are revealed by God.

Yet whatever comes from the Supreme Truth cannot be false, and what is not false cannot be repudiated by any necessary reason. Just as our Faith cannot be proved by necessary reasons, because it exceeds the human mind, so because of its truth it cannot be refuted by any necessary reason. So any Christian disputing about the articles of the Faith should not try to prove the Faith, but defend the Faith.

is interested only in *kalām*-minded Christian apologetics, but here his perspective is broader. In fact, in the *Critique* ‘Abd al-Jabbār dismisses those Christians who argue from intellectual proofs as a bunch of irreligious philosophers.<sup>167</sup> Thus ‘Abd al-Jabbār, having refuted Christian intellectual proofs, now refutes what is left to the Christians as a refuge: the historical transmission of their religion and the miracles that validate it. He concludes:

Let it be said to them, “Who passed on to you that Christ (peace be upon him) is your ancestor? We have denied this to you and demonstrated that you have opposed Christ (peace be upon him) in his doctrine and practice. You have broken his contracts and annulled his commandments. [This is] a demonstration that you cannot deny” (p. 182, ll. 5–7).

### 3. *Style/Purpose*

The material on Christian practice is not only important for the unique view it gives of the medieval Eastern Church, it is also a key to understanding the *Critique*. For without it one might justifiably argue that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s deconstruction of Christian scripture and religious history is a theological exercise, i.e. an effort to answer the question: why is it that the Islamic reports of Jesus and his religion differ from those of the Christians? Yet if that were the case, if ‘Abd al-Jabbār only cared about an intra-Islamic project of addressing theological and historical problems, he certainly would not have so explicitly addressed contemporary Christians. Instead the *Critique* is a work fully in conversation with the inter-religious controversies of its author’s day. For this reason, no doubt, ‘Abd al-Jabbār cites here several lists of Christian apologists,<sup>168</sup> while he names no Christian opponent in “al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā” of the *Mughnī*. This latter work is fundamentally different.

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Thomas Aquinas, *De rationibus fidei*, trans. J. Kenny in “Saint Thomas Aquinas: Reasons for the Faith against Muslim Objections,” *Islamochristiana* 22 (1996), 33. A critical edition of the Latin text has been published as: Thomas Aquinas, “De Rationibus Fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum,” *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia* (Rome: Leonine Commission, 1969). A more complete introduction to the text, and a German translation, has been done by M. Grabmann, “Die Schrift: De rationibus fidei contra Saracenos Graecos et Armenos ad Cantorem Antiochenum des heiligen Thomas von Aquin,” *Scholastik, Vierteljahrschrift für Theologie und Philosophie* 17 (1942), 187–216.

<sup>167</sup> *Tathbīt*, 192–3.

<sup>168</sup> See *Tathbīt*, 75–6, 192–3 and 623.

### 3.1. *Contrast with the Mughnī*<sup>169</sup>

In writing “al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā” of the *Mughnī*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār had less material on Christianity to work with, and his arguments therein are, per force, based on logic and not on texts. Thus, while in the *Critique* ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues that the Christian gospels are inauthentic by using the extensive narratives quoted above, in the *Mughnī*, he relies on a logical argument, namely that a monotheistic prophet could not relate that which the Christians claim:

They cannot say: “Christ, according to you, was one of the prophets of God. So how can you claim to nullify the validity of our religious teaching, when [our teaching] is taken from him?” We know their lie in this matter. For we affirm that he brought only that which the intellect confirms: monotheism (*tawḥīd*) without the declaration of three (*tathlīth*).<sup>170</sup>

It is also clear that in the two works ‘Abd al-Jabbār is participating in two different conversations. In the *Mughnī* he is taking part in the intra-Islamic dialogue of the *mutakallimūn*; one of his principle sources on Christianity is Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq’s *kalām*-minded polemic.<sup>171</sup> Thus ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s tone therein is often theoretical:

Languages have different natures. For this reason we say that the one who translates from one language to another must be knowledgeable about what is valid and invalid for God Most High according to the intellect. He must be knowledgeable of the literal uses and metaphors of each language. For an expression could be used literally for one thing and metaphorically for another, but the one who puts it into another language might use it literally [for both things]. The one who

<sup>169</sup> In the following section I compare the *Critique* and the anti-Christian chapter in the *Mughnī*. There is also material on Christianity in the *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamṣa* and the *al-Majmū‘ fī l-muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*. Yet these two works are by disciples of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, who claim to be recording their teacher’s views (see chapter 2, section 2.3). These sections are also significantly shorter, running only a couple of pages each.

<sup>170</sup> *Mughnī*, 5:142–3.

<sup>171</sup> Like Warrāq’s text, the *Mughnī* first generally (and quite disinterestedly) lays out the general doctrines of the three Christian sects: Melkite, Jacobite and Nestorian, then moves on to a discussion of the Trinity (pp. 86ff.) and the Incarnation (pp. 146ff.). D. Thomas (*Anti-Christian Polemic*, 46ff.) comments on the relation between the two works: “The verbal correspondence in this latter attack [the *Mughnī*] is so close that it shows beyond any reasonable doubt that the *Radd* [of Warrāq] was either ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s immediate source or was quoted in his actual source” (p. 49). Despite the close connection between the two works, ‘Abd al-Jabbār never cites Warrāq as an authority in the “Radd ‘alā l-Naṣārā” of the *Mughnī*, a fact that Thomas argues is due to Warrāq’s heretical reputation (p. 50). Yet ‘Abd al-Jabbār cites Warrāq in the *Critique* (p. 198).

translates a metaphor from the first language literally into the second language is in error. Undoubtedly there are metaphors in these books [i.e. the Bible] which are like the ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān. This is known from many examples of the Qur'ān commentators who, when they comment on the Arabic in Persian, make this kind of error. Either they are ignorant of the meaning due to [their] intellect or due to the language (*Mughnī*, 111).

‘Abd al-Jabbār is here interested in explaining, in general, how the Christians might misunderstand the Bible (by taking metaphors about Christ literally). In the *Critique*, on the other hand, ‘Abd al-Jabbār directly enters the Muslim-Christian debate, as he seeks to deconstruct specific Christian doctrines and apologetical arguments. Thus he discusses the question of translation in a more applied and less abstract fashion:

Some people have said that “son” in the Hebrew language (which was the language of Christ) refers to a righteous servant, an obedient, sincere friend, while “father” refers to a master, possessor and director.

They say, “He said in the Tawrāt, ‘Israel is my son and first born.’<sup>172</sup> His sons are my sons.”<sup>173</sup> Thus, according to the claims of the Christians, [Israel] would be divine. Isaiah the Prophet (God’s blessing be upon him) said in his book: “God is the Father of all the world.”<sup>174</sup> O community of Christians, you remember that Matthew relates in his gospel that Christ said: “Blessed are you community of righteous people; you will be called sons of God.”<sup>175</sup> Matthew says in his gospel: “Christ said to the people, ‘Your heavenly father is one alone’” (p. 120, ll. 1–8).<sup>176</sup>

They say regarding the evil ones that they are sons of Satan and many similar things in their language. They use “son” with the meaning of sincere friend, and “father” with the meaning of lofty master and possessor. For this reason the Christians say about their Metropolitan “*abūnā*.”<sup>177</sup> All of this is part of their use (p. 120, l. 18–121, 1).

Perhaps the most salient example of the contrast between the *Mughnī* and the *Critique* is ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s discussion in the two works of the crucifixion, a constant source of contention between Muslims and

<sup>172</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:110; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:340, 357.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Exodus 4:22 for the first sentence. The second sentence has no correlation. Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:110. V. Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 25, 27 who also quotes both sentences (in the first instance).

<sup>174</sup> No correlation to Isaiah, although 63:16 and 64:8 refer to God as father.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Mt 5:9.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Mt 5:48, 23:9. Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 145.

<sup>177</sup> “Our father,” the common title in both the East and West Syrian churches for addressing a priest.



Christians.<sup>178</sup> In the *Mughnī* he argues against the crucifixion with general rational arguments, the validity of which would hold for any such question: the fallibility of human observation, the problems of transmission and the legitimacy of compelled transmission. He is accordingly satisfied with putative statements: “might have changed,” “it was possible,” “the validity of which . . . is unknown.”<sup>179</sup> When he addresses this matter in the *Critique*, however, there are no putative statements. Instead, ‘Abd al-Jabbār relates a narrative of what actually took place:

Now if the Christians went back over their reports and what is in their four gospels, and if these gospels were the object of their trust, they would know that Christ<sup>180</sup> was not the one who was killed and crucified.<sup>181</sup> When they reach the report of the killed and crucified [man] and his crucifixion, [the gospels] say:

On the Thursday of Passover, the Jews made out for Herod, the companion of Pilate, King of the Romans, and they said, “There is a man from among us who has corrupted and deluded our youth.<sup>182</sup> According to the stipulation, you are obliged to empower us over someone who [conducts himself] in this way, that we may prosecute him.” So [Herod] said to his guards, “Go with these [people] and bring their adversary.”

Then the guards went out with the Jews. As they came to the door of the ruler, the Jews approached the guards and said, “Do you know our adversary?” They said, “No.” Then the Jews said, “Nor do we know him. Yet walk with us and we will find one who will guide us to him.”

<sup>178</sup> Cf. also van Ess (*TG*, 4:335), who discusses the intra-Islamic debate on this question surrounding Ibn al-Rāwandī (for van Ess’s translation of Ibn al-Rāwandī’s argument see *TG*, 6:481–2).

<sup>179</sup> “We know that they have erred in transmission and interpretation because of the ones from whom they took their book: John, Matthew, Luke and Mark; these are among those whom they read. For when Christ disappeared (*fuqida*)—they claim that he was killed—his companions were killed. None remained that followed his religion to pass on to [others] his book and law except for these four. They claim that they dictated the gospels in three languages. But it was known that these four were liable to change and to substitute [matters], since they were accused of lying. How can it be valid to rely on their transmission regarding what is fitting for God Most High and what is unfitting? It is only valid for us to rely on what we said, since the transmitters of our Book and the sources of our religion were a large group, and could not have agreed on a lie. We have received what they have transmitted with valid knowledge. For this reason what we have said is valid” (*Mughnī*, 5:143).

<sup>180</sup> Read *المسيح* for *المسيح* (ms 65v).

<sup>181</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 143–4.

<sup>182</sup> Pines reads *ikhwānanā* for *aḥdāthanā* and translates, “our brothers.” See *Jewish Christians*, 53.

As they walked Judas Iscariot, who was one of the intimate and trusted [friends] and important twelve companions of Christ, met them. He said to them, "Are you looking for Jesus the Nazarene?" They said, "Yes." He said, "What would you give me if I guided you to him?" So one of the Jews let out some of his dirhams, counted thirty and handed them over to him, saying, "This is yours." So [Judas] said to them, "As you know, he is my friend and I am ashamed to say 'this is he,' but stay with me and look at the one to whom I offer my hand and whose head I kiss. Then when I move my hand away from his, take him."

They went with him, but there were many people from every place in Jerusalem who were meeting there to celebrate the feast. Judas Iscariot offered his hand to someone and kissed his head. He moved his hand away from [the other's hand] and dove into the crowd. So the Jews and the guards took [this man].

The man whom they took said, "What is the matter between us?" He was severely anxious. They said to him, "The ruler wants you." He said, "What is the matter between me and the ruler?" So they took him to [the ruler], bringing him in to Herod. He lost his head in fear and anxiety and began to cry. He was not in control of himself (p. 137, l. 11–138, 13). . . .

When Judas Iscariot met the Jews he said to them, "What did you do with the man whom you took yesterday?" They said, "We crucified him." [Judas] was amazed at this, finding it unbelievable. So they said to him, "We have done it. If you want to be sure of it, go to the melon field of so and so." When he went there, he saw [the man] and said, "This is innocent blood. This is pure blood." He insulted the Jews and brought out the thirty dirhams that they gave him as a broker, threw it in their faces and went to his house. Then he hanged himself (p. 139, l. 16–140, l. 1).<sup>183</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s strategy of using narratives to advance his arguments makes the *Critique* at once more eclectic and more disorganized than the “al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā” of the *Mughnī*. A. Charfi concedes that the *Tathbīt* is “without a logical order.”<sup>184</sup> Indeed, the *Critique* proceeds more like an oral address than a carefully planned treatise,<sup>185</sup> shifting between topics abruptly due to word association or the author’s

<sup>183</sup> Cf. translation of Stern, “Apocryphal Gospels,” 42ff. and of Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 53ff.

<sup>184</sup> Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 158.

<sup>185</sup> G. Monnot, whose *Penseurs musulmans* focuses on ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s treatment of dualistic religions in the *Mughnī*, finds the Qāḍī’s wandering style generally mystifying: “On a l’impression de pénétrer un désert sans *ma‘ālīm*, i.e. sans point de repère, ou pour mieux dire de s’enfoncer dans un marais, semblable à la ‘bourbe’ fatale de la ténèbre selon l’image bardesanite: plus la lumière de l’intelligence s’appuie sur le texte pour en sortir, plus elle s’y empêtre” (p. 45).

whim.<sup>186</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār is also inconsistent. He switches back and forth between the Syriac (*Fūlūs* or *Fawlūs*, p. 98) and Arabic (*Būlus* pp. 143, 156 etc.) forms of Paul’s name, as he switches between the Arabic Islamic name for Jesus (‘*Īsā*), the East Syriac form *Īshū*‘ (pp. 100, 112, 142, 149 etc.) and a form influenced by the West Syriac (*Yashū*‘, p. 146). Likewise, he at once argues that Christian scripture denies that Jesus was crucified (pp. 139–40, 143) and describes how it affirms that he was crucified (p. 202). Charfi characterizes most early Islamic anti-Christian works as collections of disjointed proofs.<sup>187</sup> The *Critique* does not escape his characterization.

### 3.2. *Relation to kalām*

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s style, which appears poor from a literary perspective, is directly connected to his motive in writing. He is not interested in writing coherent works as much as he is interested in defeating his opponent. As G. Monnot comments: “Chez ‘Abd al-Jabbār, [la logique] combat surtout. Le texte est polémique.”<sup>188</sup> In the *Critique* this means that ‘Abd al-Jabbār is unfailingly hostile to Christianity. He has no interest in discovering what might be true or authentic in Christianity. Nor is he interested in finding information within Christian tradition that might teach him about the Prophet Jesus in Islam, or even a general, sociological lesson on the historical development of religions.

<sup>186</sup> Notice, for example, how the mention of circumcision in the following anecdote leads to a thought on castration which leads to one on Muslim prisoners of war which leads to one on the weak state of the Islamic world:

They decline circumcision, but they castrate infants. If they take Muslims prisoner, they look at the infants, castrate a large number of them and then cast them away. Many of them die. Yet they claim to be compassionate and merciful (cf. Jāhīz, *Radd*, 21).

Now when Islam first [began], [the Byzantines] were careful with captives, due to the strength of Islam and their weakness, that they might benefit from them. Yet when the conduct of the kings of Islam worsened, and their concern for [Islam] decreased, when those raiding them were like Sayf al-Dawla ‘Alī b. Ḥamdān [d. 356/967], when those in Egypt, the enemies of Islam, seized the endowments of the frontier forts, the Muslims became unimportant in the eyes of the Byzantines. They say that the Islamic state disappeared about eighty years ago. Today you are in about the year 385 [AD 995]. Now I return to mentioning the conduct of the Christians (p. 168).

<sup>187</sup> “فقد جاءت هذه الآراء في الأغلب بصيغة حجج متراكمة ومتابعة الواحدة تلو الأخرى دون أن يحرص أصحاب الردود على التخلص المنطقي من دليل إلى آخر.” Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 8.

<sup>188</sup> G. Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 31.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s motive in writing on Christianity is limited, as is that of most classical Muslim authors who address Christianity.

There are exceptions, however. Certain early Muslim historians like Ya‘qūbī (d. 292/897) and Mas‘ūdī have a clear interest in accurately reporting the contents of the Bible, without polemical commentary. While some of the biblical passages that they relate clearly reflect an Islamic bias, they make no attempt to construct *theologoumena*. Instead, they seem to be addressing the question: “What would the Islamic Injīl have said here?”<sup>189</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār, however, does not report any accounts out of a purely investigative historical spirit.<sup>190</sup> His goal is always the deconstruction of Christian religion. As Monnot remarks, “En revanche, il ne fait aucun effort pour chercher le secret, le ressort ou la valeur d’une croyance étrangère. Le sens religieux lui en échappe.”<sup>191</sup>

Thus ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s discussion of opposing teachings is inevitably in the context of debate. As Monnot points out, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s approach to other religions can be seen in his use of the verb *ṣahḥa* (“to be valid”) and the related noun *ṣiḥḥa* (“validity”). ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s is not concerned with the *ḥaqīqa*, the essential truth of the matter. Instead, he is exploring ways to show the logical invalidity of Christian claims.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Compare also the place of the Bible in the work of Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī’s, *A‘lām al-nubuwwa*, his debate with the irreligious philosopher Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā’ al-Rāzī (d. 313/925 or 323/935). The latter refers so often to the Bible that Abū Ḥātim comments: “This I have reported in abbreviated form, but there is a long form for everything we mentioned. The passages from the *Tawrāt* would be like the length of *sūrat al-baqara* [the longest chapter of the Qur’ān].” Razī, *A‘lām al-nubuwwa*, 121. The same can be said, to a lesser extent, for Ṭabarī’s universal history. His chapter on Jesus, for example, has a much less disputational tone than do the sections on Jesus in his Qur’ān commentary. See Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 1:723–41. In his account here, Ṭabarī includes with approval the account of Jesus’ miracle of changing water into wine, an account that other Muslim others reject as an aspersion against a law-abiding prophet. Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 1:731.

<sup>190</sup> His writing thus matches the observation of Massignon: “L’apologétique musulmane est critique et prompte dans l’attaque; elle réduit et décape, *per absurdum*, par brèves déductions, les problèmes complexes jusqu’à une simplicité radicale; elle se maintient sur le terrain de l’emploi normal des noms de choses usuelles, elle ‘univocise’ les mots, les restreint à un sens obvie, les concrétise et les durcit.” L. Massignon, “Notes sur l’apologétique islamique,” *Revue des études islamiques* 6 (1932), 491.

<sup>191</sup> Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 147. Monnot concludes that the tradition of Islamic research on other religions is “l’histoire de l’incompréhension” (p. 148). D. Thomas, meanwhile, comments on the work of Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq: “When regarded as an example of polemic, it obviously seems entirely destructive in its attitude towards Christianity, and concerned not so much with the truth of any teaching as with the defeat of any opponent.” *Anti-Christian Polemic*, 60.

<sup>192</sup> “Il semble même que le combat dialectique ne sorte pas volontiers du plan

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s interest in the question of validity is a product of a particularly Mu‘tazilī *modus operandi*. The Mu‘tazila were, broadly speaking, reluctant to accept *tawātur* (or *naql*, “transmission”) as a method for verifying religious doctrine, unlike their opponents, the *ahl al-ḥadīth*.<sup>193</sup> They preferred to find logically verifiable proofs for Islamic beliefs. The intellect (*‘aql*), as the rhymed saying goes, is superior to transmitted reports (*naql*).<sup>194</sup> The importance of this principle to ‘Abd al-Jabbār is evident in several passages of the *Critique* in which he attempts to build arguments that prove the truth of Islam on the basis of pure reason, or, as ‘Abd al-Jabbār puts it, “even without the knowledge of prophethood” (See pp. 116, 126).

This attitude reflects a belief that history, religion and even God Himself are constricted by logic. In the Ash‘arī system of *kalām*, the divine is ultimately inscrutable, being beyond the human capacity of reason. Due to this, seemingly contradictory assertions (such as the mercifulness of God and His condemnation of sinners whom He has compelled to sin) are, in the Ash‘arī view, to be maintained “without asking how” (*bi-lā kayfā*), as the famous axiom has it. (This is what G. Hourani refers to as “theistic subjectivism.”) With the Mu‘tazila, however, the nature of God and His action in human history are comprehensible to human reason (Hourani: “rationalistic objectivism”).<sup>195</sup> This assertion brings along with it a theological conundrum, as certain qualities (logic, mercy, goodness, etc.) now appear as eternal forms apart from God to which He must conform. It also opens infinite possibilities for the theologian, allowing him to make judgments and arguments on God and religion on the basis of logic alone.

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idéal. Même le verbe *ṣaḥḥa* ne signifie presque jamais ici ‘être vrai’ (avec un souci d’objectivité), mais exprime la simple validité dans l’ordre du raisonnement.” Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 43.

<sup>193</sup> Notice ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s comments in the *Mughnī* (16:152): “Our teachers have affirmed [Muḥammad’s signs] as both miracles and proofs, yet they do not permit one to rely upon them in debating opponents.” Cf. D. Sklare, “Responses to Islamic Polemics by Jewish Mutakallimūn in the Tenth Century,” *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, ed. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 150, n. 45.

<sup>194</sup> On this, see van Ess, *TG*, 4:334ff.; I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1910, second edition, 1925), ch. 3.

<sup>195</sup> “The main thrust of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s ethics, however, has not yet been mentioned. That is its rigorous and insistent objectivism. . . . ‘Abd al-Jabbār, therefore, is not content with the mere definitions of ‘obligatory’ as deserving blame for omission and of ‘evil’ as deserving blame for doing—objective as these are. He also insists that there are reasons why some acts deserve blame for omitting or doing, consisting in further objective characteristics or grounds belonging to certain types of acts.” G. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition*, 112.

‘Abd al-Jabbār shows a great deal of confidence in human intuition (for which G. Hourani compares his system to that of modern intuitionist philosophers).<sup>196</sup> This intuition “is attainable independently of any divine revelation, so it is accessible to unbelievers.”<sup>197</sup> This sets the stage for the type of disputation that appears in the *Critique*:

If it is said, “How<sup>198</sup> can you conclude that all of their ancestors neither witnessed this nor observed this as they claim?” Let it be said: the one who considers will know by his intellect that the matter is as [Muḥammad] (God’s blessing and peace be upon him) said and not as they said. For if these groups really had witnessed that and known it, then whoever met them and heard from them should be in a similar<sup>199</sup> state of knowledge as them. So everyone who has met the Christians and the Jews and heard that from them should therefore know their statement. We would be in a similar state as theirs in this knowledge. Do you not see that when we informed them regarding the killing of Ḥamza, Ja’far, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī<sup>200</sup> (May God be pleased with them) they shared our knowledge of that and their state was similar to ours? Yet when we return to ourselves, we do not find ourselves knowing [their report], despite our interaction with them and repeated listening to them. Rather, we have learned that they are not knowledgeable in that and that their belief in it is not knowledge. This is the proof by which we know the validity (*ṣiḥḥā*) of [Muḥammad’s] (God’s blessing and peace be upon him) claim and the falsehood of their claim that they are knowledgeable about [the crucifixion] (p. 124, ll. 1–10).<sup>201</sup>

Here ‘Abd al-Jabbār constructs a logical argument—namely that the validity of a report can be determined by the universality of its acceptance—and applies it to both Christian and Muslim claims. The importance of this particular argument is not so much in its reasonableness (indeed, in this respect it may fail to impress), but rather in what it shows of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s commitment to logic and debate.

Arguments of this sort most often take the form seen at the opening of the passage cited immediately above: “If it is said (*fa-in*

<sup>196</sup> G. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition*, 98.

<sup>197</sup> G. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition*, 114.

<sup>198</sup> Read ابن for أين (ms. 58r).

<sup>199</sup> Read مثل for منل (ms. 58r).

<sup>200</sup> Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 3/625) uncle of the Prophet killed at the battle of Uhud; Ja’far b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 8/629) cousin of the Prophet and brother of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, killed at the battle of Mu’ta; ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644) second caliph, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān (d. 35/656) third caliph, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), fourth caliph, all of whom were assassinated.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Jāḥiz, *Hujāj al-nubuwwa*, in *Rasā’il al-Jāḥiz*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1991), 1:251.

*qīla*) . . .” “let it be said (*qīla*),” or “if they say (*in qālū*),” “then we say (*fa-naqūlu*).” This structure, usually referred to as *masā’il wa-ajwiba*, is prevalent in most *kalām* treatises and dominant in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Mughnī*.<sup>202</sup> Yet the *Critique*, even if it does not share the *masā’il wa-ajwiba* format with “al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā” of the *Mughnī*, is equally a product of *kalām*. ‘Abd al-Jabbār is still relying on logic to build his arguments. Instead of applying it to abstract theological formulae, however, he applies it to the interpretation of scripture, history and practice.

### 3.3. *Intended Audience*

While the *Critique* is less abstract than ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s other writing on Christianity, this does not mean that it was written for a different audience. It is clear from a number of elements that ‘Abd al-Jabbār wrote the *Critique*, like the *Mughnī*, for Muslims.<sup>203</sup> In fact, in the *Critique* ‘Abd al-Jabbār addresses himself directly to a Muslim reader who seeks to know how to refute Christians, to whom he refers in the third person:

For if you put one of them to the test in this way . . . say . . . (p. 93, l. 6).

Now, they might say, “We do not say that there are three Gods, so how can they relate the declaration of three about us?” We say to them: “You have given us the meaning of the declaration of three, divulged and reported its truths in detail and forbidden certain expressions regarding it” (p. 95, ll. 3–5).

Now if the Christians went back over their reports and what is in their four gospels, and if these gospels were the object of their trust, they would know . . . (p. 137, ll. 11–12).

In addition, ‘Abd al-Jabbār not infrequently reports material about Christianity which would be immediately rejected by a Christian reader

<sup>202</sup> H. Daiber, citing Ḥasan b. Ayyūb (d. 4th/10th) as an example, suggests that the origins of *masā’il wa-ajwiba* in Islamic tradition lie with converts to Islam among Christian Aristotelian philosophers. Daiber’s choice of Ḥasan b. Ayyūb is peculiar, seeing that he comes rather late in the development of *kalām* (compare, for example, the well developed *masā’il wa-ajwiba* style of the Muslim born Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq). See H. Daiber, “Masā’il wa-ajwiba,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 6:636, which in other respects is a very informative article.

<sup>203</sup> This is consistent with the majority of medieval Islamic anti-Christian polemics. Works that were explicitly intended for a Christian audience are rare. One of the few exceptions is the letter of Ḥasan b. Ayyūb to his Christian brother, which is quoted by Ibn Taymiyya in his *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:312–344, 2:352–3:3.



but might have a profound effect on a Muslim reader. This is the case with those biblical verses discussed above (section 2.2) that he has transformed for the purpose of a certain *theologumenon*. Many other examples might be drawn, such as when he reports that according to the Christians, the authors of the four gospels, “were companions of Christ and his disciples [*talāmīdhuhu*]” (p. 155, l. 10). Christian doctrine holds that Matthew and John were among the apostles, but that Mark was a disciple of Peter and Luke of Paul. Jāḥiẓ, upon whom ‘Abd al-Jabbār relied,<sup>204</sup> was aware of this point of Christian doctrine.<sup>205</sup> Yet by claiming that the Christians declare all four of the gospel authors to be direct disciples of Christ, ‘Abd al-Jabbār can once again catch them in hypocrisy and *tahriḥ*, which he does when he paraphrases Luke 1:1–4.<sup>206</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s habit of informing the reader of which biblical verses the Christians cite in their defense, a phenomenon mentioned above, also shows that he was writing for Muslims.

There are also some signs that ‘Abd al-Jabbār was writing for his immediate context in Rayy, where the East Syrian (Nestorian) Church was the dominant Christian presence. Again it is fruitful to compare the *Critique* to the anti-Christian chapter in the *Mughnī*, which shows few signs of connection with the Christians living in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s midst. In “al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā” of the *Mughnī*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār addresses the doctrine of the Melkites, Jacobites and Nestorians with relatively equal interest, as three theoretical positions to be compared and refuted.<sup>207</sup> In the *Critique*, however, he is primarily concerned

<sup>204</sup> *Tathbīt*, 198.

<sup>205</sup> Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 24.

<sup>206</sup> “Yet they do not know. They have no idea who they were. They only have a claim in this regard. Luke mentioned in his gospel that he did not see Christ. Luke says, speaking to the one for whom he made his gospel (and he is the last one who made [a gospel] of the four): ‘I know your desire for goodness, knowledge and refinement (*al-adab*), so I made this Gospel, because of my knowledge and because I was close to those who served the Word and saw Him.’” (*Tathbīt*, 155).

<sup>207</sup> See, for example, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s treatment of the crucifixion in the *Mughnī* (5:84): “They differ over the crucifixion and the death, beyond their agreement that Christ was crucified and killed. The Nestorians maintain that the crucifixion occurred to Christ according to his humanity not to his divinity. Most of the Melkites maintain that the crucifixion occurred to Christ in his totality, and that Christ is divine and human. Most of the Jacobites maintain that the crucifixion and death took place to the one existing substance of the two substances which are the divine and human.”

Notice how closely this echoes the work of Warrāq, who writes (*al-Radd ‘alā l-tathlīth*, 75): “The three sects claim that the Christ was crucified and killed, but



with the Nestorians. Thus he addresses the Nestorian contention that their theological position, unlike that of the Melkites and the Jacobites, is one of pure monotheism, like that of Muslims:

For the Melkites relate that [Christ] is “true god from true god, from the substance of his Father,” and that the killing, crucifixion and birth occurred to him in his entirety.<sup>208</sup> The Jacobites say that Mary become pregnant with god and gave birth to god; that god was killed and god died.<sup>209</sup> So what do you Nestorians say? They have said about Christ that he is composed of two sorts, two hypostases and two natures: god and man. [They say that] the birth and killing only occurred to the human and this is what they call [his] humanity (p. 96, ll. 4–9).

The *Critique*, then, is closely connected to the sectarian context in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār lived. This context is perhaps the most important factor that motivated him to write the *Tathbūt* and the *Critique* which it contains—but not the only one.

A. Charfi identifies six primary roles for medieval anti-Christian polemic:

1. to reverse the demographic imbalance (i.e. to convert non-Muslims),
2. to integrate neophytes,<sup>210</sup>
3. as an exercise of *kalām*,
4. to search for the origins [of Islam/religion],
5. as a response to social antagonism, and
6. to defend and glorify Islamic civilization.<sup>211</sup>

then they differ over the crucifixion and killing, concerning whom in reality these things affected and who in reality the crucified was. The Nestorians claim that the Christ was crucified with respect to his human nature but not his divine nature. . . . Many of the Melkites claim that the crucifixion and killing affected the Christ in his entirety in the body, ‘the Messiah in his entirety’ being the divine nature and the human nature. . . . The majority of the Jacobites claim that the crucifixion and killing affected the Christ who was one substance from two.”

If ‘Abd al-Jabbār does have an intended opponent in the *Mughnī*, it is not any Christian sect at all, but rather the Islamic theological school opposed to the Mu‘tazila: the *Kullābiyya*. See *Mughnī*, 5:86, 87, 88, 93, 95, 97, *passim*. In this ‘Abd al-Jabbār seems to following Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī more closely than Warrāq. See Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic*, 39–40.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Warrāq, *al-Radd fī l-ittihād*, 75.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:146–7; Warrāq, *al-Radd fī l-ittihād*, 193; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:314–5.

<sup>210</sup> This is a goal that Jāḥiẓ explicitly declares in his *Radd*: “Therefore, I read your writing and I understood what you reported regarding the issues of the Christians before you and the confusion which entered the hearts of the new and the weak among you.” Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 10.

<sup>211</sup> A. Charfi, “Polémiques islamo-chrétiennes à l’époque médiévale,” *Scholarly Approaches to Religion, Interreligious Perceptions and Islam* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 265–6.

All of these factors, it can be argued, apply to the *Critique*, particularly the last four. Yet the most important explanation for ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s polemic is not in the above list; it is the precedent set by the Qur’ān and the Prophet Muḥammad. By invalidating Christianity, ‘Abd al-Jabbār is following the *sunna* of Muḥammad, who “appeared in Mecca, declared the Jews unbelievers and washed his hands of them. Thus [he did] with the Christians and the Byzantines. He washed his hands of them” (p. 5).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### MUSLIM SOURCES OF THE *CRITIQUE*

Having discussed the nature of the *Critique*, I turn now to its relationship with earlier Islamic writings on Christianity. This task, apparently straightforward, is rendered problematic by the fact that the *Critique* is substantially different from those writings. Pines found the task to be futile, concluding that the *Critique* is not Islamic:

Ostensibly, it is a chapter of Moslem anti-Christian polemics. . . . However, in reality, this Moslem theologian adapted for his own purposes—inserting numerous interpolations—writings reflecting the views and traditions of a Jewish Christian community.<sup>1</sup>

Stern, who describes Pines' Jewish-Christian thesis as "nowhere near the truth but . . . entirely wrong,"<sup>2</sup> nevertheless does little to show how 'Abd al-Jabbār uses Muslim authorities. Besides tracing the influence of 'Alī al-Ṭabarī on 'Abd al-Jabbār's account of Jesus' temptation,<sup>3</sup> Stern does not present any further evidence of Muslim sources, resigning himself with the statement: "no other sources can be identified."<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere he comments: "The whole question of the sources of 'Abd al-Jabbār for the chapter discussed in this article is obscure, since sources can be established only for a few passages, and speculation about the rest is too uncertain to be profitable."<sup>5</sup>

In the present chapter I seek to challenge this conclusion. I will do so in three steps. In the first section I will introduce the most important extant Islamic texts on Christianity written before the *Critique*. In the second section I will analyze individual passages in the *Critique* for precedents in that literature and other Islamic works. Finally, in the third section, I will make some remarks, based on insights gained from the previous chapters, on the relation of the *Critique* to earlier Islamic writings. This will lead back to the importance of 'Abd al-Jabbār's particular historical context in the sectarian milieu of medieval Rayy.

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<sup>1</sup> Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 129.

<sup>3</sup> See Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 130.

<sup>4</sup> Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 130.

<sup>5</sup> Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 159.

1. *‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Authorities on Christianity*1.1. *Authors Mentioned by ‘Abd al-Jabbār*

The precedent set by the Qur’ān of critiquing Christianity and Christians led to a rich tradition of early Muslim writings on Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Yet ‘Abd al-Jabbār considers his *Critique* to be a new development in this tradition:

I have mentioned to you that we did not intend to demonstrate the fault of Christianity. We simply intended to demonstrate that [the Christians] parted from the religion of Christ and opposed it in all of its doctrine and practice despite their firm assertion, that Muḥammad’s (God’s blessing and peace be upon him) knowledge of it is from God (Mighty and Exalted) and that this was one of his miracles and signs. It was fitting to [add] anecdotes of their statements and a refutation of them. These are hardly found in [another] book, especially anecdotes of their devotions and statements of their leaders. So keep that in mind, for you can hardly find this in [another] book. You have a great need to memorize it.

There are many [texts] in which they are questioned and refuted, among them the book of Jāḥiẓ, and another of his books [called] *al-Risāla al-‘asaliyya*; the book of Abū Ja‘far al-Iskāfī, and the excellent section devoted to them in the *Kitāb al-Ma‘ūna* of Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. al-Ikhshīd. Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq has a book against them. Abū ‘Alī has a book against them. Abū Hāshim has a question [on them] in his *al-Baghdādiyyāt*. In the *‘Uṣūl* and the *Sharḥ* of Ibn Khallād and the *Idāḥ* of Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣrī (May the mercy of God be upon all of them) there is a discourse against them (p. 198, ll. 3–16).

In this passage ‘Abd al-Jabbār distinguishes the *Critique* from the earlier tradition of *kalām*-minded anti-Christian polemics. Unlike those works, his is not intended “to demonstrate the fault of Christianity;” that is, he does not intend to show the logical failures of Christian doctrine. Instead, he intends for the *Critique* to demonstrate that the religion of the Christians is not that of Christ.

‘Abd al-Jabbār goes on to provide a list of those authors who do question and refute the Christians—that is, who do write *masā’il wa-ajwiba* against them—and thus provides an exposé of his library.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Anti-Christian polemic was neither the vocation of Muslim converts from Christianity, as has occasionally been suggested, nor a response to Christian attacks on Islam. Charfi identifies thirty-three known polemicists from the first three Islamic centuries. Only *two* of them are converts, and very few of them pay any attention to Christian apologetics. “Polémiques islamo-chrétiennes à l’époque médiévale,” 263.

<sup>7</sup> This list is supplemented by a second list that ‘Abd al-Jabbār provides else-

The first thing to note is that he mentions here only Muʿtazilī writings on Christianity.<sup>8</sup> These are books with the Muʿtazilī *nihil obstat*.<sup>9</sup>

The first two works that he includes in this group are both by Jāḥiẓ. The first, which ʿAbd al-Jabbār refers to simply as “the book,” is almost certainly Jāḥiẓ’s *Radd ʿalā l-naṣārā*, which I have discussed in the second chapter.<sup>10</sup> The second work, *al-Risāla al-ʿasaliyya*,<sup>11</sup> is unknown.<sup>12</sup>

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where in the *Tathbūt* (p. 352), in which he names those authors who have written books *dalalatan ʿalā nubuwawati Muḥammad*. On this see chapter 4, section 3.2).

<sup>8</sup> Does this merely reflect the fact that the Muʿtazila were the most prodigious authors of anti-Christian polemics in the early period? I do not think so. While it is true that the Muʿtazila dominated this genre, non-Muʿtazilis (e.g. ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī and the Zaydī Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm) also played an important role. It is hard to imagine, for example, that ʿAbd al-Jabbār was unaware of Ashʿarī’s writing against the Christians in his *Maqālāt ghayr al-islāmiyyīn* (unfortunately not extant) since he so thoroughly researched the thought of Ashʿarī on other aspects of *kalām*. According to Ibn Taymiyya, this work on non-Muslim religions was even longer than Ashʿarī’s famous *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn* (on Muslim sects). It undoubtedly contained much material on Christianity. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna*, 4 vols. (Bulāq: al-Maṭbaʿat al-Kubrā, 1322), 3:71. Cf. Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 114 and the list of Ashʿarī’s works in R.J. McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ashʿarī* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1953), 211ff., esp. nos. 1, 84 and 86.

<sup>9</sup> This strikes me as important evidence regarding the state of the Muʿtazila at the end of the fourth/tenth century. There is no sign that ʿAbd al-Jabbār thought of his school as dying or obsolete. ʿAbd al-Jabbār speaks as though *only* the Muʿtazila wrote against the Christians.

<sup>10</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār quotes Jāḥiẓ’s well-known treatise repeatedly in his anti-Christian chapter of the *Mughnī*, 5:107, 110, 113, 149.

<sup>11</sup> The meaning of this title is itself unclear. *ʿAsaliyya* is an adjective coming from *ʿasal* (“honey”). Thus it might be translated as “The Honey-sweet Letter.” Yet Jāḥiẓ also wrote books entitled *K. al-Hayawān* (“Animal Book”) and *K. al-Bighāl* (“Book of the Mules”), books that have more to do with people than with animals. Perhaps, then, the title should be translated “Book of Honey,” with the understanding that it is not about the sweet stuff that bees produce. Alternatively, the title might refer to the color of honey, i.e. yellow. If this is the case, then there might be an association here with the expression *ʿasaliyyu l-yahūd*, which Lane defines, on the basis of a number of classical Arabic lexicographers, as “The distinctive mark, or sign of the Jews.” The reference is to the yellow headdress or garment that Jews were at times compelled to wear, according to the dictates of *al-shurūṭ al-ʿumariyya*. See Lane, 5:2046.

<sup>12</sup> A. Charfi makes the suggestion that it is identical with an anti-Christian fragment published by D. Sourdel: “Un pamphlet musulman anonyme d’époque abbasside contre les chrétiens,” *Revue des études islamiques* 34 (1966) 1–33. See Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 160. Yet Sourdel himself is skeptical, despite a certain correspondence between this text and Jāḥiẓ’s *Radd ʿalā l-naṣārā*. In the *Radd ʿalā l-naṣārā* (p. 32) Jāḥiẓ refutes the idea that Jesus would be divine by virtue of the virgin birth, pointing out that Adam was also born without a father. The fact that he introduces this argument by stating “As I said in another response,” and that the same argument appears in Sourdel’s pamphlet (p. 27), might suggest that this pamphlet is Jāḥiẓ’s earlier work. Sourdel, however, remains unconvinced (p. 11), and rightly so. The comparison between Adam and Jesus is common, being based in the Qurʾān (3:59: *إن مثل عيسى عند الله كمثل آدم*), and traditionally connected to Muḥammad’s disputation with the

Jāḥiẓ also wrote a third work, *Hujaj al-nubuwwa*,<sup>13</sup> heretofore little known, which is particularly similar to the *Critique*.<sup>14</sup> Yāqūt attributes an additional two works to Jāḥiẓ that might have had an impact on the *Critique*, both of which are no longer extant: *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* and *al-Farq bayn al-nabī wa-l-mutanabbī*.<sup>15</sup> The only other author in the list above whose work is extant is Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq, whom I have discussed at some length in the second chapter. It is noteworthy that 'Abd al-Jabbār refers the reader to the work of Warrāq, after having listed him earlier as the first of the heretics (*mulḥida*)!<sup>16</sup> Clearly he considered it licit to read the work of a man whom he personally considered a heretic.

As for the rest of the works that 'Abd al-Jabbār cites: Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī's arguments against Christianity appear in 'Abd al-Jabbār's extensive quotations thereof in the *Mughnī*.<sup>17</sup> Ibn Khallād's *Uṣūl* is lost, as is his *Sharḥ* (which is a commentary on his own *Uṣūl*).<sup>18</sup> As for Abū Ja'far Muḥammad al-Iskāfī,<sup>19</sup> a statement of his on Christianity is recorded in Ka'bī's "Radd 'alā 'l-Naṣārā."<sup>20</sup> Iskāfī and Ibn al-Ikshīd also appear in another important passage of the *Critique*, in which 'Abd al-Jabbār gives credit to his Mu'tazilī predecessors for their anti-Christian arguments:

Know that the masses of the Christians believe that God chose Mary for himself and his son. [They believe] that He selected her as a man

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Christians of Najrān. See Ibn Ishāq, 1:582. The identification of the work edited by Sourdel with Jāḥiẓ's *al-Risāla al-'asaliyya* is convincingly rejected by J.-M. Gaudeul, who shows that the "pamphlet musulman" is actually part of a correspondence ascribed to the Umayyad caliph 'Umar II and the Byzantine Emperor Leo III.

<sup>13</sup> *Hujaj al-nubuwwa*, 1:221–282. The only scholar to work on the *Hujaj* to my knowledge is S. Stroumsa in her *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). See pp. 22ff.

<sup>14</sup> Jāḥiẓ's stated purpose in this work is to establish arguments (*hujaj*) for the prophethood of Muḥammad, just as 'Abd al-Jabbār seeks to establish proofs (*dalā'il*) for him in his *Tathbūt dalā'il al-nubuwwa*. In his treatise Jāḥiẓ refutes and anathematizes the same groups as 'Abd al-Jabbār: Shī'a, *zanādiqa*, philosophers, idol-worshippers, Zoroastrians, Jews and, Christians. See Jāḥiẓ, *Hujaj al-nubuwwa*, 250.

<sup>15</sup> See Yāqūt, *Irshād*, 6:73 and T. Andrae, *Die Person Muhammads in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1918), 57, n. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Tathbūt*, 128.

<sup>17</sup> See pp. 80, 91, 111, 126, 134, 140, 141.

<sup>18</sup> There is a *Sharḥ* on his *Uṣūl* extant (Leiden ms. or. 2949) yet this is not the work of Ibn Khallād himself but rather of the Zaydī imām al-Nāṭiq bi-l-Ḥaqq Abū Ṭalib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 424/1033). See C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, (Leiden: Brill, 1937–49) 5 vols., S1:343, 624; J. Schacht, "Ibn Khallād," *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 3:832.

<sup>19</sup> See Sezgin, 1:619.

<sup>20</sup> Ka'bī, *K. Awā'il al-adilla*, 65. Note that 'Abd al-Jabbār added to Ka'bī's biographical dictionary of the Mu'tazila (*Maqālāt al-islāmiyyin*) with his *Faḍl al-ī'izāl*.

chooses a woman. He selected her due to His yearning for her. Nazzām and Jāḥiẓ have related this. [Jāḥiẓ] said: “They only declare this outright to one who has their trust.” Ibn al-Ikshīd said in his *Ma‘ūna* (*Assistance*), “This is what they indicate. Do you not see that they say, ‘If He were not a Begetter he would be sterile, and sterility is a flaw.’”<sup>21</sup> This is the statement of all of them, which indicates physical intercourse. You will find this in his book *al-Ma‘ūna* and in the book of al-Jāḥiẓ against the Christians. I think that Abū Ja‘far al-Iskāfi reported this in his book against the Christians (p. 147, l. 18–148, 6).

Here there is also a mention of yet another important Mu‘tazilī scholar: Jāḥiẓ’s instructor Nazzām. Overall, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s frequent references to the work of his Mu‘tazila predecessors in the *Critique* suggest that they were the first resource he turned to on Christianity.<sup>22</sup>

What of non-Mu‘tazilī authors? ‘Abd al-Jabbār refers to the work against the Christians by a certain Abū l-Rabī‘ Muḥammad b. al-Layth, about whom little is known, including whether or not he was a Mu‘tazilī.<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere ‘Abd al-Jabbār relies substantially on the Shī‘ī Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. 300/912 or 310/922).<sup>24</sup> While ‘Abd al-Jabbār does not mention Nawbakhtī in the *Critique*, his disciple Mānkdm̄ does so when commenting on ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s anti-Christian polemic in the *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa* (p. 291).<sup>25</sup> Mānkdm̄ refers to Nawbakhtī’s *al-Ārā’ wa-l-diyānāt*, the same book on which, according to Jishumī, ‘Abd al-Jabbār wrote a commentary (see chapter 2, section 2.3).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Taḥbūt*, 96 and Warrāq, *al-Radd ‘alā l-taḥlīth*, 118, 132.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār gathered information on other religions also from the Mu‘tazilī Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Mismā‘ī (d. late 3rd/9th), whom he names on five different occasions in the section on dualistic religions in the *Mughnī* (Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 56). Mismā‘ī’s work, however, is not extant, and his biography is unclear. The same holds for Abū Sa‘īd al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 225/840), whom ‘Abd al-Jabbār repeatedly mentions in the *Mughnī* (cf. Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 61) likewise on the subject of dualistic religions. Ḥuṣrī also appears several times in the *Taḥbūt* (pp. 1, 51, 129, 232, 371, 374). In the *Critique* itself (p. 129), ‘Abd al-Jabbār includes Ḥuṣrī among the heretics, along with Ibn al-Rāwandī and Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq.

<sup>23</sup> *Taḥbūt*, 77; Cf. Charfī, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 163.

<sup>24</sup> In the *Taḥbūt* (pp. 225, 551), he quotes Nawbakhtī as an authority on the early Shī‘ī *mutakallim* Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. ca. 183/800).

<sup>25</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār also names Nawbakhtī in his writing against dualist religions in the *Mughnī*: 571, 152, 155.

<sup>26</sup> While Nawbakhtī’s book (like ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s commentary) is no longer extant, it is quoted extensively by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) in his heresiography *Talbīs Iblīs*. Nawbakhtī’s *al-Ārā’ wa-l-diyānāt* was also used by Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) and Ibn al-Murtaḍā. See J.L. Kraemer, “al-Nawbakhtī,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 7:1044. Nawbakhtī was himself reliant in large measure on the work of Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq. On this see Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 165, n. 2; W. Madelung, “Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq über



1.2. *Authors Unmentioned by ‘Abd al-Jabbār (See Appendix 4)*

It remains, then, briefly to note those extant early works of anti-Christian polemic that ‘Abd al-Jabbār does not mention in the *Critique*, in order that a more complete presentation of early Islamic writing on Christianity might be achieved.<sup>27</sup> These texts can be divided into several categories: First, there are works that might be called *kalām*-minded, such as the *Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā* of the philosopher Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Kindī (d. 3rd/9th),<sup>28</sup> a chapter in the philosopher Abū l-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī’s (d. 381/992) *al-ʾIlām bi-manāqib al-islām* and a letter by the philosopher Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī (d. after 391/1000).<sup>29</sup> The same is true for the chapter that Māturīdī devotes to the refutation of the Christians in his *K. al-Tawḥīd*.<sup>30</sup> Māturīdī’s work anticipates that of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s contemporary Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī, who devotes a short chapter to Christian doctrine in his *K. Tamhīd al-awā’il wa-talkhīṣ al-dalā’il*, written around 369/980.<sup>31</sup>

Not all early anti-Christian works, however, are *kalām*-minded. An entirely different approach, which I classify as historical/scriptural,

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die Bardesaniten, Marcioniten und Kantäer,” *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 270, n. 4. (Reprinted in W. Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* [London: Variorum, 1985], XX.) Cf. also p. 214, n. 11, where Madelung disputes Monnot’s claim regarding the importance of Warrāq.

<sup>27</sup> D. Thomas includes a brief yet insightful introduction of Islamic writings on the Incarnation from Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm to Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī in his *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity*, 37–48.

<sup>28</sup> Like Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq, Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī was accused of apostasy from Islam, a point that is raised by Qusṭā b. Lūqā in his response to Ibn al-Munajjim. *Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne*, 130.

<sup>29</sup> Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Kindī, *al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā*, in A. Périer, “Un traité de Yaḥyā ben ‘Adī,” *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* 22 (1920–1), 2–21. Abū l-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī, *al-ʾIlām bi-manāqib al-islām* (Cairo: n.p., 1967). Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī, in G. Troupeau, “Un traité sur le principe des êtres attribué à Abū Sulaymān al-Sigistānī,” *Pensamiento* (25) 259–67. On the latter two works, see Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 149–52.

<sup>30</sup> See D. Thomas, “Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī on the Divinity of Jesus Christ,” 43–64 (Māturīdī’s chapter against the Christians is critically edited and translated, pp. 50–9), and U. Rudolph, *al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand* (New York: Brill, 1996), 168. On this chapter, D. Thomas comments: “The passage against the divine Sonship of Jesus fits integrally into the overall scheme of al-Māturīdī’s theology as an aspect of his evidence for the cogency and authority of Islam, and not simply a polemical excursus.” Thomas, “Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī on the Divinity of Jesus Christ,” 49.

<sup>31</sup> See A. Abel, “Le chapitre sur le christianisme dans le ‘tamhīd’ d’al-Bāqillānī,” *Études d’orientalisme Lévi Provençal* 1 (1962), 1–11 and Wansbrough’s (pp. 150ff.) description of his epistemology.

is seen in the *Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā* of the Zaydī Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 246/860),<sup>32</sup> who details the flaws of Christian doctrine, scripture and exegesis. Much of the same is true for the writings of the aforementioned convert ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī.<sup>33</sup> Born a Nestorian Christian, Ṭabarī converted to Islam towards the end of his life.<sup>34</sup> In his remaining years, Ṭabarī wrote two works against Christianity, both of which show an in-depth knowledge of Christian scripture and tradition: *K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla* and *al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā*. In both cases he demonstrates an exceptional knowledge of the Bible, which he claims to have read in Hebrew, Syriac and Greek.<sup>35</sup>

A third approach to anti-Christian writing is seen with Ibn al-Munajjim (who, like ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, was a scientist), the author of a letter entitled *K. Ithbāt nubuwwat Muḥammad*. S.K. Samir identifies Ibn al-Munajjim as ‘Alī b. Yahyā (d. 275/888),<sup>36</sup> a court official for whom the Christian scientist and translator Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq composed a medical treatise on Galen. He belonged to a family which served as the court astrologers (hence *Munajjim*) for the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs in Baghdād.<sup>37</sup> His father, Abū ‘Alī Yahyā b. Abī Maṣṣūr al-

<sup>32</sup> Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 301–64. On Qāsim, see van Ess, *TG*, 2:734; Madelung, “al-Kāsim b. Ibrāhīm,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 8:453–4. D. Thomas dates the composition of Qāsim’s anti-Christian polemic to 210/825, which would make it the earliest extant Islamic anti-Christian treatise, although by no means the least sophisticated. D. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam*, 33. Cf. also I. Goldziher, “Über Bibelcitate in muhammedanischen Schriften,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 13 (1893), 315–22. Qāsim, a descendent of Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, spent a long period together with Christians while in Egypt. He was, according to Madelung, largely in agreement with Mu’tazilī doctrinal views, although he never formally associated himself with the Mu’tazila. See W. Madelung, “Imām al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm and Mu’tazilism,” *On Both Sides of al-Mandab* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1989), 39–48.

<sup>33</sup> D. Thomas “al-Ṭabarī,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 10:17–18.

<sup>34</sup> “I finally left the Christian religion, to which I belonged from the beginning of my life until I reached my seventieth year, and I sought Islam, the true religion. Thus I sold worldly matters for religion.” ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 119. See also S.K. Samir, “La réponse d’al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl à la réfutation des chrétiens de ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī,” *Parole de l’Orient* 11 (1983), 284–6.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 146; Cf. Fritsch, 8. Ṭabarī’s *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, the authenticity of which was long questioned, is essentially an Islamic exegesis of the Christian Bible. Ṭabarī seeks to prove that Christian teaching is not biblical and that Muḥammad is predicted in both the Old and New Testaments. Ṭabarī’s *Radd*, while hardly bereft of scriptural citations, also contains anecdotes from church history and logical arguments regarding the Trinity and the Incarnation. Both of Ṭabarī’s works might be classified as historical/scriptural.

<sup>36</sup> See S.K. Samir, Introduction to *Une correspondance Islamo-chrétienne*, 539.

<sup>37</sup> See M. Fleischhammer, “Banū l-Munajjim,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 7:558–61.

Munajjim (d. ca. 215/830), converted to Islam from Mazdaism at the request of the caliph al-Ma'mūn.<sup>38</sup> 'Alī b. Yaḥyā is not the Munajjim whom 'Abd al-Jabbār names as the author of a work on the signs of Muḥammad (See section 3.2). This is Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. 'Alī b. Yaḥyā (d. 327/939), the grandson of the author in question.<sup>39</sup>

As for 'Alī b. Yaḥyā's work, it is preserved in the refutations thereof by Ḥunayn b. Ishāq and Quṣṭā b. Lūqā (d. 300/912–913), both of whom I will discuss in the following chapter. Since 'Abd al-Jabbār elsewhere cites both Ḥunayn and Quṣṭā as examples of Christian apologists,<sup>40</sup> it is possible that he knew of the *K. Ithbāt nubuwwat Muḥammad* of 'Alī b. Yaḥyā. In this work, 'Alī b. Yaḥyā addresses Christians directly and chooses arguments that Christians might accept. His approach is like that of the famous grammarian Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889),<sup>41</sup> whose *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* 'Abd al-Jabbār refers to together with the work of 'Alī b. Yaḥyā's grandson.<sup>42</sup>

Another similar treatise is a letter that the convert Ḥasan b. Ayyūb wrote to convince his brother 'Alī to embrace Islam with him. Ḥasan's letter, which is referred to by Ibn al-Nadīm,<sup>43</sup> survives today through Ibn Taymiyya's quotations of it in *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>44</sup> It is the type of letter which converts, even today, are encouraged to write to their former co-religionists in an effort to bring them into the fold of Islam. It is, therefore, written for a Christian audience. In this it is similar to the letter of Ibn al-Munajjim, although Ḥasan's letter is much more focused on scriptural and anecdotal arguments. Nevertheless, these letters form a distinct category of anti-Christian polemical literature, separate from *kalām*-minded and historical/scriptural works: the missionary/apologetic letter.

In this category belong two works that purport to be records of debates. One of them is a written correspondence ascribed to the

<sup>38</sup> Pace Samir, who identifies Maṣṣūr as the caliph in question.

<sup>39</sup> On Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, see Ibn al-Nadīm, 219–20; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, 5:424; Dhahabī, *Ta'riḥ al-islām*, yrs. 321–30, 202; Ṣafadī, 8:246–7. Aḥmad's father, Yaḥyā b. 'Alī, died in 300/913. See Sezgin, 1:375.

<sup>40</sup> *Tathbīt*, 192; Cf. also pp. 75–6.

<sup>41</sup> See C. Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 267–77.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Qutayba's work, although not extant, is quoted from by Ibn al-Jawzī (v.i., section 3.2).

<sup>43</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, 221.

<sup>44</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:312–344, 2:352–3:3.

Byzantine Emperor Leo III and the caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 99/717–101/720).<sup>45</sup> Both Christian and Muslim recensions of this debate exist, yet they likely date to a significantly later era than the reigns of these monarchs.<sup>46</sup> I therefore refer to the Islamic text as the letter of pseudo-‘Umar.

The second work, which has been edited and translated by S. Griffith, claims to be the record of a debate that took place in the court of the same Leo III, involving a Muslim named Wāṣil al-Dimashqī.<sup>47</sup> The correspondence of these treatises suggests that Leo III was in fact interested in religious debate with Muslims. Yet the Muslim protagonist of “The Debate of Wāṣil al-Dimashqī,” like that of the letter of pseudo-‘Umar, remains unknown.<sup>48</sup>

Though not exhaustive, the preceding survey covers the principle works of extant Islamic anti-Christian polemic completed by the time ‘Abd al-Jabbār wrote the *Critique*. It is also important to note that much material on Christianity appears in early Islamic works of other genres, including *ta’rīkh* and *tafsīr*. Accordingly, I will refer to all of these genres as I describe precedents to particular passages in the *Critique*.

## 2. *Passages in the Critique and Earlier Islamic Writings*

### 2.1. *Qur’ānic Passages*

On several occasions in the *Critique* ‘Abd al-Jabbār turns to the Qur’ān in order to answer Christian apologists who attempt to interpret the

<sup>45</sup> Sourdel comments that this is not a “réfutation théologique savante du dogme de la Trinité, comme on en trouve déjà à une époque ancienne, mais bien plutôt à un écrit polémique s’en tenant aux arguments et aux objections échangés le plus couramment entre Chrétiens et Musulmans.” Sourdel, “Un pamphlet musulman anonyme,” 3.

<sup>46</sup> J.-M. Gaudeul, “The Correspondence between Leo and ‘Umar: ‘Umar’s Letter Re-discovered?” *Islamochristiana* 10 (1984), 109–57. Gaudeul dates the Muslim letter to the end of the 3rd/9th century. Pseudo-‘Umar’s letter is closely related, in both content and form, to the debate that the Shī‘ī theologian Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Bābawayh (d. 381/992) describes between the Imām ‘Alī al-Riḍā and an unnamed Christian patriarch, a debate which D. Thomas argues is Ibn Bābawayh’s literary creation. See D. Thomas, “Two Muslim-Christian Debates from the Early Shī‘ite Tradition,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988), trans. on 65–74.

<sup>47</sup> It appears in S. Griffith “Bashīr/Beser,” 314–26.

<sup>48</sup> It has been suggested that he is identical to the Mu‘tazilī Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭā’. On this see chapter 2, section 1.2.

Islamic scripture in their favor. ‘Abd al-Jabbār explains, for example, that Christians find proof for the divinity of Christ in Qur’ān 4:171, since it calls him the Word and Spirit of God:

They say: “Muḥammad brought Christianity and our teachings but his companions did not understand.” They speak about His statement (Mighty and Exalted), “The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, is only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He cast into Mary, and a Spirit from Him” (p. 116, ll. 2–4).<sup>49</sup>

These Christians, according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, argue that Muḥammad actually preached Christianity but was misunderstood by his companions, who corrupted his message.<sup>50</sup> Thus Christians, themselves accused of falsifying the Islamic message of Jesus, turned the concept of *tahrīf* around and accused Muslims of falsifying the Christian message of Muḥammad. ‘Abd al-Jabbār is not the first Muslim to encounter this Christian argument regarding Q 4:171. Already Jāḥiẓ sought to alert his Muslim reader to it:

They may say: “Is not Christ the Spirit of God and His Word as He says (glory be to Him), ‘and His word that He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him?’”<sup>51</sup>

A similar dialogue between Muslims and Christians surrounded Qur’ān 5:116, only in this case the Christian argument was bolder: it does not suggest a Christian interpretation of the Qur’ān, but rather that the Qur’ān is mistaken about Christianity. ‘Abd al-Jabbār again records the Christian claim:

Your master has said in your book: “Did you say to the people, ‘Take me and my mother as gods, apart from God?’” The Christians say: “This is a lie.” For we said about [Christ] that he is a god but we did not say about his mother that she is a god.

Let it be said to him: [God] did not report that [the Christians] said such a thing. This is not a report and therefore cannot be true or

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:111: “They may say: It is accepted among you that God Most High calls Jesus His word and His spirit, so would you accept that God calls him His son in the Injīl?”

<sup>50</sup> Note that this approach has not disappeared. The Italian Islamicist I. di Matteo argues that the Qur’ān nowhere rejects the divinity of Christ or the Trinity in his *La divinità di Cristo e la dottrina della Trinità in Maometto e nei polemisti musulmani* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1938). See especially chapter one. Some of his arguments were adopted by another Italian, the Franciscan G. Basetti-Sani, who however has a much more theological approach to the question. See his *The Koran in the Light of Christ* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), esp. 145ff.

<sup>51</sup> Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 26.

false. He only said: “Did you say to the people, ‘Take me and my mother as gods, apart from God?’” Even one who does not know Arabic well (or at all) would not consider this a report. This statement was only made as an inquiry and a request for information (p. 145, ll. 1–8).<sup>52</sup>

Compare the discussion of the same verse by Jāḥiẓ:

They said that the proof that our Book is invalid and our cause corrupt is that we attribute to them things which they and their predecessors were unaware of. For we claim that God (glory be to Him) said in His Book, on the tongue of his Prophet Muḥammad (blessing and peace be upon him), “O Jesus son of Mary, did you say to the people, ‘Take me and my mother as gods, apart from God?’” They claim that they absolutely do not teach that Mary is a god, either in private or openly.<sup>53</sup>

Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm also discusses this Qur’ānic verse in the context of his polemic against Christianity, although his approach is more philosophical than that of ‘Abd al-Jabbār or Jāḥiẓ. He integrates this verse into a larger argument that, if the Christians maintain the divine nature of Jesus, then they are logically bound to maintain the same for his mother Mary. God, therefore, is justified in questioning Jesus on the subject:

The Begetter must have the same essential quality as the ones Begotten. This is a reproach to those who designate [Jesus] but not his mother for worship and divinity. For their essential state is of the same level. . . . Thus God says regarding this (without being angry at [Jesus] or blaming him): “O Jesus son of Mary, did you say to the people, ‘Take me and my mother as gods, apart from God?’”<sup>54</sup>

There is again a correspondence between the *Critique* and the writings of Jāḥiẓ in regard to a third Qur’ānic passage, 19:24–33. In this passage Jesus speaks as a child, first to Mary and then to “her people” (*qawmihā*). ‘Abd al-Jabbār remarks that Christians do not acknowledge this miracle: “According to them Christ did not speak in the cradle and did not come to declare his mother innocent” (p. 199). Jāḥiẓ debates the Christians on this point.

[The Christians] say: “You claim that Jesus spoke in the cradle. Yet we, despite our ancient [connection] with him, despite our proximity to his affair, despite the fact that our claims about him are more extraordinary than yours, despite the great number of our enemies, the

<sup>52</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:141, 151.

<sup>53</sup> Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 306–7.

diversity of our lands and the differences that exist among us, we do not know this nor do we assert it. How could we assert it when we have not heard of it from any predecessor, or anyone at all. Even the Jews do not know this. They maintain that they have not heard of it except from you. Neither the Zoroastrians know it, nor the Ṣābiʿūn, the Buddhists, the Turks, the Khazars nor others.”<sup>55</sup>

Finally, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s narrative on the crucifixion, based on Qur’ān 4:157–8, also has precedents in earlier Islamic writings. This narrative (see chapter 3, section 3.1) is part of a long theoretical discussion of epistemology (pp. 123ff.), to which ‘Abd al-Jabbār relates Qur’ān 4:157, a verse which denies that the Jews crucified or killed Jesus.<sup>56</sup> This verse is an element of a larger anti-Jewish section (beginning with 4:153) in the Qur’ān. In its context it simply acts as another proof of Israelite perfidy (along with the Golden Calf episode [4:153] and their accusing Mary of fornication [4:155]). Yet in Islamic exegetical tradition this verse is interpreted instead as historical evidence of the life, or death, of Jesus.<sup>57</sup> Most interpreters, then, comment on this verse by speculating on what happened on the day of the crucifixion. The early exegete Muqātil b. Sulaymān, for example, names Judas as the one who was crucified instead of Jesus:

God (glory be to Him) made [someone] resemble Jesus. So [the Jews] killed him. (The one who was killed had struck Jesus and said to him, “Do you lie in front of God, claiming to be the Messenger of God?”). When the Jews took him to kill him he said, “I am not Jesus! I am so-and-so” (his name was Judas). So they called him a liar and said, “You are Jesus.”<sup>58</sup>

Muqātil reports that the one who struck Jesus was crucified in his place, apparently as a punishment. This seems to be a reference to the guard of the Sanhedrin of Jn 18:22, who strikes Jesus and scolds him for the answer that he gives to the high priest.

This narrative suggests that there is a relationship between Muqātil’s report and the “Wandering Jew” tradition of medieval and renaissance European

<sup>55</sup> Jāhīz, *Radd*, 12. Jāhīz takes up the issue again on pp. 22–4.

<sup>56</sup> “As for their word, ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of God,’ they did not kill him and they did not crucify him; it was made unclear to them. Those who differ about it are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it beyond supposition. Certainly they did not kill him!” Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:143.

<sup>57</sup> On this topic see M. Ayoub, “Towards an Islamic Christology II: The Death of Jesus, Reality or Delusion?” *The Muslim World* 70 (1980) 2, 91–121.

<sup>58</sup> Muqātil b. Sulaymān, 1:420.



literature. The “Wandering Jew” narratives, which appear in Europe in the thirteenth century (and would later find their way into the works of Shelley, Hawthorne, Kipling and others) have their basis in Jn 18:22. They describe how the guard who struck Jesus was condemned by him, not to be crucified in his place, but rather to wander the earth until his return. The guard’s name is alternatively given as Buttadaeus, Ahasuerus—i.e. Xerxes—or Malchus, the name given by John to the high priest’s servant whose ear is cut off by Simon Peter, Jn 18.10. See Y. Gl., “Wandering Jew,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16 vols. (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 16:259–63.

In Ṭabarī’s commentary on 4:157, another tradition appears (on the basis of Wahb b. Munabbih, d. 110/728)<sup>59</sup> which reverses the punishment theme in the above narratives. Here an unnamed disciple offers to sacrifice himself for Jesus, and, miraculously assuming the latter’s shape, is crucified in his place. The result is a total reversal of Christian doctrine: instead of Jesus dying for the sake of his disciples, one of the disciples dies for the sake of Jesus.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Wahb is one of many *mawālī* (non-Arab Muslim) scholars of the earliest Islamic generations who are credited with supplying information on the Jewish and Christian traditions. Ibn Sa’d reports that Wahb had read ninety-two or ninety-three “revealed books” in a synagogue. On this see the recent historical study of A.-L. de Prémare, *Les Fondations de l’Islam* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 337.

<sup>60</sup> “Jesus was taken into a house with seventeen of the disciples, but [the Jews] surrounded them. Yet when [the Jews entered] among them, God made all of [the disciples] into the shape of Jesus. So [the Jews] said to them, ‘You have used magic against us! Single out Jesus for us or we will kill all of you!’ Jesus said to his companions, ‘Who among you will sell his person today for paradise?’ One of them said ‘I will!’ and he went out to them, saying ‘I am Jesus’ (God had made him into the shape of Jesus). They took him, killed him and crucified him. Hence comes, ‘he was made to appear to them’ [Qur’ān 4:157]. They thought that they had killed Jesus. The Christians also thought that it was Jesus. God raised Jesus on that same day.” Abū Ja’far al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 4:351.

In another tradition (4:353), Ṭabarī reports (on the authority of Ibn Ishāq) that there were thirteen disciples with Jesus, one of whom is named Sergius. Stern comments: “The name Sergius was obviously chosen at random as a common Christian name.” Stern, “Apocryphal Gospels,” 48. There is some reason to believe that this is not the case. Sergius is the name given in Christian tradition to the renegade Arian or Nestorian (or more rarely Jacobite) monk who taught Muḥammad the heretical Christian views that would turn into Islamic doctrine. (See, e.g. *Risālat al-Kindī*, 76–7). In the Syriac version of the “Legend of Baḥīrā” (and the Latin translation thereof) the double name *Sargis Bḥirā* is found. (See Gero, “The Legend of the Monk Baḥīrā,” 52). Thus Sergius is a foil to the *Baḥīrā* of Islamic tradition (See Ibn Ishāq, 1:180–3), the pious monk who is faithful to the true Injīl of Jesus. This is confirmed by Mas’ūdī, who records that the Christians call Baḥīrā *سرجس*. (*Murūj*, 1:72. Cf. Gero, “The Legend of the Monk Baḥīrā,” 49). Likewise, Ṭabarī reports in his history that the Roman emperor, upon interviewing the disciples of Jesus and embracing their faith, released Sergius, by which he likely intends the monk otherwise



2.2. *Biblical Material*

The biblical pericopes of the *Critique*, much more voluminous than the Qur'ānic pericopes therein, have many direct antecedents in earlier Islamic writings.<sup>61</sup> The widespread and frequent use of biblical passages by early Muslim authors has recently been shown by M. Accad in an important four-part article.<sup>62</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār was fully conversant with this tradition, as the following examples demonstrate:

*Critique*, p. 112, ll. 3–5; cf. Jn 8:37:

John reports that [Christ] said to the Israelites, "You want to kill me, but I am a man who told you the truth that I heard from God."

'Abd al-Jabbār reports this passage, which highlights the humanity of Jesus, verbatim as it is found in Ḥasan b. Ayyūb's letter.<sup>63</sup> 'Alī al-Ṭabarī also quotes this passage and, like 'Abd al-Jabbār, assigns it to the Gospel of John (although he places it in the ninth, not the

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known as Baḥīrā. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:739. An alternative analysis of the names Sergius and Baḥīrā is given by A. Mingana, who suggests that Sergius was a historical figure to whom Christians referred with the West Syriac *bhūra*, a title given to all monks. Arab Muslims then mistook this title for a proper name. See A. Mingana "The Transmission of the Koran," *The Moslem World* 7 (October 1917) 4, 407.

Why, however, does the name Sergius appear in the monk-Muḥammad accounts in the first place? Gero argues that "the name Sargis for the monk itself was clearly a shibboleth of the oriental, Syrian Christian tradition proper" (p. 51). I would suggest that, in addition, there is a connection with the saint and martyr Sergius (Arabic *Sarjīs*, Armenian *Sarkīs*), who was martyred in AD 303 (along with Saint Bacchus) in the Syrian city of Ruṣāfa, a city that was given the title Sergiopolis by Justinian I in his honor. (It would later become the residence of the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Mālik, r. 105–25/724–43). Christian Arabs had a particular devotion to Saint Sergius, performing pilgrimages to the site of his martyrdom, as testified by the sixth century Arabic inscription at Zabad. See de Prémare, 236ff. On Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis see I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 2:115–33. The legendary encounter between Muḥammad and Baḥīrā (or Sergius) also takes place in Syria (outside the southern city of Buṣrā) and may have been influenced by the martyrdom account. On that account, see the anonymous *Histoire nestorienne*, 253–4.

<sup>61</sup> "A survey of some of the polemicists from the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries will show a considerable degree of awareness of the value of Christian scripture as a weapon against their Christian opponents." D. Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 30.

<sup>62</sup> M. Accad, "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: an exegetical inventorial table," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14 (Jan 2003) 1, 67–91; 14 (Apr 2003) 2, 205–20; 14 (Jul 2003) 3, 337–52; 14 (Oct 2003) 4, 459–79. In these articles Accad provides an extensive table of biblical quotations by twenty different early Muslim authors, although he does not include 'Abd al-Jabbār among them.

<sup>63</sup> "Risāla," 2:337.

eighth chapter): “John says in the ninth chapter of his gospel that Christ said to the Israelites, ‘You want to kill me but I am a man who spoke to you the truth that I heard from God most high.’”<sup>64</sup>

p. 113, ll. 6–8:

[Jesus] said, “God (Mighty and Exalted) did not eat and does not eat. He did not drink and does not drink. He did not sleep and does not sleep. He did not beget, does not beget and is not begotten. No one has seen him that has not died.”

This passage has no precise biblical correlation, although the idea that no one has seen God is alluded to in Exodus 33:20, Jn 1:18 and I John 3:12. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s statement, instead, is related to a *logion* reported in Ḥasan b. Ayyūb’s letter to his brother: “[Jesus] said that God does not beget and is not Begotten, does not eat, does not drink and does not sleep. [He said that] none of his creatures have seen him, that no one has seen him who has not died.”<sup>65</sup> This *logion* appears in an abridged form in ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī’s *Radd*. Ṭabarī clearly has the passage in Exodus (33:20) in mind, and writes: “God Most High said to Moses (peace be upon him), ‘No one will see me and live.’”<sup>66</sup>

p. 113, l. 15–114, 1; cf. Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36, Lk 22:42:

O Father,<sup>67</sup> if it is your pleasure to turn away this bitter cup from someone, then turn it away from me. But not as I want but rather as you want.

A number of early Muslim writers report Jesus’ statement from the Agony in the Garden as part of an argument that he is human and not divine. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī argues that the uncertainty which Jesus shows is inappropriate for a prophet: “One who said ‘O Lord, if it is possible to make this tribulation pass from me then do so’ is one who doubts the capability of God. It cannot be that the one who says this knows that God is capable of everything.”<sup>68</sup> When Māturīdī

<sup>64</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 122–3.

<sup>65</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:335–6.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 129.

<sup>67</sup> The ms. (51r.) clearly has *يا إيل*, (*yā ʾīl*), which corresponds to the *īl ʾīl* of Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34 in the Syriac Peshitta, and is the reading given in the edition. Yet it seems more likely that the original version of the text (the only ms. dates to 615/1218, two hundred and thirty years after the composition of the *Tathbūt*) had *يا أباي* or *يا أبتي* (“O my Father”), due to this quotation’s relationship to Lk 22:42 (cf. Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36). This would also correspond to the version given by Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:335, 337, 341.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 145.

brings up this passage, he argues instead that Jesus' conduct here is precisely that of a prophet, one who calls on the power of God. In fact, to him Jesus' actions are much like those of Moses:

In addition to this is [the statement] of Jesus, which he said on the night of his arrest: "My God, if it is your wish to take this bitter cup from anyone, then take it from me." If [a Christian] says: "The weeping and supplicating came from Jesus in order to teach the people," say: Then the same applies to Moses.<sup>69</sup>

This verse also forms a part of the debate attributed to the Umayyad caliph 'Umar II and the Byzantine Emperor Leo III.<sup>70</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb likewise reports it and, like 'Abd al-Jabbār, does not elaborate on it,<sup>71</sup> undoubtedly since the Muslim interpretation of this verse was already well-known. Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī also quotes this passage in his *tafsīr*.<sup>72</sup>

p. 114, ll. 10–11; cf. Mt 28:19:

They might say: "Matthew reports in his gospel that [Christ] said to his disciples, 'Travel through the earth and baptize the servants [of God] in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'"

This verse figures prominently in Christian apologetics to Muslims and thereby won the attention of Muslim polemicists. Mt 28:19 is one of the few biblical quotations that Nāshī' al-Akbar reports in his *K. al-Awsaṭ fī l-maqālāt*. In introducing this verse, Nāshī' categorizes Christian apologetics into two distinct types:

As for those Christians that believe in proclaiming three (*muthallithū l-naṣārā*), they are of two types. One group debates with intellectual analogies. The other group cites only the external meaning of the Injīl

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<sup>69</sup> Māturīdī in D. Thomas, "Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī on the divinity of Jesus Christ," 53 (Thomas' translation). Bāqillānī uses this verse in a similar way, perhaps under the influence of Māturīdī. He argues that by the Christians' logic Moses, too, might be a god. Like Moses, Bāqillānī argues, Jesus would call on his creator and Lord asking for signs: "The Injīl speaks of this, for it is in the Injīl that Jesus (peace be upon him) cried and said, 'Lord, if it is your will to make this cup pass from someone, then make it pass from me.'" Bāqillānī, 120.

<sup>70</sup> See the English translation of the Muslim letter (pseudo-'Umar) as preserved in the *Morisco* text, Gaudeul, 118 and the translation of the Christian letter from the Armenian in A. Jeffery, "Ghevond's text of the correspondence between Umar II and Leo III," *Harvard Theological Review* 37 (1944), 311.

<sup>71</sup> He reports: "[Jesus] said, 'Father, if you wish, let this cup be turned away from me. Not as I wish, let your will be done.'" Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:335.

<sup>72</sup> Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 4:353.

and the tradition of their predecessors. As for those who cite the external meaning of the Injīl, they are attached to reporting how Christ said: “Warn people in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.” Yet here there is no proof that [the Trinity] is eternal or created, or if it is one substance, or anything else.<sup>73</sup>

Ḥasan b. Ayyūb likewise encountered this verse as part of a Christian apology for the Trinity. Like Nāshī’, he finds it unconvincing:

We ask you about one thing that we would like you to inform us about. [What is] the basis for your worship of three hypostases, which, according to your claim, come from one divine substance? What is it, and whence did you take it, and who is your authority for it? In what book did it descend or which prophet prophesied it or which statement of Christ (peace be upon him) do you claim for it? Isn’t the authority that you have for it the statement of the disciple Matthew that Christ (peace be upon him) said to his disciples, when he wanted to disperse them: “Go and baptize people in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”? But the meaning of this statement, if it is sound, would be to go and put these expressions together, that the blessings of God might be gathered together, the blessing of Christ His Prophet and that of the holy spirit, by which the prophets and messengers are supported.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, a version of this passage appears in Bāqillānī’s *Tamhīd*, albeit with an interesting addition: “[Jesus] said, As my Father sent me, so I send you to baptize people and wash them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”<sup>75</sup> What is peculiar here is the added phrase: “as my Father sent me.” Bāqillānī undoubtedly added this to emphasize that Jesus was a Messenger (*rasūl*, one who is sent).<sup>76</sup>

p. 117, ll. 10–11; cf. Exodus 7:1:

In the Tawrāt, Moses is the god of Pharaoh and the god of Aaron and Aaron is Moses’ Messenger to Pharaoh.

‘Abd al-Jabbār reports this passage to establish that the Bible refers to people with divine terms only in a metaphorical sense. The point, of course, is that if Moses is called a god metaphorically to express the authority that God has given him, surely it is also metaphorically

<sup>73</sup> Nāshī’ al-Akbar, *K. al-Awsaf*, 82.

<sup>74</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:353. Cf. Qur’ān 2:87, where Jesus is described as being supported by the Holy Spirit. Cf. also 2:253, 5:110, 21:90.

<sup>75</sup> Bāqillānī, 121.

<sup>76</sup> This addition might also reflect the influence of the previous verse, Mt 28:18 (which in its canonical form actually suggests a high christology): “[Jesus] said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’”

that Jesus compares himself to God. This is an argument with clear precedents in the work of earlier writers, including Ḥasan b. Ayyūb:

God says to Moses (peace be upon him) in the Tawrāt, “I have made you a god, O Moses, to Pharaoh”. . . . So you say that God (glory be to Him) made Moses a god, meaning gave him leadership . . . so what is the difference when you say that Christ said in the Injīl, “Who has seen me has seen my Father” (Jn 14:9) or “my Father and I are one” (Jn 10:30)?<sup>77</sup>

Bāqillānī uses this passage in the same way.<sup>78</sup>

[The Christians] may say, “We say that Christ is a god simply because God says in the scriptures that he is a god and names him so.” . . . Let it be said to them: You say that God says to Moses, “I have made you a god to Aaron and I have made you a god to Pharaoh,” with the meaning of “you are his director and commander and he will have to obey you.”<sup>79</sup>

p. 119,<sup>80</sup> ll. 14–19; cf. Jn 20:17:

However, it has come down that he would say God was his father. He said, “My Father sent me,” and “My Father said to me,” and many things like this. So what do you say about this?”

Let it be said to him: If he had said this, there would still be no evidence in it for the Christians. For they have said: “He said to us, ‘I am going to my Father’<sup>81</sup> and your Father, my Lord and your Lord.” So he did not give himself a privilege above them.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s quotation of Jn 20:17 (“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”) is perhaps the most widely quoted verse in early anti-Christian works. It is reported by Jāḥiẓ (*Radd*, 25), ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī (*Radd*, 122, 135), Ḥasan b. Ayyūb (2:340), Nāshī’ al-Akbar (p. 82), Ka’bī (p. 64) and Rāzī (p. 142). The verse’s popularity comes from its portrayal of Jesus equating himself with humanity and not with divinity (although in Jn 20 it is the resurrected Christ who makes this statement). It also resembles Qur’ān 3:51, 5:117, 19:36 and 43:64, where Christ declares God to be “my Lord and your Lord.”<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:342.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. also ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 147–8, where he argues that the use of “father” in the Bible is metaphorical.

<sup>79</sup> Bāqillānī, 122. Like Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, Bāqillānī connects this discussion with a refutation of Jn 14:9 (p. 123).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:111.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:109.

<sup>82</sup> Incidentally, this quotation forms part of the anti-Christian epigraphy in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

p. 120, ll. 3–4; cf. Exodus 4:22 for first sentence:

As they say, “He said in the Tawrāt, ‘Israel is my son and first born. His sons are my sons.’” So, according to the claims of the Christians, [Israel] would be divine.<sup>83</sup>

As with the earlier passage from Exodus quoted above, ‘Abd al-Jabbār cites this verse to argue that the phrase “son of God” in the Christian gospels must be metaphorical, as Israel is metaphorically described as God’s son here. The first sentence in the excerpt is the adoption of the Israelites by God in Exodus 4:22 (although “Israel” refers to the people and not the man in the biblical text). The second sentence is non-canonical. Its source most likely is Jāḥiẓ, who adds it to his citation of Exodus 4:22 (with a slight difference). Jāḥiẓ cites this, however, in the context of an intra-Muslim debate, one which ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself refers to in “al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā” of the *Mughnī* (p. 107). The debate was over whether or not it is reasonable (or strategically valuable) to concede that God might call Jesus “son of God” in the way that He calls Abraham “close friend” (*khalīl*) in the Qur’ān (4:125). Alluding to his teacher Naẓẓām’s argument to this effect (see chapter 1, section 1.2), Jāḥiẓ comments:

I have seen that one of the *mutakallimīn* allows this [statement], if it is intended to mean adoption, upbringing, clarifying the height of his station, and singling him out for mercy and love, but not to mean begetting or [God’s] taking a female companion. He says that, comparatively speaking, there is no difference between taking an offspring through adoption and upbringing and taking a close friend through companionship and love. He claims that God Most High can dictate by name that which he loves, as he dictates by meanings that which he loves. Thus it is with the claim of the People of the Book regarding the Tawrāt, Injīl, Psalms, and Prophets (peace be upon them) that God said, “Israel is my first born.” It means: “He is the first that I adopted from my creatures.” [Similar] is His statement: “Israel is my first born and his sons are my children.”<sup>84</sup>

Nāshi’ al-Akbar and Ḥasan b. Ayyūb also cite Exodus 4:22.<sup>85</sup> Neither of these authors, however, mentions the additional non-biblical phrase found in ‘Abd al-Jabbār and Jāḥiẓ.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:110.

<sup>84</sup> Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 25, cf. 27–8.

<sup>85</sup> Nāshi’ al-Akbar, *K. al-Awsat*, 82; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:340, 356. In both cases Ḥasan introduces this verse with the pious invocation seen with Qur’ānic passages: *qāla ‘azza wa-jalla*.

p. 120, ll. 14–15:

Christ said to the Israelites, “If you were the sons of Abraham, you would have responded to me, since I am a son of Abraham.”

This is a non-biblical *logion*. Pines speculates that it originates in a lost apocryphal Christian or Judaeo-Christian writing.<sup>86</sup> More likely it comes from a contraction and confusion of Jn 8:33–42, where the theme of Abraham and sonship is central (cf. also Mt 3:9). This *logion* is anticipated by a passage in Qāsim’s polemic, which adds an element related to Jn 8:44:

They said, “We are sons of Abraham,” and they flung great slander at him. He said, “You are not children or sons of Abraham. If you were his children then you would know what is pleasing to him. Rather you are sons of Satan and of sin.”<sup>87</sup>

Qāsim’s report here is also related to a remark that ‘Abd al-Jabbār makes elsewhere in the *Critique*: “[the Christians] say regarding evil ones that they are sons of Satan and many similar things in their language” (p. 120).<sup>88</sup> Abū Ḥatīm al-Rāzī also uses this latter expression, remarking: “[Jesus] said to the Jews, ‘You are the sons of Satan.’”<sup>89</sup>

p. 149, l. 19–150, 3; cf. 188. cf. Mt 5:17–9 and Lk 16:17:

In a sentence, Christ came to revive the Tawrāt and to establish it. He said, “I have come to you only to act in accordance with the Tawrāt and the commandments of the prophets before me. I did not come to cancel but to complete. For with God it is easier for the sky to fall upon

<sup>86</sup> Pines proposes an association with Jn 8:58, either as a refutation to Jesus’ words there (“Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am”) or as an ancient tradition which Jn 8:58 is refuting. See Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 61 and “Gospel Quotations,” 231. Cf. Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 324.

<sup>87</sup> Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 324.

<sup>88</sup> In the previous chapter I discuss ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s strategy of citing biblical verses that qualify the biblical designation of Christ as son of God. For this reason he quotes Mt 5:9 (from the Beatitudes): “Blessed are you community of righteous people; you will be called sons of God” (*Taḥbūt*, 120). Compare Rāzī (*A’lām al-nubuwwa*, p. 143) and Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (pp. 321, 326, 327) who cite Mt 5:9 but with the canonical “makers of peace” in place of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s “community of the righteous.” Qāsim has “sincere friends (*asfīyā*)” of God” in place of the canonical “sons of God,” according to his practice of Islamizing biblical material. On this, see D. Thomas, “The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic,” 35. Pines sees Qāsim’s substitution of “sincere friends,” along with his translation of Mt 5:22 (p. 327, where “You fool” is replaced by “You uncircumcised”), as proof that he was influenced by a Judaeo-Christian community. See Pines, “Notes on Islam,” 149.

<sup>89</sup> Rāzī, *A’lām al-nubuwwa*, 161.

the earth than for anything to be cancelled from the law of Moses. Whoever cancels anything from that will be called lacking from the kingdom of heaven.

‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes this passage twice as part of his effort to show that Christ did not abrogate the Mosaic Law. This position is unusual for a Muslim theologian,<sup>90</sup> but it is not in conflict with the Qur’ān (see Q 3:48, 5:46, 61:6 and chapter 1, section 1.2). Some other early Muslim writers likewise take this position, in a similar effort to show that the Christians have gone astray from the religion of Christ. Thus Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm quotes Jesus saying:

Let no one think that I have come against the Tawrāt, the Injīl and the Prophets, or to cancel out anything at all that came from God. Rather, I came to fulfill all of that, to affirm every matter that is from God and all of His messengers. I give to you a true saying and announce to you a matter, so understand it faithfully: Not one verse of all the verses of God will be changed or cancelled until the heavens and earth are changed and rejected. Indeed, the one who cancels a verse of God, or changes the smallest of his commandments, who teaches anyone a substitute or changed [verse or commandment], whether small or large, will be called contemptible and will be lacking from the kingdom of God.<sup>91</sup>

‘Alī al-Ṭabarī also quotes this verse in his *K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, describing it as proof that Christ confirmed the prophets before him: “He said, ‘I did not come to cancel but to fulfill.’ He also said, ‘Truly I say to you that not a letter of [the Tawrāt] will be wiped out until heaven and earth are wiped out.’”<sup>92</sup>

The Ismā‘īlī Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943) argues, in his *K. al-Maḥṣūl* (which Abū Ḥātim quotes in the *K. al-Iṣlāḥ*), that Jesus did not bring a new law but followed the law of Moses. Nasafī concludes that Jesus, the fifth *nāṭiq* of the Ismā‘īliyya, had the qualities of the first *nāṭiq*, Adam, and the seventh (and final) *nāṭiq*, the Qā’im:<sup>93</sup> “Christ (peace be upon him) did not compose the

<sup>90</sup> Cf., for example, the view of ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 201–3.

<sup>91</sup> Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 327.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 202. Ṭabarī goes on to argue, however, that the law of Jesus was different from that of Moses, just as the law of Muḥammad differs from that of Jesus. It is only Muḥammad’s law that is ultimately binding and unchangeable.

<sup>93</sup> *Nāṭiq* is a term which in early Ismā‘īlī writings carries the literal meaning “preacher” or “speaker.” Later, however, it becomes a rank in the Ismā‘īlī hierarchy of spiritual leaders, often used interchangeably with *rasūl*. At a still later stage *nāṭiq* refers only to seven exalted figures within that hierarchy, from Adam to the Qā’im. See W. Ivanow, *Studies in Early Persian Ismā‘īlism* (Leiden: Brill, 1948), 35.



Injīl, nor did he institute a law (*sharīʿa*). His way was like the way of the first of the *nāṭiqs*. For this reason he resembles the first of the *nāṭiqs* regarding his covenant. He conducted himself according to the law of Moses and did not depart from it.”<sup>94</sup>

Abū Ḥātim quotes Nasafi’s statement in order to refute it. He counters that Jesus “did not uphold the law of Moses (peace be upon him) for one day . . . but rather abrogated the law of Moses and established his own.”<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, with his refutation Abū Ḥātim makes it clear that the peculiar view of Nasafi—that Jesus continued to teach and practice the law of Moses—was known in his city of Rayy, the city which ‘Abd al-Jabbār would later call his own.

p. 155, ll. 12–15; cf. Lk 1:1–4:

Luke mentioned in his gospel that he did not see Christ. Luke says, speaking to the one for whom he made his gospel (and he is the last one who made [a gospel] of the four): “I know your desire for goodness, knowledge and refinement (*al-adab*), so I made this Gospel, because of my knowledge and because I was close to those who served the Word and saw Him.”

Both Jāḥiẓ (*Radd*, 24) and ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī (*al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 186) point out that Luke admits he did not personally know Christ.

p. 165, l. 14–166, 7; cf. Mt 4:1–11, Lk 4:1–13:

According to their Gospel Satan imprisoned Christ and kept him enclosed for forty days, in order to test him. Christ refrained from eating and drinking, fearing that it would end up as a trick of Satan

<sup>94</sup> Nasafi in Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *K. al-Islāh* (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, 1377 [Islamic solar date = 1998]), 249. Cf. H. Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismāʿīliya* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1978), 121, and 122, where Halm discusses the important place of Jesus in Ismāʿīlī cosmology. Cf. also Ivanow, 156.

<sup>95</sup> Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *K. al-Islāh*, 253. See also Ivanow (p. 156): “[Abū Ḥātim] rejects the story that Adam has not given a system of law (*sharīʿa*). All the *Nāṭiqs* act similarly, composing religious books and systems of law for their followers. If Muḥammad the Prophet used to order his associates to write the revelation with which he was inspired, so did Jesus to his disciples, *ḥawāriyyūn*. The only difference is that these latter wrote this in the Gospel at a much later date. Just as the Gospels differ, so also did the (real) Coran differ from the reminiscences of the Prophet’s associates.”

Abū Ḥātim’s view matches that of another fourth/tenth century Ismāʿīlī, Abū Yaʿqūb Ishāq al-Sijistānī (d. mid 4th/10th). Sijistānī, who in other respects defended Nasafi against the criticisms of Abū Ḥātim (See Halm, 53ff.), does not do so on the question of whether Jesus abrogated the law of Moses. In his *K. Ithbāt al-nubuwwa*, Sijistānī states: “When Jesus came and the call (*daʿwa*) that he brought was established, the law of Moses was abrogated.” (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿat al-Kāthūlikiyya, 1966), 189.

against him. [Satan] said to him while he was in his hand, "If you are the son of God then tell these rocks to be bread." Christ said to him, answering, "It is written that the life of a person shall not be by bread but by every word that comes from God." Then Satan conveyed him to the city of Jerusalem, brought him up to the corner of the temple and said to him, "If you are the son of God, then throw yourself from here, for it is written that the angels will take care of you and your leg will not stumble on a stone." Christ said, "It is written, do not test God your god." Then he conveyed him to a high mountain and showed him all of the kingdoms of this world and their ornaments. He said to him, "If you fall on your face, prostrating to me, I will make this entire world yours, just as I did for one before you." So Christ said to him, "Depart, O Satan! For it is written, Prostrate to the Lord your god." Then God sent an angel who removed Satan from his place and threw him in the sea, opening up the way to Christ.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, closer to Matthew’s version than that of Luke, has a number of antecedents in Islamic literature. Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm reports two elements of the temptation—the prostration before Satan (although Qāsim refers to him as *iblis* and not *shayṭān*) and the transformation of rocks—and he reverses the order of these as they stand in both Matthew and Luke. Moreover, in Qāsim’s version, the devil tempts Jesus to turn the rocks not into bread but rather into gold and silver.<sup>96</sup>

The version of ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, who quotes the account partially in his *K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*,<sup>97</sup> and on two separate occasions in his *Radd*, is closer to that of ‘Abd al-Jabbār.<sup>98</sup> Closer still is the version of Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, which at some points matches ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account verbatim.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 324. See also D. Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim anti-Christian Polemic," 35.

<sup>97</sup> P. 194. Here he explicitly identifies the account as that of Matthew.

<sup>98</sup> First on p. 122 and then more fully on p. 132. Stern cites this second quotation of the Temptation story as a source for the *Critique*. Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 147.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:324–5 (I have italicized those words not in the *Critique* and put in parentheses those in the *Critique* but not in Ibn Ayyūb’s version):

[Satan said to him] "If you are the son of God, then throw yourself from here, for it is written that the angels will take care of you and your leg will not stumble on a stone." Christ said, "It is *also* written, do not test God your god." Then he conveyed him to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of this world and their ornaments. He said to him, "If you fall on your face, prostrating to me, I will make all *that you see* yours (as I did for one before you)." So Christ said to him, "Depart, O Satan! For it is written, 'Prostrate to the Lord your god.'" Then God sent an angel to remove Satan from his place and throw him into the sea, opening up the way to Christ.

p. 199, ll. 1–6; cf. Mt 3:17, Mk 1:11, Lk 3:22:

The prevalent [opinion] according to them is that Mary (peace be upon her) belonged to the son of her paternal uncle who was called Joseph or Jacob the Carpenter, and that she was with him. People thought that Christ was the son of Joseph until John baptized him in the Jordan and a voice came from heaven, [saying]: “This is my son in whom I am pleased.” They say, “So we know that he is the son of God Most High, not the son of Joseph the Carpenter.”

‘Abd al-Jabbār brings up the account of John’s baptism of Jesus in the context of his argument that Christians attack the dignity of Mary by making her vulnerable to accusations of fornication (on this see chapter 3, section 2.2). Ḥasan b. Ayyūb brings up the baptism account and mentions the passage of Isaiah (42:1) that is contained within it to warn his Muslim readers that Christians see this incident as a fulfillment of prophecy.<sup>100</sup> More complete and accurate, however, is the account of the historian Aḥmad b. Ishāq al-Ya‘qūbī.<sup>101</sup> While Ya‘qūbī’s account does not share the polemical approach of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, it is nonetheless evidence that these biblical accounts were present in Islamic literature well before the *Critique*.

In this regard it is important at least to note another body of Islamic literature in which biblical material appears. In the exegetical, historical and polemical works discussed above, biblical material appears either as part of a refutation of Christianity or as historical evidence. Yet other works, pious or hortatory by nature, incorporate many biblical sayings of Jesus into homilies on asceticism and charity. In these works, usually by Shī‘ī or Ṣūfī authors, Jesus appears as a combination of an ascetic prophet and a sage. Perhaps the most exceptional example of this literature is the *Tuhaf al-‘uqūl* of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s older contemporary, the Shī‘ī Ibn Shu‘ba (d. 381/991). Ibn Shu‘ba reports the eleventh Shī‘ī Imām al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī’s (d. 260/874) quotation of a speech by Jesus, a speech that is modeled after the Beatitudes and the “Woes” (Mt 23) of Matthew’s Gospel

<sup>100</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 323. Cf. also the comments of the Muslim opponent of ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, “K. al-Masā’il wa-l-ajwiba,” in M. Hayek, *Ammār al-Baṣrī, apolo-gie et controverses*, 259–60. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī cites a related verse (Mt. 17:5, from the Transfiguration) as part of his argument against the divinity of Christ: “Matthew says in the nineteenth chapter [sic] of his Gospel, citing Isaiah’s prophecy about Christ that God (glory be to Him) said, ‘This is my servant, whom I have declared pure, and my beloved, in whom I take rest.’” ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 144.

<sup>101</sup> Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1419/1999), 1:65.

and yet significantly expanded.<sup>102</sup> Nowhere does Ibn Shu‘ba’s work have direct antecedents to biblical quotations in the *Critique*. Yet this type of work is an important example, like Ya‘qūbī’s history, of the degree to which the Islamic community had absorbed biblical material into its own tradition by ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s time.<sup>103</sup>

### 2.3. *Narratives*

#### 2.3.1. *Paul in Earlier Islamic Writings*

##### 2.3.1.1 Paul and Christian Origins

Thus the scriptural pericopes in the *Critique* are evidently related to a well developed tradition of Muslim writings on Christianity. This relationship is no less evident for other elements of the *Critique*, including the historical anecdotes that stand at the center of the work.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s narratives of Paul, Constantine and biblical origins are the myths through which he describes *how* the Christians changed the religion of Jesus. The twists and turns of these stories, even the apparently insignificant details, are all products of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Weltanschauung*, of his theological, historical and sociological thinking. At the heart of these myths lies Paul, the *kāfir par excellence*.<sup>104</sup> Paul not only rejects the religion of Jesus, he changes it for his own purposes. He is a power monger, a conniving and selfish man who uses Christians to ingratiate himself with the Roman authorities: “This Paul was a wicked and evil Jew. He pursued evil and assisted the evil, anxious to cause disorders. He sought leadership and dominion and used every kind of trick to achieve it” (156). While ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s detailed narratives of Paul are unprecedented in Islamic writings, this picture of him is not.

<sup>102</sup> See Ibn Shu‘ba, 373–83.

<sup>103</sup> On this literature see Khalidi (*The Muslim Jesus*), who refers to the corpus of pious sayings attributed to Jesus as the “Muslim Gospel.” Drawing on the work of Asín-Palacios, but also adding to it, Khalidi collects a large number of such sayings. See also M. Asín-Palacios, “Logia et Agrapha,” *PO* 13 (1919), 335–431 and 19 (1926), 531–624; M.M. Qa’im and M. Legenhausen, “Words of the Word of God: Jesus Christ Speaks through Shī‘ī Narrations,” *Tawhid* 13 (1996) 3, 21–40 and 13 (1996) 4, 45–56.

<sup>104</sup> On this term, see T. Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’an* (Montreal: McGill, 1966), 70.

In his recently published *Tafsīr*,<sup>105</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s contemporary Tha‘labī also blames Paul for changing the Islamic message of Jesus. In Tha‘labī’s account, Paul is equally devious and troublesome, but in a different way. Paul comes to understand that the Islamic message of Jesus is, in fact, the truth. Yet he does not convert. Instead, feeling himself already damned, Paul decides to infiltrate the community of Jesus’ disciples and pervert their religion so that they, too, will be damned:<sup>106</sup>

The [Christians] were all of [one religion] for a year after Jesus was raised.<sup>107</sup> They prayed in the same direction [*qibla*], and they fasted in the month of Ramaḍān until a war occurred between them and the Jews.

There was among the Jews a courageous man named Paul.<sup>108</sup> He killed a group of the followers of Jesus and then said to the Jews, “If the truth is with Jesus, then we have disbelieved and been neglectful. Hellfire is our destiny. We would be the deceived, the losers, if they entered heaven but we enter hellfire. So I will play a trick so as to deceive them that they may enter hellfire.” Now he<sup>109</sup> had a horse that was called *al-‘uqāb* (“the eagle”) upon which he would fight. He hamstrung (*arqaba*)<sup>110</sup> his horse and made as though he were remorseful, putting soil upon his head. The Christians said to him, “Who are you?” He said, “Paul,<sup>111</sup> your enemy. I have heard from heaven: ‘You can only repent by becoming a Christian.’ So I repented.”

Thus they brought him into the church. He entered a house for a year, not leaving it by day or by night, so that he learned the Injīl. Then he went out and said, “It was announced to me: ‘God has accepted your repentance.’” So they believed him and loved him. He went to Jerusalem and took Naṣṭūr as a disciple, teaching him that Jesus and Mary and god were three [gods]. Then he went to Rome and taught

<sup>105</sup> The edition, however, has a number of mistakes. In my translation I have emended the text based on the manuscript: Ms. 102 *tafsīr*, Medina Public Library (Maḥmūdiyya Collection).

<sup>106</sup> This same narrative is also reported by Abū l-Muzaḥḥār Shahfūr b. Ṭāhir al-Isfārā’īnī (d. 471/1078–9) and by Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405), in his encyclopedia of animals (under the entry for horse [*faras*] due to the reference to Paul’s horse), on the authority of Muḥammad b. al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī (d. 146/763). See Isfārā’īnī, *K. al-Tabṣīr fī l-dīn*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1955), 133–4 (cf. Fritsch, 49–51); Damīrī, *K. Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 2001; reprint of 1284/1867 Būlāq edition), 2:254–5 (cf. Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 178 and 181).

<sup>107</sup> Damīrī (2:254) has eighty-one years.

<sup>108</sup> Read يونس for بولس.

<sup>109</sup> Read لها for له.

<sup>110</sup> Read غرقت for عرقب.

<sup>111</sup> Read يونس for بولس.

them about the divinity and humanity [of Jesus]. He said, "Jesus was not human but took on humanity."<sup>112</sup> He had no body but took on a body.<sup>113</sup> He is the Son of God." He taught this to a man who was called Jacob. Then he called a man who was called Mālik<sup>114</sup> and said to him, "Jesus is the god who was and who is."

When [Paul] got power over them he called these three, one by one, and said to each of them "You are my successor (*khalīfatī*). I saw Jesus in a dream and he was pleased with me." He said to each of them, "Tomorrow I will sacrifice myself, so call the people to your teachings [*niḥlatika*]."<sup>115</sup> Then he went to the altar and sacrificed himself, saying, "I do this to the pleasure of Jesus."<sup>116</sup> So when it was the third day, each of [the three] called the people to his side and a sect from the people followed each one of them. They differed with each other and have been fighting until our day. All of the Christians are from these three groups.<sup>117</sup>

Thaʿlabī's account relates not only to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's narrative of Paul in the *Critique* (see chapter 3, section 2.3), but also to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's narrative therein on biblical origins (see chapter 3, section 2.1), as it begins with a reference to a "war" (*ḥarb*) between the Jews and the followers of Christ (ʿAbd al-Jabbār has "conflict," *khilāf*). Thaʿlabī's narrative is one of a group of Islamic accounts that describe how the main three Christian sects in the medieval Islamic world (Melkite, Jacobite and Nestorian) came into being. The focus of these narratives on dissension between the Christian groups seems to be inspired by Q 5:14, which describes how God has sown hatred among the Christians as a punishment for forgetting the divine message.

In these accounts Paul plays a central role, inevitably as the trouble-maker, the one who sows the seeds of discord. In this sense he is a parallel character to ʿAbdallāh b. Sabaʾ, an alleged Yamanī Jew and early convert to Islam who is often depicted as the one who incited the discord that led to the split between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Read تَأْنَسُ for يَتَأْنَسُ.

<sup>113</sup> Read تَجَسِّمُ for يَتَجَسَّمُ.

<sup>114</sup> Read مَالِكُ for مَالِك.

<sup>115</sup> Read لِمَذْبَحِهِ for نَحْلَتِكَ.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Qarāfī (120–1), who includes the tradition of Paul committing suicide for the sake of Jesus. Cf. Colossians 1:23, where Paul speaks of himself of making up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, and especially II Timothy 4:6, where Paul speaks of himself as being ready to be "offered" or "poured out as a libation."

<sup>117</sup> Thaʿlabī, 5:33 (commentary on Q 9:31), cf. ms. folios 96v–97r.

<sup>118</sup> On the parallels between ʿAbdallāh b. Sabaʾ and Paul, see P.S. Van Koningsveld, "Islamic Image of Paul and the Origin of the Gospel of Barnabas," *JSAI* 20 (1996),

Paul plays this role also in the *K. al-Ridda wa-l-futūḥ* of the early chronicler Sayf b. ʿUmar al-Tamīmī (d. late 2nd/8th). In Sayf's account, Paul, who is called Abū Shāʿul ("the father of Saul") and described as the King, initially orders that the Christians be killed. When they escape and he realizes that they cannot be so easily exterminated, Abū Shāʿul decides to play a trick on them. Faking a conversion, as in Thaʿlabī's account, Abū Shāʿul becomes a Christian and takes the name Paul in order to ruin Christianity from the inside:

So [Paul] left his kingship and put on their clothing. Then he followed them in order to lead them astray until he arrived at their outpost. They took him and said to him, "Praise be to God who captured you and overpowered you. . . ." He said, "Jesus came to me as I was leaving you and took my hearing, sight and reason, so that I could not hear, see or reason. Then he lifted this from me and I promised God that I would join with your cause. . . ."

He said, "I have seen the night and the morning, the sun and the moon and the planets coming from there [i.e. the East]. They come from the direction which is the right one for us to pray in." They said, "You have spoken rightly!" So he changed their *qibla*. . .

He said, "God has subjected to you all that is on the Earth. He has given you what is in the sky as a mark of His generosity to you. By God, it is not right for you to reject His generosity. So why do you say that some things are permitted and others forbidden? Everything between the bedbug and the elephant is permitted."<sup>119</sup>

As in the *Critique*, Paul ruins Christianity by abrogating the Mosaic Law. However, Sayf adds an element absent from the *Critique*: Paul, not Jesus, tells his disciples: "should someone strike your cheek, offer the other cheek" (p. 223). Sayf also adds a fourth figure to the narrative of the three Christian sects, a figure who is called simply *al-muʿmin*, "the believer." He is the Muslim, the one who preserves the true religion of Jesus:<sup>120</sup>

202. In some accounts ʿAbdallāh b. Saba' is accused of deifying ʿAlī in the same way that Paul is accused of divinizing Jesus. See M. Hodgson, "'Abdallāh b. Saba'," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 1:51.

<sup>119</sup> Translated from the excerpt given by van Koningsveld from the ms., pp. 222–3. The last phrase also appears in the polemical Jewish work on the life of Jesus, *Tōlēdōth Yēshūʿ*. See S. Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1902), 48 (Hebrew), 61 (German translation). Cf. English translation of H. Schonfield, *According to the Hebrews* (Duckworth: London, 1937), 57.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. the account of the Syrian historian Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176), where Paul does not appear, but the same trope of the Christian sects occurs. Ibn ʿAsākir al-Dimashqī, *Ṣirat al-sayyid al-Masīḥ*, ed. S. Mourad (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1996), 215–216.

So the three [Ya‘qūb, Nastūr and Malkūn] returned to [Paul] and reported to him. He said to them, “Catch up to *al-mu‘min* and his companions and kill them, that they may not corrupt you and your cause. . . .” So they fought [*al-mu‘min* and his companions] and vanquished them, forcing them out to Syria where the Jews captured them. They informed the Jews about what had happened and said, “We are only fleeing that we might be secure in your land. We have nothing to do with this world. We seek only caves, mountain tops, and cells that we might wander through the land. . . .” The believers [*al-mu‘minin*] fled into the Arabian Peninsula, where the Prophet [Muḥammad] encountered thirty such monks who believed in him.<sup>121</sup>

As in Tha‘labī’s narrative, an element appears here that is parallel to the narrative on biblical origins in the *Critique*. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, like Sayf, has the faithful followers of Jesus flee to the Arabian Peninsula (p. 153, ll. 2–3), a reference that reflects the trope of Muslim followers of Jesus in the *sīra* literature (see chapter 3, section 2.1).

#### 2.3.1.2. Paul and the Question of *tawātur*

The preceding accounts are, ostensibly, historical narratives. In fact, they are, like the *Critique*, polemical texts with a specific *theologumenon*: that Christianity is not the religion of Jesus, i.e. that Christians do not have a valid transmission from Jesus. Many of these same issues are discussed by Jāḥiẓ in his *Hujaj al-nubuwwa*. Jāḥiẓ, however, addresses them from a theoretical perspective, drawing a comparison between Paul and Mani:

[They have] the report of the [church] fathers and the century before, that Paul came with wonders and marks. This is like the reports of the Manicheans about the century which preceded them, that Mani brought wonders and marks, or like the Zoroastrians from the fathers that preceded them, that Zoroaster brought wonders and marks. So we know that these Christians do not lie about the generation that preceded them, neither do the *zanādiqa* nor the Zoroastrians. Yet the proof that the basis of their report is not like its derivative is that God (glory be to Him) does not give marks to one who does not recognize them. Thus Paul, who maintained that Jesus (peace be upon him) is a god, does not know God Most High. He does not know the difference between a lord and a servant, or a human and God.<sup>122</sup>

Jāḥiẓ argues here that the “basis” (*aṣl*) of the Christians’ report is not like its “derivative” (*farʿ*). He concedes that the Christians might

<sup>121</sup> Sayf b. ‘Umar in van Koningsveld, 224.

<sup>122</sup> Jāḥiẓ, *Hujaj al-nubuwwa*, 251–2.



have accurately preserved the knowledge of the preceding generation, but maintains that a gap in their transmission occurred earlier, with Paul. The issue here, then, is transmission (*tawātur*), a common element of Muslim-Christian debate.<sup>123</sup> It is true that, as mentioned earlier, Mu‘tazilī scholars such as Jāḥiẓ did not look at *tawātur* as a sufficient standard for religious doctrine. Yet Jāḥiẓ’s intent here is simply to establish a reasonable argument that will show how Christians could have changed the religion of Jesus, even if the current generation has no memory of this change. In other words, the Christian claims of *tawātur* can be undermined with rational arguments. In this sense Jāḥiẓ’s approach is typically Mu‘tazilī. ‘Abd al-Jabbār takes a similar approach in the *Critique* yet he frames his argument within a narrative:

Another one responded and said, “Do you, Christian community, know why there came to be Christians among the Arabs, Egyptians, Ethiopians and others?” They said, “No.” So he said, “But I know and if you were Christians you would know.” They asked him and he informed them, saying, “The first fathers spent a night, all having [the same] one language. Then every one of them could speak in the language of one of the nations. Each one of them went to that nation which spoke this language. They called upon them in their language and brought forth wonders and miracles for them. If not, then tell us why the Armenians, Arabs, Egyptians and Ethiopians became Christians?”

They say, “I believe. This is a clear proof.” So they write this and record it and turn it into a feast and a remembrance.

This is the basis of the thing, its cause and its origin. Thus it becomes immortalized and disseminated. Then ages pass by, periods proceed and then they claim that it is something that has its basis in the wit-

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<sup>123</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār attempts to show that only Sunnī Muslim doctrine has a valid *tawātur*, arguing this on p. 181 (cf. 128) in a way reminiscent of Ibn al-Munajjim (pp. 48–50). Both authors concede that non-Muslims differ over the validity of Muḥammad’s claims. They both argue, however, that all are in agreement on the fact that he made such claims. ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues:

Do you not see regarding the Prophet Muḥammad (God’s blessing and peace be upon him) that when it was claimed that he was the Messenger of God to all of creation, and that he was the standard for them, everyone whom the report reached knew it, whether they trusted it or counted him as a liar, whether they saw him or did not see him?

Ibn al-Munajjim has:

There is no difference between the nations, religions and sects over these general points which I have enumerated about Muḥammad. For [these reports] came in such a way that they could not be a lie. There is only a difference over the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be upon him). For some nations witness to it, that God sent him, and some nations consider his prophethood a lie (p. 50).

On this argument, cf. also Jāḥiẓ, *Hujaj*, 251 and Malāḥimī, 84.

ness of nations, since it is more possible to lie about something that transpired long ago (p. 207, ll. 2–11).<sup>124</sup>

The origin of the tradition that at the end of one night the Church fathers were given the charism of speaking different languages is certainly the biblical account of Pentecost (Acts 2:6ff.; indeed 2:15 makes it clear that the miracle was manifested in the morning). Yet ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s immediate source was probably Ibn Ishāq, as recorded by Ṭabarī, who reports a tradition that the disciples of Jesus whom he sent to far off lands initially refused to go, apparently because they could not speak the corresponding languages. So Jesus complained about them to God and “from that very night each one of them could speak the language of the people to whom he was sent.”<sup>125</sup>

Speaking elsewhere on the question of *tawātur*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār makes an analogy, as Jāḥiẓ does, between Paul and Mani. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s argument is more sophisticated; he argues that Paul changed the Islamic message of Jesus by capitalizing on the ethnic pride of the Romans, as Mani did with the Persians:

Similar to the deed of Paul in helping the Romans in their religion, and separating [them] from the religion of Christ, is that which Mani the priest did. He was the leader of the Manicheans, a long period after Paul. He had leadership and, after being a priest, became the bishop of the Christians in Iraq, in the possession of Persia. He mixed with the Persians, praising light and denouncing darkness as the Zoroastrians do. He praised Zoroaster, the prophet of the Zoroastrians.

[Mani] said that the Light chose him and sent him to the East, as it sent Christ to the West. He despised Abraham, Ismā‘īl and the prophets whom Christ affirmed, just as the Persians wash their hands of them. Mani helped them and became close to them by despising

<sup>124</sup> Compare ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s comments elsewhere:

The Christians might say, “Christ is the first of us. He is our ancestor and you agree that he had signs and miracles. So how can you say that our origin is, like our conclusion, [invalid]?” (p. 182, ll. 3–4).

We know that Christ is a prophet and that he had signs and miracles as you say, but not by your transmittal, nor by your claims. We know this only by the statement of our Prophet (God’s blessing be upon him).

Yet you have claimed that these nations responded to Christianity only due to signs and miracles that Paul, George, Father Mark and their likes brought forth. You recorded this in your books as did the Manicheans, the Zoroastrians and others. You claimed that in every era, and the people that are with you testify to this. Yet they do not see [these signs and miracles], or their effects, at all (p. 182, ll. 7–13).

<sup>125</sup> Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 1:1560.

[the prophets], saying, “Satan sent them.” He would write, “From Mani, the servant of Christ,” just as Paul wrote. He was similar to [Paul] and followed in his footsteps . . . (p. 169, ll. 9–170, 4).<sup>126</sup>

### 2.3.1.3. Paul and *ta’rīkh*

Yet Paul’s place in Islamic writings is not limited to polemical arguments like those above. He also appears in history (*ta’rīkh*) writings simply as an important figure of Christian tradition. The writings of these authors, among them Ya‘qūbī, Mas‘ūdī and al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. late 4th/10th), are marked not by *theologumena*, but by an investigative and scientific spirit. Maqdisī describes the doctrines and practices of various Christian sects without deconstructing them,<sup>127</sup> declaring openly: “this is not a refutation of them.”<sup>128</sup> Ya‘qūbī’s account of Paul’s life, meanwhile, is a close rendition of the Acts of Apostles’ narrative:

Of all people, Paul was the greatest in severity and injury against [the Christians], killing whomever he could find among them and seeking them in every place. So he went out on the way to Damascus to gather up a group [of Christians] who were there. Then he heard a voice that called out to him, “O Paul, how you persecute me!” He was so terrified that he lost his sight. Then Ananias came to him and ministered to him until he recovered and his eyes were healed. [Paul] began to frequent churches, proclaiming and praising Christ. The Jews wanted to kill him, and he fled from them. He began to evangelize the people along with the disciples [of Christ], proclaiming the same things. He lived an ascetic life, denouncing the things of this world so that all of the apostles promoted him above themselves and made him their leader.

<sup>126</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s argument combines two important Islamic apologetical themes. One of these, expressed in modern times with the saying *lā waṭaniyya fī l-islām* (“there is no nationalism in Islam”), is the idea that the Islamic *umma* replaces any tribal or national bonds. While other religions are limited to a certain ethnic group, Islam is universal. The second theme is the idea of Islam as *al-dīn al-wāsiṭ* (“the middle religion”). In ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account, Islam stands in a central position between the extremes of Roman religion in the West and Persian religion in the East. Muslim geographers often presented Mecca as the navel of the world, and Muslim authors, both medieval and modern, describe Muḥammad as the “middle” prophet, a perfect mean between the law-obsessed Moses and the love-obsessed Jesus, being anticipated only by Abraham, the *ḥanīf*, *khalīl Allāh*. On this latter notion see the novel of N. Maḥfūz, *The Children of Gebelawi*, trans. P. Stewart (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1988).

<sup>127</sup> Maqdisī, 1:336.

<sup>128</sup> Maqdisī continues, “although one who researches into their statements . . . will know the invalidity of their teachings.” *K. al-Baḍ’ wa-l-ta’rīkh*, ed. Khalīl ‘Imrān al-Manṣūr, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1417/1997), 1:337. This edition is erroneously attributed to Abū Zayd Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Balkhī (d. 322/934).

He got up and proclaimed his message, speaking about the Israelites, the prophets and the station of Christ. He would say, "Come with us to the nations, for God said to Christ, 'I have made you a light to the nations, that you might bring salvation to every region of the earth.'"<sup>129</sup> Each of them would proclaim his opinion, saying, "We have to preserve the law (*nāmūs*), sending evangelists to every land, who will forbid them from sacrificing to idols, from fornicating and from eating blood."

Paul went out with two men to Antioch in order to set up the religion of baptism. When he went back he was taken and brought to Rome, where he got up and proclaimed his message, speaking about the station of Christ. But a group made a pact to kill him due to his ruining of their religion, and his mentioning and praising of Christ.<sup>130</sup>

Ya'qūbī's biography of Paul is not a polemical narrative aimed at proving a certain argument; it is the faithful attempt of a historian to report what is known about the life of Paul. His biography is thus an example of an entirely different resource that 'Abd al-Jabbār would have had as he sat down to write the *Critique*. The presence of such a historically-minded biography also demonstrates that 'Abd al-Jabbār's polemical style is not simply an inheritance of earlier Islamic tradition. It is a product of his own religious thought.

### 2.3.2. *Constantine in Earlier Islamic Writings*

The same conclusion applies to 'Abd al-Jabbār's biography of Constantine. Both Ya'qūbī<sup>131</sup> and Mas'ūdī describe the life of the

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Lk 2:29–32 and Isaiah 49:6.

<sup>130</sup> Ya'qūbī, 1:72.

<sup>131</sup> Ya'qūbī, 1:132 (cf. Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 282):

The first of the Roman (*rūm*) kings who left the Greek tradition for the Christian one was Constantine. The reason for this is that when he was fighting a group he saw in a dream something like spears descending from the sky with crosses on them. So he had crosses mounted on his spears. Then he fought and was victorious. This was the cause for his conversion to Christianity. He established Christianity, building churches and gathering all of the bishops from every land to confirm it. The first meeting that they had was at Nicaea, with three hundred and eighteen bishops and four patriarchs from Alexandria, Rome, Antioch and Constantinople.

The reason why Constantine gathered them together is that, when he became a Christian and took Christianity into his heart, he wanted to increase his knowledge. He counted the variations of doctrine and found thirteen, including . . . [list of thirteen different trinitarian and christological doctrines].

So Constantine gathered the three hundred and eighteen bishops and the four patriarchs. At that time there were no others. The patriarch of Alexandria said, "Christ is created; he was made a god (*ma'lūh*)."<sup>132</sup> So when they gathered together they disputed with him on this point and they unified the statement of the entire group. They said, "Christ was Begotten from the Father before all created things, from the nature of the father." They did not mention the

Roman emperor in a sober and scientific tone. ‘Abd al-Jabbār describes Constantine’s life in a polemical tone, even as he reports much of the material found in Mas‘ūdī,<sup>132</sup> such as Helen’s role in Constantine’s conversion and her support of the church,<sup>133</sup> and the measures implemented by Constantine to strengthen Christianity.<sup>134</sup> Whereas Mas‘ūdī refers to Constantine’s father as *فليطانس*,<sup>135</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār refers to him as *فيلاطس*. In both Mas‘ūdī’s *Murūj* and ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Critique*, the conversion of Constantine takes place during a battle with the *Burjān* (Bulgarians) and not with his rival Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge, as in the canonical Christian account.<sup>136</sup>

Other elements in the *Critique* are found in Mas‘ūdī’s biography of Constantine in the *K. al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, a work written a few years later.<sup>137</sup> Here Mas‘ūdī reports, as ‘Abd al-Jabbār does, that

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Holy Spirit. They also did not designate a creator and created. Yet they agreed that the Father is a god and the son a god from him. So they went out from Nicaea. Constantine was king for fifty-five years.

<sup>132</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s narratives on Constantine are also related to an account that Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī includes in his history. Ṭabarī writes that a king of the Romans heard of the way in which the Jews were persecuting the remaining disciples of Christ and proceeded to investigate the affair of Christ. Upon listening to the reports of the disciples, he embraced their religion. The king then recovered the wood upon which Christ was crucified and opposed the Israelites, killing many of them. Ṭabarī concludes: “This was the origin of Christianity among the Romans.” Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 1:739–40.

<sup>133</sup> Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 1:329, 331.

<sup>134</sup> Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 1:334.

<sup>135</sup> Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 1:329.

<sup>136</sup> See Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 164. Unlike the *Taḥbīt* (and like Ya‘qūbī’s account), here it is the Emperor himself who has a vision during his sleep of the Cross as a light in the sky. Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 1:331.

<sup>137</sup> In Mas‘ūdī’s description of Constantine’s conversion in the *Tanbīh*, he uses the Arabic term *ḥunafā’* to describe the Roman pagans: “On the reason behind [Constantine’s] conversion to Christianity and leaving behind the teachings of the *ḥunafā’*: The *ḥunafā’* said that this was due to the appearance of leprosy in his body.” Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, 137. This use preserves the sense of the Syriac *ḥanpa/ḥanpē*, which was taken into the Qur’ān as *ḥanīf* but with a virtually opposite signification, meaning “Muslim” or “monotheist” (See Qur’ān 3:67, etc.). On this term Jeffrey concludes, “The probabilities are that it is the Syr. *ḥanpē*, as was pointed out by Nöldeke. This word was commonly used with the meaning of *heathen*, and might well have been known to the pre-Islamic Arabs as a term used by the Christians for those who were neither Jews nor of their own faith.” *Foreign Vocabulary*, 115. Cf. W.M. Watt, “Ḥanīf,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 3:165–6.

The author of *Risālat al-Kindī* (pp. 26ff.) argues that *ḥanīf*, as it applies to Abraham, refers to the first ninety years of his life when he was a pagan. This is also the meaning given to the term by the Christian philosopher Abū Qurra (d. 204/820). See Abū Qurra, *Fī wujūd al-khāliq wa-l-dīn al-qawīm*, ed. I. Dick (Jounieh: Saint Paul, 1982), 200 (or, ed. L. Cheikho, *al-Machreq* 15 [1912], 766).

Constantine attempted to keep his leprosy secret from the pagans, and that he later became disillusioned with pagan worship after losing battles fought in the name of the seven planets.<sup>138</sup> In the *Tanbīh* Masʿūdī also makes a vague comparison between Constantine and the Sasanian ruler Ardashīr son of Bābak, which may be a precursor to ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s comment to that effect.<sup>139</sup>

Masʿūdī’s reports on other topics in the *Tanbīh* also suggest a correspondence with the *Critique*.<sup>140</sup> He writes, like ʿAbd al-Jabbār, that the Emperor Nero killed Paul,<sup>141</sup> while the Emperor Titus assaulted the Israelites.<sup>142</sup> This latter report is also made by Maqdisī,<sup>143</sup> and in a different form by Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī.<sup>144</sup> Like Yaʿqūbī, Masʿūdī and Maqdisī, Ṭabarī does not relate these events as part of a *theologumenon*; his report thereof serves simply to augment his larger history.

This is not the case with two other historians, both of whom were contemporaries of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his neighbors in Rayy: al-

<sup>138</sup> Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, 137–8. Cf. *Tathbūt*, 160; Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 168–9. In the *Tanbīh*, Masʿūdī uses the term Ṣābiʿūn to refer to all pagans, including the Romans before Constantine’s conversion (see *Tanbīh*, 122). It is possible, then, that the term Ṣābiʿūn should be read accordingly in the *Critique*, i.e. that it need not refer specifically to the Ḥarrānians in each case, except when ʿAbd al-Jabbār specifies: “The Ṣābiʿūn of Ḥarrān” (*Tathbūt*, pp. 108, 163). According to Stern, Muslim authors came to apply Ṣābiʿūn to all Graeco-Roman pagans due to the use of this term by the Ḥarrānian pagans, who had thereby claimed status as People of the Book (see Qurʾān 2:62; 5:69; 22:17). See Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 161, 163.

<sup>139</sup> Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, 137. Cf. Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 145, n. 7. Yet the parallel drawn here by Masʿūdī is simply that Constantine and Ardashīr are the two figures after whom the Romans and Persians respectively have accurate dating for their monarchies. ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s comparison is more detailed (see chapter 3, section 2.3); Cf. Maqdisī, 1:288–9.

<sup>140</sup> See, e.g., Masʿūdī’s account of the composition of the Christian Bible in his *Tanbīh* (p. 160).

<sup>141</sup> Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, 126; ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Tathbūt*, 160.

<sup>142</sup> Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, 127; ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Tathbūt*, 159. Masʿūdī is more specific, reporting that Titus destroyed the temple and killed three thousand Jews. He adds: “It is found in one of the history books that God has punished the Romans from that day in which they destroyed Jerusalem.” *Murūj*, 1:325.

<sup>143</sup> Maqdisī, 1:316. He comments that Titus attacked the Israelites with such barbarity that “no stone remained upon another stone.”

<sup>144</sup> Ṭabarī includes in his history a brief and rather vague anecdote of the origin of Christianity among the Romans in his history, which seems to be a conflation of the Titus and Constantine accounts. According to this anecdote, the Roman king, having heard of the crucifixion of an Israelite who claimed to be the Messenger of God, summoned the apostles and subsequently embraced their religion. He later discovered the cross on which Jesus had been crucified and venerated it. The king, to revenge the crucifixion of Jesus, attacked the Israelites and killed many of them. Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:739.

Khaṭīb Iskāfī and Ibn Miskawayh. These two scholars report virtually identical versions of Constantine's conversion,<sup>145</sup> in which many of the polemical themes present in 'Abd al-Jabbār's account appear. The relationship between the *Critique* and Iskāfī's *Lutf al-tadbīr* is particularly important, since, like the Qāḍī, Iskāfī was a member of the *majlis* of Ibn 'Abbād,<sup>146</sup> and the two undoubtedly met on many occasions. Thus the following excerpt from *Lutf al-tadbīr* may be the source of 'Abd al-Jabbār's narrative on Constantine:

It is said that Constantine, king of the Romans, ruled them until he had grown old in age and weak of body. He suffered from leprosy, which disfigured his face. Thus the Romans wanted to remove him and said, "You have had enough of this world, so retire from ruling us. . . ." He consulted his advisers about his status and they said to him: "You have no power over your people. They are all agreed on removing you."

Now they were following a different religion. They did not know of Christianity but rather worshiped idols in ignorance. So he said, "What scheme [should I use]?" They said to him, "Take permission to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Then take up one of the religions of the prophets, call [the people] to it and impose it upon them. Then they will be divided into groups. One group will be with you and another will isolate itself from you. So you will fight those who rebel against you with those who obey you. Then you will have the upper hand, for every group that fights for religion prevails."

. . . [Upon arriving in Jerusalem] Constantine chose Christianity. He and a group who were with him became Christians. He returned to Roman lands with monks, deacons and bishops, calling the Romans to Christianity. Most of them responded. He fought and overcame those who rebelled against him. He burned and tore up the books of their doctrine. He built churches and imposed Christianity upon them with the sword.<sup>147</sup>

Iskāfī's account agrees with that of 'Abd al-Jabbār in content and intent. Both authors relate the detail that Constantine was struck with leprosy, for which reason he was afraid of losing power. The aim of both accounts is also the same. Iskāfī, like 'Abd al-Jabbār, uses the story of Constantine to show that Christianity was forcefully imposed upon people.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup> See Iskāfī, *Lutf al-tadbīr*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1964), 48–9 and Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. L. Caetani, 7 vols. (London: Luzac, 1909–21), 1:135–6. Cf. Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 169ff.

<sup>146</sup> See E.K. Rowson, "al-Raghib al-Iṣfahānī," *ET*, 8:390.

<sup>147</sup> Iskāfī, 48–9.

<sup>148</sup> Elsewhere Iskāfī, like 'Abd al-Jabbār, emphasizes Constantine's persecution of



### 2.3.3. *The Creed in Earlier Islamic Writings*

‘Abd al-Jabbār connects his biography of Constantine with the Council of Nicaea and the establishment of the Creed (see chapter 3, section 2.3). Earlier Muslim authors, however, are more interested in the doctrine of the Creed than in the historical circumstances of its genesis. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, for example, does not even mention Constantine when he discusses the contents of the Creed, which he refers to as *sharī‘at dīnīhim* (“the code of their religion”) in *K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*,<sup>149</sup> and *sharī‘at al-īmān* (“the code of faith”) in his *Radd*.<sup>150</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār, on the other hand, usually refers to the Creed as *tasbīḥat al-īmān* (“the acclamation of faith.”)

Unlike ‘Abd al-Jabbār, Ṭabarī never quotes the Creed *in toto*, although it is clear that he is familiar with it. Instead, he builds a critique around it in short pieces: “The beginning of [their] *sharī‘a* is: ‘We believe in one God, the Father, the master of all, the maker of what is seen and unseen.’ Then they cut off their declaration regarding God and continue by saying: ‘We believe in one Lord Jesus (*īshū‘*) Christ, true god<sup>151</sup> from true god, from the substance of his father.’ However, this contradicts their first statement. . . .”<sup>152</sup>

Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, like Ṭabarī, refers to the Creed as *sharī‘at al-īmān*, yet his account thereof is closer to that of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, even though Ḥasan reports that the Creed was established in Constantinople, while ‘Abd al-Jabbār connects it to Nicaea.<sup>153</sup> Both authors are cor-

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the pagans, specifically the pagans of Ḥarrān. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s report leads Stern to conclude that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account has its origins in Ḥarrānian pagan circles. “The part [the Ḥarrānian pagans] play in the account is sufficient to render probable the guess that the account derives from their circle.” Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 164.

Surely Stern’s logic is reasonable, but the persecution of pagans also plays a central role in Iskāfī’s and Ibn Miskawayh’s accounts. Ḥarrānian paganism also has a prominent place in Maqdisī’s description of non-Islamic religions (Maqdisī, 1:326–7). In all of these accounts, the persecution of the pagans is a complement to Constantine’s self-serving and disingenuous conversion. It was pagan regulations that threatened the rule of the leprous king. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, then, is expanding on a pre-existing theme of Muslim polemics.

<sup>149</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 45.

<sup>150</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 123, 128, 136, 137, etc.

<sup>151</sup> Read *الحق* for *الدين*.

<sup>152</sup> ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 136.

<sup>153</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:318. In fact, the version of the Creed that both authors report is closest to that established at Constantinople, which is often referred to as the “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.



rect, since the Creed established at the Council of Nicaea (325) was enlarged at the First Council of Constantinople (381). Meanwhile, Ḥasan's description of the Creed corresponds to that of 'Abd al-Jabbār. Ḥasan introduces the Creed with, *lā yatimmu lahum qurbānun illā bihā* ("their Eucharist is not complete without it"); 'Abd al-Jabbār has, *lā yatimmu li-aḥādīn minhum 'indahum īmānun illā bihā* ("no one's faith among them is correct without it"). Their wordings of the Creed are, for the most part, identical (See Appendix 5).<sup>154</sup>

Nāshi' al-Akbar does not describe the Council of Nicaea, but he does show interest in the figure of Arius, whose doctrine helped provoke the Council, and whom 'Abd al-Jabbār describes as the one "who spoke intelligibly about their teachings" (p. 98, l. 2). In his introduction to Christianity, Nāshi' begins by classifying two different types of Christians: monotheists (*muwāḥḥidūn*) and tritheists (*muthallithūn*).<sup>155</sup> As for the first, he remarks: "Among them are the Arians, the companions of Arius, who maintain monotheism. He rejected tritheism and the [multiplicity] of hypostases. He declared that Christ and the Holy Spirit are created servants."<sup>156</sup> Arius is often seen by early apologists (as the Gospel of Barnabas is by contemporary ones) as evidence for the true, Muslim followers of Jesus, those who held on to the teaching of Jesus against the heresy of the Christians. Ḥasan b. Ayyūb describes Arius as a true monotheist.<sup>157</sup> This trend seems to reach a climax with Ibn Taymiyya (writing three centuries after 'Abd al-Jabbār) who remarks not only that the Arians were monotheists, but also that they held Christ to be only a prophet, and that he was neither crucified nor killed (cf. the wording of Q 4:157).<sup>158</sup> In this way Arian Christians (who in fact held Christ to be a crucified savior) became good Muslims in Islamic tradition.

<sup>154</sup> The second half of the two Creeds (from *wa-qāma fī l-yawmi l-thālith* "and he rose on the third day") are precisely identical. The first half of the two versions differ only in wording, not in meaning. See Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:319 and *Tathbūt*, 94 (translated in the previous chapter). Cf. also 'Abd al-Jabbār's abridged version of the Creed in the *Mughnī* (5:81), which owes something to Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq, *al-Radd 'alā l-tathlūth*, 66–70 (cf. also 72).

<sup>155</sup> Nāshi' al-Akbar, *K. al-Awsaṭ*, 76.

<sup>156</sup> Nāshi' al-Akbar, *K. al-Awsaṭ*, 82.

<sup>157</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:314.

<sup>158</sup> See T. Michel, S.J., *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity* (Delmar, NY: Caravan, 1984), 311.

2.3.4. *Other Narratives: Christian Miracle Accounts*

It is clear by now that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s narratives on Paul, Constantine and the Creed in the *Critique* do not come *ex nihilo*, but have a basis in the arguments of earlier Muslim authors. This is true for much of the other narrative material in the *Critique*, including ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s statements that:

- Jesus prayed towards Jerusalem, not towards the East.<sup>159</sup>
- Unlike Christians, Jesus was circumcised.<sup>160</sup>
- It is impossible that Jesus, who slept and ate, defecated and urinated, could be God.<sup>161</sup>
- It was easier for some nations to accept the Incarnation since they already worship material objects.<sup>162</sup>
- In the Islamic world Christians have grown insolent and cast off the restrictions placed on them by the *sharī‘a*.<sup>163</sup>
- Christians castrate children.<sup>164</sup>

The narratives on Christian practice in the *Critique* (see chapter 3, section 2.4) are largely unprecedented in extant Islamic writings, with one salient exception. ‘Abd al-Jabbār describes a miracle, which, so Christians claim, occurred through the power of the True Cross:

Similarly you may know the falsehood of their claim that the wood upon which Christ was crucified was placed upon a dead man who became alive and moved. [They claim] that all of this took place in Jerusalem, publicly, on a day that was witnessed by Christians, Jews, Romans and nations so numerous that only God could count them. This is so for their similar claims (p. 125, ll. 8–15; cf. 223).

<sup>159</sup> *Tathbīt*, 149. Cf. pseudo-‘Umar in Gaudeul, 137, 153; Mātūrīdī (as quoted above), 53. See also the references given by Stern (“‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 155, n. 4) to the use of this argument by the Muslim protagonist in the Syriac apology of the Nestorian patriarch Timothy I (See A. Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic and Garshuni, Edited and Translated with a Critical Apparatus* 2 [1928], 29; henceforth: Timothy, *Apology*). The same argument is used by the Muslim protagonist in a second debate, which purportedly took place in 3rd/9th century Jerusalem. See the German translation by K. Vollers in, “Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 29 (1908), 66.

<sup>160</sup> *Tathbīt*, 149, 160. Cf. Timothy, *Apology*, 27–8.

<sup>161</sup> *Tathbīt*, 98. Cf. Warrāq, *al-Radd fī l-ittihād*, 99, 141; “The Debate of Wāṣil al-Dimashqī,” 316, 318; Jāhīz, *Radd*, 27–8.

<sup>162</sup> *Tathbīt*, 210. Cf. Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 308; ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 146.

<sup>163</sup> *Tathbīt*, 191–2. Cf. Jāhīz, *Radd*, 18–19.

<sup>164</sup> *Tathbīt*, 168, 173. Cf. Jāhīz, *Radd*, 21.

Ḥasan b. Ayyūb refutes this same report, addressing Christians directly: “You say that the wood upon which Christ was crucified was placed upon a dead [person] who then lived, and that this is a proof that he is god. . . .”<sup>165</sup> Maqdisī also mentions the report of this miracle and connects it with the Feast of the Cross.<sup>166</sup>

### 3. *The Critique in the Context of Earlier Muslim Scholarship*

By now it is evident that the *Critique* is not a work in the *kalām*-minded “al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā” tradition. This is a fact which ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself makes clear in the passage quoted at the opening of this chapter (section 1.1). Yet ‘Abd al-Jabbār does not identify the tradition to which the *Critique* does belong. This matter might now be better understood in light of the preceding discussion of his Islamic sources.

#### 3.1. *Dalā’il Works*

At the same time, this matter cannot be properly considered without appreciating the larger work in which the *Critique* occurs: the *Tathbūt dalā’il al-nubuwwa*. The *Tathbūt*, by its very name, would seem to belong to a genre known as *dalā’il* or “proofs” literature, a genre that dates back to the earliest period from which Islamic works are extant.<sup>167</sup> *Dalā’il* works are designed to prove a certain tenet of the Islamic tradition through citation of mainly anecdotal evidence. Those *dalā’il* works concerned with Muḥammad’s prophethood are most often a catalogue of the miracles surrounding the Prophet, beginning

<sup>165</sup> Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:343.

<sup>166</sup> Maqdisī, 1:338.

<sup>167</sup> Many early *dalā’il* texts are not extant, including works attributed to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Mu’tazilī predecessor Bishr b. al-Mu’tamir (*K. al-Hujja fī iḥbāt al-nabī*; see Ibn al-Nadīm, 185), the traditionist Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/889) and the ascetic Ibrāhīm b. Ishāq al-Harbī (d. 285/898). For references to early *dalā’il* works see, T. Andrae, *Die Person Muhammads*, 59–60; Firyābī, 7ff.; E. Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Ṭāwūs and His Library* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 139ff.; G. Vajda, “Un manuscrit du *Kitāb Dalā’il al-an-Nubuwwa* de Ja’far al-Mustaghfirī,” *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, 2 vols. (Rome: Istituto per l’Oriente, 1956), 2:567–72. On the nature of *dalā’il* works, see Stroumsa, 22; T. Fahd, “Nubuwwa,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 7:95; M.J. Kister, “The Sīrah Literature,” *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1:352–67, esp. 355.

with his birth, when he emerged from Āmina's womb already circumcised, propped himself up, and gazed to the heavens.<sup>168</sup>

The origin of these works is connected to sectarian controversy, specifically the argument often made by Jews and Christians that the veracity of prophethood can only be established by a prophet's signs.<sup>169</sup> The Qur'ān itself raises this issue, as it repeatedly notes how the unbelievers ask, "Why has no sign been sent down to him from his Lord?" (See 6:37, 10:20, 13:7, 13:27). The Qur'ān also suggests (17:59, 93) that Muḥammad's only sign is the Qur'ān itself. And yet early Muslims, eager to prove their claims that a new prophet had appeared in Arabia, soon devised long lists of Muḥammad's miracles.

Many of these miracle stories, according to T. Andrae, originally circulated in non-Islamic traditions, from the Arabic Infancy Gospel, to the Buddhist sutras, to Zoroastrian and Greek myths.<sup>170</sup> These were incorporated into *dalā'il* by storytellers, *quṣṣās* (whose integrity as historians is questionable). Goldziher describes the fantastic narratives of *dalā'il* works as the victory of the principle of *ijmā'* ("consensus"); that is, the popular view of Muḥammad's elevated status overwhelmed more sober theological doctrine.<sup>171</sup> Ironically, at the

<sup>168</sup> See Andrae, *Die Person Muhammads*, 32.

<sup>169</sup> As Stroumsa puts it, "Since Muḥammad had claimed to be a prophet, and since this claim had been rejected by both Jews and Christians, the traits that distinguish a true prophet from an imposter at once became a key issue. And although by the ninth century we find this topic elaborated by Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike, it is a safe assumption that in the first round it was Islam which had to come up with "proofs of prophecy," in response to Christian and Jewish incredulity" (p. 25). In the *Mughnī* (15:148), 'Abd al-Jabbār argues that miraculous signs are the criteria which distinguish a prophet from a false prophet.

<sup>170</sup> Andrae (*Die Person Muhammads*, 26ff.) traces the influence of this material on the biographer Ibn Ishāq, among others. Cf. the comments of Henri Lammens:

L'étudiant musulman ne s'inquiète pas de synthèse historique. Son effort intellectuel ne s'élève pas au-dessus de l'analyse, une analyse purement externe, s'interdisant de discuter la crédibilité intrinsèque. A ses yeux le *ḥadīth* possède avant tout une valeur théologique, invoquée à l'appui de doctrines isolées.

Le même méthode, des principes analogues ont présidé à l'élaboration séculaire de la *ṣīra*. Autour du noyau, fourni par l'interprétation du Qoran, sont venues se superposer des couches inconsistantes, amas bizarre d'apports chrétiens et judaïques, amalgamé avec le théories dynastico-politiques, avec les réveries théocratiques, les opinions des écoles de théologie et de droit, avec les tendances de cercles ascétiques et les aspirations de soufisme.

H. Lammens, *Fāṭima et les filles de Mahomet* (Rome: Sumptibus pontificii instituti biblici, 1912), 139–40.

<sup>171</sup> "The power of *ijmā'* here scored one of its biggest triumphs in the whole system of Islam, insofar as the belief of the people succeeded in penetrating into the canonical conception of the Prophet and, so to speak, forcing it to make him into a

death of Muḥammad, he ceased to be regarded as a mere human: "Though the supposition of immortality had in the nature of things to be dropped soon, the belief in the supernatural gifts of the Prophet while alive could take firm root."<sup>172</sup>

Yet even sober scholars found *dalā'il* useful in their arguments for the validity of Islamic doctrine. Thus Ibn Ishāq's biography of the Prophet is filled with sensational accounts, from the washing of Muḥammad's heart to his super-human feats in battle to the night journey to Jerusalem and thence to heaven. Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845) includes a section in his history entitled "Report of the signs of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) before he received revelation."<sup>173</sup> Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī refers in his history to a project of writing a separate work on Muḥammad's *dalā'il*.<sup>174</sup>

That such works were a response to Jewish and Christian challenges is evident in an early *dalā'il* work entitled *Tathbīt nubuwwat Muḥammad*, attributed to the Zaydī Imām Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Rassī, known as al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq (d. 298/911).<sup>175</sup> al-Hādī, who was not the only Zaydī to take an interest in the question of *dalā'il*,<sup>176</sup> opens his work by making this connection:

Someone may ask you about the proof of Muḥammad's (God's blessing be upon him and his family) prophethood. Say to him, "There are many proofs for that." Yet no one would ask us about this question except the People of the Book, who agree with us about monotheism and

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fortune-teller, worker of miracles, and magician." I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, trans. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern, 2 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), 2:161.

<sup>172</sup> Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2:161.

<sup>173</sup> Ibn Sa'd, 1:96. Elsewhere (2:87–9) he seeks to show where predictions of Muḥammad appear in Jewish and Christian scripture, in a section entitled "Report of the Description of the Messenger of God in the Tawrat and Injil."

<sup>174</sup> He comments: "The reports on the proof of [Muḥammad's] prophecy (God's blessing and peace be upon him) are too many to enumerate. For this reason they deserve a separate work, God willing." Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 1:1146.

<sup>175</sup> Imām al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Rassī, *Tathbīt nubuwwat Muḥammad*, Maktabat al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr bi-Ṣan'a', 'Ilm al-kalām, ms. 39. Microfilm listed in, *al-Makhṭūṭāt al-'arabiyya al-muṣawwara*, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1967), 8, #72. The manuscript is late (1041/1631) and the fact that it is attributed to the founder of the Zaydī dynasty in Yemen, al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq, might raise questions about its authenticity. However, al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq did have a reputation as a scholar, and was known to have Mu'tazilī leanings like his grandfather Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. See Madelung, "Zaydiyya," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 11:479.

<sup>176</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār's Zaydī contemporary, al-Mu'ayyad bi-llāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn also wrote a work on *dalā'il* entitled *Ithbāt nubuwwat al-nabī*. See Sezgin, 1:570. See the discussion thereof by van Ess in "Some Fragments of the *Mu'araḍat al-Qur'ān* attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffā," *Studia Arabica et Islamica*, 151–2.

prophecy. For the heretics (*mulḥidūn*) would not ask about the validity of prophethood, since they do not believe in the Lord of the prophets (Peace be upon them). The ones to ask us are the Jews and the Christians, the People of the Book who maintain monotheism. We say to them: “There are many proofs for the validity of [Muḥammad’s] (Peace be upon him) prophethood, since he accomplished things which are beyond [normal] beings.”<sup>177</sup>

al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq’s work is brief and does not contain a long list of Muḥammad’s miraculous signs. Such a list can be found in the *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa* of his contemporary Abū Bakr Ja’far b. Muḥammad al-Firyābī (d. 301/913). Firyābī’s work has none of the polemical narratives or logical arguments of the *Tathbīt*. It is simply a compilation of *ḥadīth* on Muḥammad’s miracles, prophecies, works of charity and the supernatural signs that surrounded him—all of which serve as proofs of the veracity of his prophethood. Firyābī provides no narration or interpretation, nor does he direct his work towards any particular opponent.

Later *dalā’il* works are similar in theme, even if they show some development in format. Andrae describes the *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa* of Abū Nu’aym Aḥmad al-Iṣbahānī (d. 430/1039)<sup>178</sup> and the book of the same title by Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī (d. 448/1056)<sup>179</sup> as the two works which “alle späteren skribenten als hauptquellen benutzt haben.”<sup>180</sup> Both of these authors came from the generation after ‘Abd al-Jabbār, but their works have more in common with Firyābī’s work than with the *Tathbīt*. Abū Nu’aym records hundreds of traditions on Muḥammad’s deeds and sayings in chronological fashion, so that his work becomes almost a biography of the Prophet’s life. Yet within that rubric Abū Nu’aym breaks down the miracles of Muḥammad into themes: those dealing with food/drink, with animals, with predictions, etc. In addition, he adds a section to the end of his work in which he draws parallels between the virtues of the prophets, and shows how Muḥammad is a rightful completion of their line.<sup>181</sup> This

<sup>177</sup> al-Hādī ilā l-Ḥaqq, folio 44v–45r.

<sup>178</sup> Abū Nu’aym was both a *muḥaddīth* and a Šūfī whose best known work is the *K. Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-ašfiyā’*, a typical example of Šūfī *ṭabaqāt* literature. See Andrae, *Die Person Muhammads*, 59.

<sup>179</sup> Not to be confused with al-Ḥākim Abū l-Sa’d al-Bayhaqī al-Jishumī, the Mu’tazilī biographer. Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī was an Ash’arī.

<sup>180</sup> Andrae, *Die Person Muhammads*, 58.

<sup>181</sup> Compare the remark of ‘Abd al-Jabbār in the *Critique*: “It is necessary to look at the marks, miracles and signs of Muḥammad (God’s blessing and peace be upon him) and to know that he is like the prophets who preceded him” (pp. 190–1).

is the closest that Abū Nu‘aym comes to engaging Christianity as a competing religion:

Every virtue that was given to Jesus was given to our Prophet (God’s blessing and peace be upon him). . . . It might be said: “Jesus is special in that the trustworthy spirit (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*, cf. Qur’ān 26:193) was sent to his mother,<sup>182</sup> and ‘appeared to her in the very likeness of a man’ (Qur’ān 19:17).’ . . . There is nothing mentioned about any other prophet like this.”

The response to this is that the Messenger of God (God’s blessing and peace be upon him) was given all kinds of these signs and examples regarding his birth. Āmina [the mother of Muḥammad] was given news of it. Among the things that she saw while in her state: . . . every beast that belonged to the Quraysh spoke that night and said, “The Messenger of God (God’s blessing and peace be upon him) and the Lord of the Ka’ba is being born. He is the security of this world and the light of its people.”<sup>183</sup>

Note that Abū Nu‘aym, even when comparing Muḥammad and Jesus, remains within the friendly confines of Islamic sources.<sup>184</sup> This is apology, not polemic.

The same is the case with the *Dalā’il* of Bayhaqī, a *muḥaddith* like Firyābī and Abū Nu‘aym, who relates an even larger amount of *ḥadīth* on Muḥammad’s *dalā’il*.<sup>185</sup> He justifies this project by stating, “I have

<sup>182</sup> Abū Nu‘aym is referring here to Qur’ān 19:17–21, which recounts the Annunciation. The Qur’ānic text does not refer to the messenger sent to Mary as *al-rūḥ al-amīn* but simply *rūḥanā* (“Our spirit,” v. 17) and *rasūlu rabbiki* (“a messenger of your Lord,” v. 19). In the one place where the phrase *al-rūḥ al-amīn* is used in the Qur’ān (26:193), it seems to refer to the prophetic mission of Muḥammad. In later exegesis, this was identified as the Angel Gabriel, the one who delivered the divine message to Muḥammad. Similarly, it was decided (under the influence of Christianity?) that the *rūḥ* of 19:17, the Annunciation, was the same Gabriel. On this question see W.M. Watt and R. Bell, *Introduction to the Qur’ān* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 155.

<sup>183</sup> Abū Nu‘aym, *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, ed. Muḥammad Ruwwās Qal’ahjī (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā’is, 1412/1991), 609–10.

<sup>184</sup> “Freilich wird im Islam die trennung von der person des offenbarungsträgers und die wahrung des alleinwirkens Gottes noch stranger beobachtet. Eine selbsttätigkeit des propheten, wie sie z.b. in den wundergeschichten der Bücher der Könige vorkommt, ist nach koranischer auffassung kaum denkbar. Demgemäss werden schon früh die wunder, die Muhammed gewirkt hat, oder die sein hervortreten begleitet haben, als zeichen des prophetentums (*a’lām al-nubuwwa*) gesammelt und sein ganzes leben unter dem gesichtspunkt der beweis des prophetentums (*dalā’il al-nubuwwa*) geschildert.” Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds*, 94.

<sup>185</sup> Andrae comments: “Zufolge dieses sehr liberalen grundsatzes in der traditionskritik hat er viele *ḥadīth* aufgenommen, die von der kritik stark beanstandet worden sind.” *Die Person Muhammeds*, 58.



gathered together some of that which has reached me regarding the miracles of our Prophet Muḥammad (God's blessing and peace be upon him) and the proofs of his prophethood, so that this might be an assistance to [Muslims] in confirming (*ithbāt*) his message."<sup>186</sup>

In the same generation of Abū Nu'aym and Bayhaqī, the generation that follows 'Abd al-Jabbār, is a third author of *dalā'il*, the aforementioned Māwardī. Māwardī's *A'lām al-nubuwwa* has a more coherent narrative.<sup>187</sup> He begins with a general definition of prophecy and prophet and then seeks to show that Muḥammad meets these criteria. This he does by describing the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān that he brought, his infallibility (*iṣma*), his predictions, and the fantastic miracles which surrounded him. Thus Māwardī, who begins with a detached theological analysis of revelation and the divine Word, ends up with the same fantastic stories of animals talking and trees bowing around Muḥammad.

### 3.2. 'Abd al-Jabbār's Understanding of *dalā'il*

The approach that 'Abd al-Jabbār takes to *dalā'il* is different.<sup>188</sup> This can be seen from his description in the *Tathbīt* of authors who wrote

<sup>186</sup> Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Naṣr, 1389/1969), 1:5. The editor of the *Tathbīt*, 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān, describes the purpose of *dalā'il* by quoting Qur'ān 2:260, "And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, show me how Thou wilt give life to the dead,' He said, 'Why, dost thou not believe?' 'Yes,' he said, 'but that my heart may be at rest'" (translation Arberry). 'Uthmān then explains: "من هنا ظهرت الحاجة إلى وجود ما ثبت النبوة." Introduction, ج.

<sup>187</sup> Ed. Muḥammad Baghdādī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1408/1987).

<sup>188</sup> In the *Critique* 'Abd al-Jabbār only infrequently discusses Muḥammad's *dalā'il* explicitly. In opening, he describes Muḥammad's knowledge of Christianity as a sign of his prophethood.

You will find that [Muḥammad] (God's blessing and peace be upon him) has spoken the truth about their teachings. Yet he was not among the debaters or false prophets. Nor had he read scriptures or encountered those who profess them. He was not among the cultivated people. Nor was there any of this [Christianity] in Mecca or the Ḥijāz. This [report of his knowledge] was spread about. People investigated thereafter and found the affair to be as he said and judged. This was after all of their efforts and extensive examining, questioning and investigating. . . . Know, then, that Muḥammad's position on this is from God (Mighty and Exalted) and that this is among his proofs (p. 92).

Thereafter, 'Abd al-Jabbār only occasionally returns to Muḥammad's *dalā'il* (pp. 109, 119 and, in connection with the crucifixion: 122–3, 132). He never brings up prophecy in general terms. This is a topic which he addresses instead in the fifteenth chapter of the *Mughnī* (15:7–146), in which he also refutes the Brahmans, who in Islamic *fiqh* works are given the role of rejecting prophecy (on this see Khwārizmī, 36–7). 'Uthmān describes 'Abd al-Jabbār's chapter on prophecy in the *Mughnī* as



“to prove (*dalālatan*) the prophethood of Muḥammad.”<sup>189</sup> Among these ‘Abd al-Jabbār singles out Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Ibn al-Munajjim (d. 327/939) grandson of the above mentioned ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā,<sup>190</sup> the grammarian Ibn Qutayba, and the Mu‘tazilī Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Zayd al-Wāsiṭī (306/918). The *dalā’il* works of these authors are unfortunately not extant, except for a brief quotation of Ibn Qutayba’s work that I will discuss below.

However, ‘Abd al-Jabbār remarks that those works were written as a response to Qur’ān 21:105, a verse that begins, “For We have written in the Zabūr (Psalms), after the Remembrance, ‘The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants,’ ”<sup>191</sup> and then shifts the attention to the second person: “indeed We sent you as a mercy to the worlds.” This latter statement is traditionally interpreted as God’s proclamation to Muḥammad; it is Muḥammad personally who is the mercy given to humanity. Put in the context of the beginning of the verse, this statement is also taken to affirm that Muḥammad is referred to in earlier scriptures. Thus two conclusions emerge: Muḥammad is the culmination of religious history, and the proofs of his prophethood appear in the earlier true scriptures. As ‘Abd al-Jabbār concludes:

The final Prophet is from the offspring of Ismā‘īl, the son of Hagar and Abraham, the one who rises up from Fārān.<sup>192</sup> His [prophethood] is

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“a discussion of the principle of prophecy and the idea of miracles in a general perspective.” In the *Tahbūt*, ‘Uthmān continues, ‘Abd al-Jabbār discusses “the confirmation of Muḥammad’s prophethood in a specific perspective” (p. j).

<sup>189</sup> *Tahbūt*, 352.

<sup>190</sup> See Ibn al-Nadīm, 219–20; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, 5:424; Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh al-islām*, yrs. 321–30, 202; Ṣafadī, 8:246–7. Aḥmad was a Mu‘tazilī who is said to have lived over ninety years and who shared his grandfather’s interest in *dalā’il*. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (5:424) describes him as “one of the most advanced Mu‘tazilī *mutakallimūn*.”

<sup>191</sup> Within the first part of this verse the text switches from first person plural to first person singular. Cf. Psalms 25:13, 37:11 and 37:29. (Abū Nu‘aym [p. 612] also sees this verse as a declaration of Muḥammad’s prophethood). *Zabūr* is usually considered to be the singular form. In other cases, e.g. Qur’ān 26:196, the form *zabur* appears, which is usually seen as the plural form. In Q 26:196, *zabur* has no connection with David or the Psalms, but is put together with *al-awwalīn* (“the first [peoples?]”) and is usually read as something like “the first scriptures.” Thus it seems to refer to something else entirely. The issue finds no firm resolution among classical or modern exegetes.

<sup>192</sup> Yāqūt describes this as a word, originally Hebrew, that refers to a mountain outside of Mecca where God announced the sending down of the Tawrāt to Moses, of the Injīl to Jesus and of the Qur’ān to Muḥammad. See Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam al-buldān*, 4:255. Cf. the references to Fārān by Ibn Qutayba in Ibn al-Jawzī’s *al-Wafā bi-ahwāl al-Muṣṭafā*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Wāḥid (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1966), 63, 64.

mightier, loftier and more victorious than all other prophethoods. The pure ones who follow him will inherit the Earth, bringing truth to life and falsehood to death, and humbling the mighty ones. Thus it is proclaimed in the Books (*Tathbūt*, 352, ll. 4–7).

‘Abd al-Jabbār, then, is particularly interested in the *dalā’il* of Muḥammad that are to be found *outside* of the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth*, in the “Books,” i.e. the Tawrāt, Zabūr (Psalms) and the Injīl. For this reason, he adds: “Those who have become Muslims proclaim this, such as ‘Abdallāh b. Salām” (p. 352, l. 15).

‘Abdallāh b. Salām (d. 43/663–4), according to Islamic historical sources, was a Jew of Medina who accepted Muḥammad and his message. In the Islamic tradition his legend grew. He became “the typical representative of the Jewish scribes which honored the truth, admitting that Muḥammad was the Prophet predicted in the Tawrāt, and protecting him for the intrigues of their co-religionists.”<sup>193</sup> Ironically, the figure of ‘Abdallāh b. Salām seems to play the same role for Islam as that of Paul does for Christianity (a figure not on the top of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s list). He is the Jew who sees the light, so to speak, and recognizes in Muḥammad (as Paul recognized in Christ) the fulfillment of the Tawrāt.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s interest in confirming Muḥammad’s prophethood from sources *other* than the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* also matches an excerpt from one of the works he mentions above: Ibn Qutayba’s *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*.<sup>194</sup> Ibn Qutayba here comments on the proofs for Islam and its Prophet in the Bible, a book that he claims to have read.<sup>195</sup> He argues that the Bible contains signs of Islam and Muḥammad, despite the efforts of the People of the Book to ignore or remove them: “This is what is in the earlier books of God, which remain in the hands of the People of the Book. They recite it, but reject its obvious meaning.”<sup>196</sup> Muḥammad must be spoken about in those books, Ibn Qutayba concludes, since the Prophet himself declared so:

<sup>193</sup> J. Horowitz, “‘Abdallāh b. Salām,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 1:52. Islamic tradition maintains that ‘Abdallāh b. Salām questioned Muḥammad on issues which only the Prophet predicted in the Jewish scriptures could answer. A number of later works purport to be accounts of these discourses. De Prémare (pp. 328–9) emphasizes the ahistorical nature of the traditions surrounding ‘Abdallāh b. Salām.

<sup>194</sup> Quoted in Ibn al-Jawzī’s *al-Wafā bi-ahwāl al-Muṣṭafā*, pp. 62–72. Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, 86.

<sup>195</sup> This is in his *K. al-Ma‘ārif*. See I. Goldziher, “Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen ahl al-kitāb,” 357.

<sup>196</sup> Ibn Qutayba in Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Wafā*, 72.

How would it be possible for the Messenger of God (God's blessing and peace be upon him) to present to them as a proof that which they do not have, when he said "among the proofs of my prophethood is that you will find it written in your [books]"? It would have been pointless to appeal to them with something that would repel them.<sup>197</sup>

Ibn Qutayba's approach has much in common with another scholar of the 3rd/9th century, 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, as seen in his *K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla* (the full title of which is *K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla fī ithbāt nubuwwat al-nabī Muḥammad*). Like Ibn Qutayba, Ṭabarī maintains that if Christians read the obvious meaning of their Bible, they would find Islam.<sup>198</sup>

Thus 'Abd al-Jabbār understands the goal of *dalā'il* as the best known authors in this genre do: to validate Muḥammad's prophethood. It is on the means to that end that he differs; instead of only cataloguing miraculous stories about the Prophet, 'Abd al-Jabbār seeks out proofs of Muḥammad's prophethood in non-Islamic sources. It is due to this belief that 'Abd al-Jabbār includes an in-depth refutation of Christianity, the *Critique*, in the midst of his *Tathbūt dalā'il al-nubuwwa*.

### 3.3. *Dalā'il and Rayy*

Meanwhile, there is another important work of *dalā'il* written before 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Tathbūt* that is a *tertium quid*: the *A'lām al-nubuwwa* of the Ismā'īlī Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, a work to which I refer in the previous chapter for its material on the Bible. The *A'lām al-nubuwwa* is Abū Ḥātim's record of his debate with the philosopher Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī,<sup>199</sup> a debate that took place before the Qāḍī al-Quḍāt of Rayy (the same position that 'Abd al-Jabbār would hold later that century).<sup>200</sup> In the course of this debate Abū

<sup>197</sup> Ibn Qutayba in Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Wafā*, 73. On Ibn Qutayba's quotations of the Bible, see G. Lecomte, "Les citations de l'ancien et du nouveau testament dans l'oeuvre d'Ibn Qutayba," *Arabica* 5 (1958), 34–46.

<sup>198</sup> "By my life, if they distinguished the report and understood it they would accept it and not reject it. They would not seek God in a way contrary to His command. So we are obliged to seek to confirm the report to them and to do away with their doubt." 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 36.

<sup>199</sup> Abū Bakr is also the author of a book, no longer extant, entitled *Makhāriq al-anbiyā'* (*The Tricks of the Prophets*), which seems to be a not so subtle response to the genre of *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*. It is possibly this work to which Abū Ḥātim refers in the course of the *A'lām al-nubuwwa* (pp. 2, 31). See also Stroumsa, 95, n. 52.

<sup>200</sup> On the debate, see L.E. Goodman, "Rāzī vs. Rāzī—Philosophy in the *Majlis*," *The Majlis*, 84–107. A reference to the debate is made by 'Abd al-Jabbār's con-

Bakr repeatedly cites the Bible (with remarkable accuracy), arguing that the multiplicity of the gospels proves the invalidity of Christian scripture.<sup>201</sup> Abū Ḥātim comes to the defense of the gospels, as he does in the *K. al-Islāh*,<sup>202</sup> arguing that they are no less valid than the Qurʾān.<sup>203</sup>

Although this debate took place over fifty years before ʿAbd al-Jabbār would write the *Critique* in Rayy, the continued presence of the Ismāʿīliyya in that city suggests that Abū Ḥātim's ideas were present there as well. Moreover, there are reasonable grounds upon which to assume that ʿAbd al-Jabbār was aware of this very debate, being as he was devoted to the refutation of both of the traditions represented there: Ismāʿīlism and philosophy. In fact, ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentions Abū Bakr al-Rāzī twice in the *Tathbūt*, once naming him among the heretics (p. 374, with Warrāq and Ibn al-Rāwandī, among others), and once describing his conversion from Christianity, which he denounces as a fraud (p. 623). This remark, incidentally, may be an important piece of evidence regarding Abū Bakr's religious background.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār relates: "You know about Ibn Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī and how he was exposed. This one was a Christian, the son of a Christian. When

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temporary, the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī* Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. ca. 411/1020–1): *al-Aqwāl al-dhahabiyya*, ed. Salah al-Sawī (Tehran: Royal Iranian Philosophical Society, 1397/1977), 2–3.

P. Kraus remarks that Abū Ḥātim's work, "comme tous les ouvrages de ce genre littéraire . . . a un caractère nettement apologetique." P. Kraus, "Extraits du *kitāb aʿlām al-nubuwwa* d'Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī," *Orientalia* V (1936), 36. Yet the tone of this work is quite different. The protagonist, Abū Ḥātim, is not trying to undermine the Bible or Christian doctrine. On the contrary, he aims to prove the fundamental unity and validity of all prophetic religions (or at least of those known to him: Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Manicheanism), against the claims of Abū Bakr that prophecy *per se* is incoherent. As Stroumsa (p. 96) puts it, "In Rāzī's view, the untenable theology of the revealed religions was combined to a narrow-minded attitude inherent to them. One could say that according to Rāzī, the senseless image of God upheld by the adherents of revealed religions reflected their general obscurantist bigotry." Thus Abū Ḥātim, *mirabile dictu*, plays the role of a Christian apologist, countering the attacks of Abū Bakr on the Bible.

<sup>201</sup> See Rāzī, *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa*, pp. 117ff.

<sup>202</sup> "The difference in the gospels does not affect the essential meaning. They differ only in expression." Rāzī, *K. al-Islāh*, 251.

<sup>203</sup> This attitude reflects not only Abū Ḥātim's particular interest in Christian scripture, but also the generally irenic approach to the Bible among the Ismāʿīliyya. A similar approach can be found in the works of Kirmānī. See P. Kraus, "Hebräische und syrische Zitate in ismāʿīlitischen Schriften," *Der Islam* 19 (1931), 243–63. Kirmānī, who unlike Abū Ḥātim was a Faṭimid, includes in his work biblical excerpts in Greek and Syriac, transliterated into Arabic letters.

he was a Christian he also followed the heretics. Then he made a show of being a Muslim and took the name Muḥammad (his name was *yūḥannā* ["John"]). This he did as a scheme against Islam." *Tathbūt*, 623, ll. 4–7. 'Abd al-Jabbār relates this as though it were common knowledge in Rayy. Yet most scholars, following the biography of Bīrūnī, (d. 442/1050) assume that Abū Bakr was born a Muslim. (See, for example, Stroumsa, pp. 88–9). However, Bīrūnī also refers to Abū Bakr's extraordinary knowledge of Greek, which suggests a Christian background. This suggestion is strengthened by Abū Bakr's remarkable quotations of the Bible in *A'lām al-nubuwwa*. Moreover, 'Abd al-Jabbār's comment should not be taken lightly. 'Abd al-Jabbār, who gives the Christian form of the name John, was in Rayy when he wrote this and must have known about the life of Rāzī from credible sources. Also, why do the sources name 'Alī al-Ṭabarī among Abū Bakr's teachers? Sezgin (3:275) rightly points out that what is known of their life dates renders this improbable. It seems that the biographers grouped these two thinkers together not only because they were both medical doctors, but also because they were both converts from Christianity.

As for Abū Ḥātim, 'Abd al-Jabbār does not mention him by name. Yet the correspondence (described in the previous chapter) between 'Abd al-Jabbār's insistence in the *Critique* that Jesus did not abrogate the Mosaic Law and Abū Ḥātim's attribution in the *K. al-Iṣlāḥ* of the same view to his Ismā'īlī and Rāzī predecessor Nasafī, suggests that he was exposed to the same currents of thought. Furthermore, in the *K. al-Iṣlāḥ* Abū Ḥātim also includes an account of the composition of the Christian gospels, which, although it is not polemical, has common features with that of 'Abd al-Jabbār.<sup>204</sup> Thus the connections between the Rāzī/Rāzī debate and the *Tathbūt* suggest that 'Abd al-Jabbār's particular conception of *dalā'il*, where non-Islamic sources are at issue, was influenced by the sectarian debates of his city.

<sup>204</sup> See Rāzī, *K. al-Iṣlāḥ*, 250ff. Cf. *Tathbūt*, 154ff.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NON-MUSLIM SOURCES OF THE *CRITIQUE*

In the previous chapter I describe two different channels through which ‘Abd al-Jabbār received information from Muslim sources. He received information directly from contacts he had in Rayy. He also received information from his library, from the works of earlier Mu‘tazilīs and others who wrote on Christianity. The same distinction can be made for ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s non-Muslim sources. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, through first hand observations, gathered information that is, as he puts it, “hardly found in [another] book, especially anecdotes of their devotions and statements of their leaders” (p. 198). On the other hand, ‘Abd al-Jabbār also integrates non-Muslim texts into the *Critique*; he is especially attuned to the works of Arab Christian apologists, who by his day had developed a sophisticated collection of arguments designed to counter Islamic polemics. In the present chapter, then, I will consider both channels of non-Muslim influence on ‘Abd al-Jabbār.

#### 1. *Oral Sources*

‘Abd al-Jabbār makes it clear that he has spoken with Christians about their religion:

So this, may God have mercy on you, is as you see and hear. If we had not seen a people, mentally sane, who say this, and heard it from them (upon our research about what God said and related about them) when they articulated this after an effort, and produced this from the obscurities of their secrets, people would not believe that there is someone on earth who would say or articulate this (p. 105, ll. 9–12).<sup>1</sup>

That ‘Abd al-Jabbār personally had disputations with Christians is thus established, yet the *Critique* is not forthcoming with the details of those disputations. It is possible that ‘Abd al-Jabbār conducted conversations with Christians in the course of his teaching and transmitting

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Tathbīt*, 111.

*ḥadīth* in Rayy.<sup>2</sup> It is almost certain, meanwhile, that he had to deal with Christian clients in his position as Qādī. From this position he could observe different religious groups first-hand. It was in front of an earlier Qādī in Rayy that the debate between Abū Bakr and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī took place. Yet perhaps the most likely setting in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār would have heard accounts of Christianity is the Vizier’s *majlis* in Rayy.

‘Abd al-Jabbār himself refers to his frequent presence at Ibn ‘Abbād’s *majlis*,<sup>3</sup> a fact that Ṣafadī also mentions in his biography of the Qādī.<sup>4</sup> It is possible that ‘Abd al-Jabbār attended inter-religious disputations at the *majlis* of the Vizier, a common practice in the Islamic world,<sup>5</sup> although he gives no specific references to such an occurrence. He does relate, however, an account on Christianity that he heard in the *majlis* of Ibn ‘Abbād’s predecessor, Abū l-Faṭḥ Ibn al-‘Amīd (d. 366/976), from an unnamed Muslim *ghāzī* (one who fights the frontier war against non-Muslims) who had become a Christian (and presumably returned to Islam). The *ghāzī* describes his experience in Constantinople, where he had been taken as a prisoner of war. There he became a Christian out of necessity (*taqīy-yatan*) and managed to win the favor of the Byzantine Emperor. He recounts to the *majlis* what took place next:

The king gave to me and gave generously. He said to his servants and helpers, “See to it that these Christian converts have well-to-do women, that they might marry and improve their affairs.” So one of them said, “So-and-so’s father has died. She has an estate and cattle and many possessions. Let us marry her to this [man],” and he pointed to me. So they married her to me. Now, she had much beauty and many possessions, so I resided with her happily. Then the king ordered a group, including me, to go out to a place ready to be harvested, since they feared that the enemy would prevent them from doing so. Our stay there would be forty days. Then troops would come and set up in our position after us that we might return to our families.

<sup>2</sup> Stern argues that one of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s students, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, also studied with a Christian teacher, the philosopher ‘Alī b. al-Samḥ (a student of Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī). See Stern, “Ibn al-Samḥ,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1956), 31–44. He is followed by Madelung, “Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī,” 25. More recently, however, D. Gimaret questions whether Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī was really a student of Ibn al-Samḥ. See D. Gimaret, “Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1:324.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 20:154.

<sup>4</sup> Ṣafadī, 18:32–3. Cf. ‘Uthmān, *Qādī al-quḍāt*, 37.

<sup>5</sup> See E. Wagner, “*Munāzara*,” *ET*, 7:565 and S. Griffith, “The Monk in the Emir’s *Majlis*; Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Period,” *The Majlis*, 13–65.

We left and resided there for this period. The troops came, and I questioned one of those who had arrived about my family and house. He said to me, "Your wife has married after you left." I tried hard to confirm this with those who were arriving. I was [again] informed of the fact and became deeply disturbed. So when I returned to the city, I avoided my house and went rather to the market of pack animals. My family asked around about who had arrived from our troops, and were told of my safety and arrival. When they found out where I was, the mother of my wife came to me with a great procession of her female neighbors who were wearing ornate robes and jewelry.

So my mother-in-law said to me, "Why is it that you avoided your house and family and settled here? We got to know the reports about you and we miss you." So I said, "What am I to do with my wife? When I was absent she married [another] after me. I should go into the king and break my sword and cut my belt in his presence, informing him of what took place with me."

Then she said, "Whoever said this erred, for your wife did not marry. How could a Byzantine woman marry two husbands? That one is only her friend. When you were absent he came and settled with her. When we knew of your arrival, he took up his mat and went away." And she called up those women and neighbors as witnesses. They testified that he was not a husband but simply her friend. For according to them this is no injury or shame.

Then my mother-in-law began to say to me, "Come up to your house and see the valuables, the wine and what you left behind. You will find it not lacking but rather preserved and abundant." So she gave me the good news that the friend of my wife preserved for me all of her provisions in my absence. She either sought to cheer me with this or to show her generosity to me with this. Those women, who were the wives of important men, said to me, "Get up, may God give you strength, to your house. For there is nothing there to be hated or denied." So I got up, carried my burdens, came to my house and resided with my wife. I did not find anything [wrong] and my jealousy subsided."

Then he said, "*O Abā l-Faṭḥ*, anyone who comes into the Byzantine land is in good spirits when his wife takes friends. He changes. Jealousy is erased from his heart. He ceases to care about protecting [what is his] and he leaves his former ways, even if he had been a Muslim" (p. 171, l. 13–p. 172, l. 19).

ʿAbd al-Jabbār uses this account to describe the licentious ways of Christian women and to poke fun at the cuckolded Byzantine men,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Prof. G. Böwering for his assistance with this translation. On this account see N. el-Cheikh, "Describing the Other to Get at the Self: Byzantine Women in Arabic Sources," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40 (1997) 2, 242–3.



in order to demonstrate that Christianity is an inadequate religion. The conclusion, where the soldier directly addresses Abū l-Faṭḥ,<sup>7</sup> makes it clear that ‘Abd al-Jabbār heard it in the Vizier’s *majlis*.

It is possible that ‘Abd al-Jabbār heard other accounts of the *Critique* in the same fashion. ‘Abd al-Jabbār relates, for example, several other entertaining and polemical anecdotes about the immorality of Byzantine women (a common theme in Islamic writings),<sup>8</sup> which might have come from the same source as the above passage.<sup>9</sup> Other accounts

<sup>7</sup> It may be objected that a *ghāzī* would not address a Vizier by name, but rather by title. *Abū l-Faṭḥ*, however, is an honorary *laqab*, not a *kunya*.

<sup>8</sup> On this see el-Cheikh, 241ff.

<sup>9</sup> Among them:

[The Byzantines] allow fornication and do not forbid it. They continued with this even after they began to worship Christ. [Fornication] is prevalent among them, and widespread in their cities and markets. If a woman does not have a husband and chooses not to be married, having a predilection for fornication, then she takes control of herself. She has the right to do that. The king sets the price for it, with the arbiters and the governors. So a man [will pay her] one *ḥils* for every ejaculation (four *ḥils* is worth one silver *dāniq*).

There are many markets in their lands for prostitutes, for whom they have stores. When their taverns open they adorn themselves and sit by the door, conspicuous and uncovered. They have no idea of covering the private and obscene parts of either men or women, or of forbidding it. Rather, when the free woman among them is brought in procession to her husband, she rides [a mount], passing among people in the markets with uncovered face and hair, having put [her hair in] braids and plaits and put on all of her make-up so that everyone will look at her.

It is said that the majority of people and marriages are faithful. Yet for those who are not married their state is as we have described. They might fornicate in the house of their fathers. Now if one brings forth a baby with these fornicators, [she] carries it to the church. If she desires, she hands him over to the patriarch, the bishop and the priest. She says, “I have given this one to Christ that he may be His servant and caretaker in the church.” They reassure her with good [tidings], saying to her, “[You are] holy, pure and blessed. Be delighted with Christ’s satisfaction and his reward.” The people call on her and congratulate her for her reward. They have wet nurses and caretakers for the children of fornication such as this group (pp. 167–8).

Likewise:

Part of [the Christians’] conduct is that the women who worship in convents, and who are confined to churches to worship, come to the single men and monks. They go out to the fortresses where there are single men. [The monks] declare to them that they are lawful, for the purpose of the face of God, the other realm and having mercy upon single men. Whoever of these women does so is thanked and praised for this act. It is said to her, “Christ will not forget your [act of] kindness and compassion.” According to them a man is not permitted more than one woman, nor is he permitted to take a concubine or have intercourse with [the slave women] whom he owns (*mulūk al-yamīn*, cf. *mā malakat aymanukum*, a Qur’ānic expression [e.g. 4:3] referring to slaves). Yet if he becomes friends with a woman or a servant, there is no injury or shame. This is commonplace in the Byzantine lands, as is fornication (pp. 170–1).

differ in subject matter but share the same colorful, polemical tone. They seem to be the type of polemical tales that were popular in the court of Ibn ‘Abbād, who is said to have employed five hundred poets.<sup>10</sup>

Among these accounts is the account of the sacrament of confession (see chapter 3, section 2.4), which bears some similarity to the stories of Byzantine debauchery mentioned earlier. Also in this category is the story of the young monk (see chapter 3, section 2.4) accused of laziness and greed by the Metropolitan, who likewise turns out to be an “*‘āriq ma’nāthā*.” These accounts all share the same *theologumenon*, that Christians put worldly matters above religion (and therefore were willing to change the religion of Christ). Being as they are variations on a theme, they could all be accounts that ‘Abd al-Jabbār heard orally, either from Christians, from Muslims who had contact with Christians, or from Muslim converts from Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

This trope appears elsewhere in the *Critique* (p. 173), where ‘Abd al-Jabbār addresses the Christian claim that their religion must be true since it is at once so exacting and so widely accepted. ‘Abd al-Jabbār responds to this claim by discussing the rigors of other religions, including that of Manicheans and the Indians. He then argues that Christianity is actually the least exacting religion:

We do not know of a broader, cheaper or easier religion than Christianity. For it has neither penalties that impose fear, like the [Islamic] written punishments (*al-ḥudūd al-maktūba*), nor fire or punishment in the next world. The most severe punishment in the next world is for the stubborn [person] who knew the truth and then left it. He will experience a period of distress, and then it will vanish and be terminated. As for the one who is not stubborn, even if he did wrong, and even if his belief was contrary to the Christian religion, he will have no fear or punishment if his intention was decent and he held that his belief was true, even if it was invalid. As for Christians, they need have no fear, for they will not be taken [away] for any sin. They say that the Lord, who is the father, sent his son to be crucified and killed, to carry our wrongs and forgive our sins (p. 187, l. 13–p. 188, l. 2).

<sup>10</sup> See Cahen, “Ibn ‘Abbād,” 672. It is also said that Ibn ‘Abbād needed four hundred camels to carry his books.

<sup>11</sup> That Muslim authors owe much of their information on Jesus, Christianity and Christians to converts can be seen, for example in the *Tafsīr* of Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, which is remarkably rich in such traditions. Ṭabarī repeatedly reports that his informant was “a man who was a Christian and became a Muslim.” See for example his *Tafsīr* on 4:157. Māturīdī also relates a report from Muḥammad b. Shabīb al-Baṣrī (a pupil of Nazzām) about Christian doctrine on the basis of Christian converts. See Thomas, “Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī on the Divinity of Jesus Christ,” 50 (see Thomas’ comments on Ibn Shabīb, p. 46). Jāḥiẓ addresses his anti-Christian polemic to the “new and the weak,” perhaps a reference to converts. Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 10.

‘Abd al-Jabbār argues that the moral laxity of Christianity is reflected in the doctrine of the afterlife, specifically the doctrine that the most severe punishment is nothing but a “period of distress.” Is this a reference to purgatory? The answer to this question is elusive, since it is difficult to determine the degree to which ‘Abd al-Jabbār transformed information from Christian sources in order that it best serve his *theologumenon*. Some transformation must have occurred here, since ‘Abd al-Jabbār suggests that Christians have no idea of hellfire at all, an inaccurate description made for the purpose of his argument.

This question is further confused by the fact that the doctrine of purgatory was not commonly held in the Christian community that surrounded ‘Abd al-Jabbār. The Eastern Church, for the most part, professed a doctrine of “deferred retribution,” whereby the soul is not punished or rewarded before the general resurrection, being, as it is, without the body.<sup>12</sup> Instead, the soul waits in a sleep-like state until the resurrection, when it will be awakened, judged and sent to either heaven or hell. This wait, however long, will feel as only a moment to the individual soul.<sup>13</sup> A similar doctrine is taught in Islam.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See P. Miquel, “Purgatoire,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 17 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–1944), 12:2655.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Aquinas wrote against the “Greeks and Armenians” on this very doctrine in his *De Rationibus Fidei ad Cantorem Antiochenum*. Note the remarks of M. Grabmann (p. 209), “Der hl. Thomas wendet sich hier gegen die Behauptung, daß die Seelen nach dem Tode bis zum jüngsten Gericht nicht bestraft und auch nicht belohnt werden. . . . In der byzantinischen Theologie hatte schon Photius diesen Zwischenzustand der vom Leibe getrennten Seele gelehrt, ihm folgten Michael Glykas und im 13. Jahrhundert Georgios Bardanes der mit einem Frater Bartholomaeus hierüber disputierte. Da seit Ende 1231 oder Anfang 1232 zwischen den Griechen und Lateinern im Orient über diesen Gegenstand heftig gestritten wurde (vgl. M. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium ab Ecclesia catholica dissidentium*, IV, Paris 1931, 84–124), ist es verständlich, da der Cantor Antiochenus den wissenschaftlichen Rat des hl. Thomas in dieser Frage einholte.”

<sup>14</sup> In Islam there is also a (non-Qur’ānic) tradition of the “torture of the grave” (*‘adhāb al-qabr*), sometimes referred to simply as the “questioning” (*su’āl*), whereby two angels, Munkar and Nakīr, visit the dead on the night after their burial and question them on their faith. D.B. Macdonald comments: “If he is an unbeliever, his grave becomes a preliminary hell, and if he is a believer, it becomes a preliminary purgatory from which he may pass at the Last Day into paradise; it may even, if he is a saint, be a preliminary paradise.” See “Malā’ika,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 6:217.

At the same time, the Persian term *barzakh*, which appears in the Qur’ān with the meaning of “boundary” or “divider,” is used in later writings to describe the locus of the soul between death and reunion with the body on the Day of Resurrection. The similarity between East Syrian Christian and Islamic teaching on this point leads T. Andrae to suggest that Muḥammad was influenced by East Syrian Christianity. See Tor Andrae, *Mohammed: The Man and His Faith*, 89.

The account in the *Critique*, however, suggests instead that the soul is judged individually, being submitted to a period of purgative suffering before entering heaven. The account may reflect a minority position in the Eastern Church on the afterlife, a position that is seen in the writings of James of Sarug (d. 521).<sup>15</sup> Yet the view in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account that the one who left the truth (perhaps an apostate) “will experience a period of distress,” and then will be removed, is closer still to the idea of purgatory as understood by the Latin Church: a period of purgative suffering that prepares the soul to enter into heaven. The primary difference between the view cited in the *Critique* and that of the Latin Church is that, according to the Latin Church, purgatory is the destination of souls who die in a state of grace but who have venial sins that must first be purged, i.e. those whose belief is valid but who did not seek forgiveness for their actions before death. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s source refers to souls who have, apparently, gone awry in their belief, not their actions.

At the same time, the logic of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account comes from the Qur’ān, which puts a doctrine of temporary punishment into the mouths of the People of the Book. In Qur’ān 3:24 (cf. 2:80) they

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<sup>15</sup> Several references in James’ poetry, as seen in the following passage, allude to purgatory:

Do not look to the kingdom, O saint, because I am not worthy,  
And I pray that I be not punished in the fire.  
He has a place between the kingdom and gehenna;  
May the good God grant it to me through your prayers.

Quoted from M.D. Guinan, “Where are the Dead? Purgatory and Immediate Retribution in James of Sarug,” *Symposium Syriacum* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1974), 547. Elsewhere in his poetry, James compares the state of the soul after death to a dangerous journey across a sea of fire, arguing that the soul can be helped on that journey by the prayers and sacraments of the living. See Guinan, 542–3. Notice the parallel to the Islamic (though non-Qur’ānic) concept of *al-sirāt*, the bridge over the fires of hell, “narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword” which the believers will traverse into paradise, a concept with roots in Zoroastrian teachings. See G. Monnot, “Širāt,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 9:670–1. Meanwhile, in his homily “On the Rich Man and Lazarus,” James prays that “if the waves of fire or the worms of Sheol or the gnashing of teeth approach him, he may be protected by Christ and by the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist” (See Guinan, 546). Yet Guinan (546–7) questions whether these prayers involve an understanding of purgatory or are simple poetic expressions of humility. He is responding to the views of M. Jugie and W. de Vries, who both conclude that James did indeed teach a doctrine of purgatory. See M. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium*, vol. 5: *De theologia dogmatica nestorianorum et monophysitiorum* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1935), 780; W. de Vries, “Die Eschatologie des Severus von Antiochien,” *Orientalia christiana periodica* 23 (1957), 380.

justify their refusal to accept Islam by claiming: “The fire will touch us for only a limited number of days.”<sup>16</sup> This case, then, is another good example of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *modus operandi* in the *Critique*. He draws anecdotes from Christian writings, history or practice to support the Qur’ānic view of Christians.

## 2. Christian Arabic Texts

### 2.1. The Bible

Yet did ‘Abd al-Jabbār draw anecdotes directly from the Bible? Recent research strongly suggests that an Arabic Bible would have been available to him. While only small portions, if any, of the Bible had been translated into Arabic before the rise of Islam,<sup>17</sup> Arabic gospel

<sup>16</sup> Note that T. Andrae connects this verse with the doctrine of some Jewish scholars that the sinning Jew will suffer only a temporary punishment. See his *Les origines de l’Islam et le Christianisme*, trans. J. Roche (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1955), 104.

<sup>17</sup> One of the first scholars to work extensively on this question was the Jesuit L. Cheikho, author of *al-Naṣrānīyya wa-ādābuhā bayna ‘arab al-jāhiliyya*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1913, 1919, 1929; see esp. vol. 3). A. Baumstark, in a series of articles, argues that a number of manuscripts with Bible fragments are pre-Islamic. See, “Die sonntägliche Evangelienlesung in vorbyzantinischen Jerusalem,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 (1929–30), 350–9; “Das Problem eines vorislamischen christlich-kirchlichen Schrifttums in arabischen Sprache,” *Islamica* 4 (1931), 562–75; “Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung aus dem Christlich-Palästinensischen,” *Zeitschrift für Semitistik* 8 (1932), 201–9; “Der Älteste erhaltene griechisch-arabische text von Psalm 110,” *OC* 9 (1934), 55–66. His claims are disputed by Graf, who concludes: “Jedoch besteht zu dieser Erklärung wenigstens kein zwingender Grund. Vielmehr sprechen für die zweite Möglichkeit, nämlich Uebernahme der Perikopennotizen aus einem griechischen Exemplar und damit Entstehung der Uebersetzung auch noch nach 630 (aber vor 843) folgende Erwägungen.” G. Graf, *GCAL* (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1947), 1:144. Mingana also maintains that there was no Arabic Bible before Islam on the basis of a Syriac text of the discussion between a Muslim amīr, whom he identifies as ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ (d. 42/663), and the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, John I. See Mingana, “The Transmission of the Koran,” 404. On this text see F. Nau, “Un colloque du Patriarche Jean avec l’Emir des Agaréens,” *Journal Asiatique* onzième série 5 (1915), 225–71; Hoyland, 459–65.

More recently, S. Griffith convincingly argues that, “prior to the ninth century, no texts of the Gospel in Arabic were available to either Muslims or Christians. They became available for the first time, for both liturgical and apologetical purposes, in the ninth century, in Palestine, under Melkite auspices. Any earlier versions which may have been made in Arabia prior to Islam have left only faint traces behind them, and were unknown to Christians in the conquered territories.” Griffith, “The Gospel in Arabic,” 128.

manuscripts date to the end of the 2nd/8th century,<sup>18</sup> and the complete Bible was likely translated by the middle of the 3rd/9th century. These translations, according to S. Griffith, were made not only for liturgical purposes, but also for apologetical purposes.<sup>19</sup> They were part of the Christian response to the increase of Arabic Islamic polemics against Christianity beginning in the first ‘Abbāsīd century.<sup>20</sup> In other words, they were part of the conversation in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār was participating.

There are also specific reasons to think that Arabic translations of the Bible would have reached Rayy, even though it was a Persian and Syriac speaking region. Mas‘ūdī reports in his aforementioned *K. al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, while discussing the composition of the Septuagint, that, “this text has been translated a number of times into Arabic by earlier and recent scholars, among them Ḥunayn b. Ishāq.”<sup>21</sup> This is the same Ḥunayn whom ‘Abd al-Jabbār mentions on five different occasions in the *Tathbūt* (pp. 76, 192, 618, 623, 634). Ḥunayn was an East Syrian/Nestorian, a member of the church that had such an important presence in Rayy. And he is only one of a number of Nestorian translators of the Bible into Arabic, including ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s younger contemporary Abū l-Faraj ‘Abdallāh b. al-Ṭayyib (d. 435/1043).<sup>22</sup> That an Arabic Bible was available in Rayy

<sup>18</sup> The oldest dated manuscripts of the Arabic New Testament are Sinai Ar. ms. 151 (containing Acts and the Pauline and catholic epistles) and Sinai Ar. ms. 72 (containing the gospels). The former is dated 253 AH (AD 867) and the latter 284 (897). On these see Griffith, “The Gospel in Arabic,” 131–2. There are a number of other translations which, though undated, are thought to come from approximately the same era. These include translations from Greek (e.g. Vatican Ar. 13; Borg. Ar. 11, 31, 95.) and translations from the Syriac Peshitta (Leipzig ar. 1075, Tischendorf ms.). On translations from the Greek see Graf, *GCAL*, 1:142–50. On translations from Syriac, see Graf, 1:150–5. Cf. also C. de Vaux and G. Anawati, “Indjil,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 3:1205 and J. Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic*, *CSCO* 267 (1966), 29–34.

<sup>19</sup> “The ninth Christian century is the earliest time from which we have unambiguous, documentary evidence of Arabic versions of the four gospels. The evidence is in the form of the actual manuscripts which contain these versions, which, as we shall see, have been transmitted in close association with anti-Muslim, Arabic apologies for Christianity.” Griffith, “The Gospel in Arabic,” 131.

<sup>20</sup> The availability of the Bible in Arabic in ‘Abbāsīd times is shown by a report of Ibn al-Nadīm. He relates that he asked a priest named Yūnus for a list of Christian books translated into Arabic and received (among other things) a detailed list of the books of the Old and New Testaments. Ibn al-Nadīm, 25–6.

<sup>21</sup> Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh*, 112. Cf. Graf, *GCAL*, 1:89.

<sup>22</sup> His translation of the Syriac Bible, incorporated into his commentary, is extant, as is his version of the *Diatesseron*. See Graf, *GCAL*, 1:150–4, 2:160ff.; J. Vernet, “Ibn al-Ṭayyib,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 3:955; A.F.L. Beeston, “The Arabic Version of Tatian’s *Diatesseron*,”

is evident from the nature of Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's debate there, which took place only decades before 'Abd al-Jabbār arrived. The text of their debate is replete with biblical quotations (see chapter 4, section 3.3). There is reason to believe that both Abū Bakr and Abū Ḥātim had copies of an Arabic Bible, since the former likely came from a Christian background and the latter defends the Bible as authentic scripture. In all, it is hard to imagine that 'Abd al-Jabbār would not have had access to such an Arabic Bible. It is also possible that a Persian Bible would have been available in 4th/10th century Rayy.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the possibility that 'Abd al-Jabbār read the Bible cannot be eliminated. Yet he never claims to have done so. Meanwhile, when he describes the Bible, he uses Syriac, and not Arabic (or Persian) vocabulary to do so. 'Abd al-Jabbār refers (p. 150) to the Acts of the Apostles as *Kitāb Afrāksis* (cf. Syriac *prakhshes d-shlīhē*),<sup>24</sup> and mentions that a quotation of Paul comes from "a book named *al-Salīh*." This is a translation of the Syriac *shlīhā*, "apostle," the term given by Syriac writers to Paul (coming from Paul's use of the term for himself in the Peshitta) and the book of his epistles used for liturgical readings.<sup>25</sup> However, many of these Syriac terms were brought into Arabic by Christian authors such as Ibn al-Ṭayyib, who uses the plural *al-salīhūn* to refer to the apostles, a form that 'Abd al-Jabbār also uses.<sup>26</sup> Muslim authors also adopted this practice. Mas'ūdī

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*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1939), 608–10. According to Graf, the Syriac *Diatesseron* that Ibn al-Ṭayyib translated was not Tatian's original work, "sondern eine jüngere Bearbeitung" (p. 152).

<sup>23</sup> A Middle Persian partial translation of the Psalms is extant. Quotations from the Bible are also found in a Middle Persian Zoroastrian polemic against Judaism and Christianity. See S. Shaked, "Middle Persian Translations of the Bible," in "Bible," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 4:206–7. This textual evidence, in addition to references from several Church Fathers (including John Chrysostom) suggests that the Bible was translated into middle Persian (Pahlavi) in the pre-Islamic era. Yet the earliest extant Persian version of the Gospels comes from a significantly later date, apparently in the 7th/13th century, at the same time that the *Diatesseron* was translated into Persian from Syriac (although the Syriac version from which the translation was made seems to have varied from Tatian's original), since the concluding inscription of the dated Persian *Diatesseron* and the undated Persian Bible match. See Messina, *Diatessaron Persiano*; Pines, "Gospel Quotations," 276, n. 81; K. Thomas and F. Vahman, "Persian Translations of the Bible," in "Bible," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 4:210.

<sup>24</sup> 'Alī al-Ṭabarī (*al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 52) also uses this title.

<sup>25</sup> See Stern, "Account," 133, n. 6. Early Greek Christian writers refer to Paul similarly, as τὸ ἀπόστολος. Thanks to S. Griffith for this reference.

<sup>26</sup> See Ibn al-Ṭayyib, 2:83; *Tathbīt*, 150.



and Ibn al-Nadīm, for example, both use the term *salīh* to describe Paul's writings.<sup>27</sup>

This issue is further complicated by 'Abd al-Jabbār's observation that, "one of them mentions in the translation of his gospel: 'This is the genealogy of Jesus (*yāshū'*) the son of Joseph the carpenter'" (p. 199, ll. 17–8).<sup>28</sup> Yet 'Abd al-Jabbār may be referring here to a translation into Syriac (see p. 153), since, as he himself indicates (p. 100), *yāshū'* is a Syriac name for Jesus. (In fact, this is only the West Syriac form; the East Syriac, which 'Abd al-Jabbār uses more often, is *ishō'*, as mentioned above).

Part of the difficulty of knowing whether 'Abd al-Jabbār was working from the Bible itself or from quotations of it in earlier works is that he often includes passages which he claims are biblical, but in fact are crafted for the sake of his argument. I discuss this point at some length in chapter three (section 2.2), yet two further examples might make it clearer. In the introduction to the Passion account, 'Abd al-Jabbār states: "Now if the Christians went back over their reports and what is in their four gospels, and if these gospels were the object of their trust, they would know . . ." (p. 137, ll. 11–12). 'Abd al-Jabbār claims that this account is from the "four gospels" of the Christians and yet, as has been shown (see chapter 3, section 3.1), it is entirely non-canonical. It is changed for the purposes of his argument. Consider a second example, 'Abd al-Jabbār's version of John 19:26–27, which I quote again here:

In the Injīl [it is related that] Christ was standing near the place of the crucifixion. Mary, the mother of Christ, came to the place. The one being crucified looked at her and said, while he was upon the wood, "This is your son." He said to Christ, "This is your mother." Mary took him by his hand and led him among the group [of people] (p. 143, ll. 9–12).

The same polemical strategy appears again. 'Abd al-Jabbār shapes this pericope to affirm the Qur'ānic doctrine on the crucifixion (4:157) and to accuse Christians of contradicting their own scriptures. In other words, *tahṛīf* is both the accusation and the means used to accuse.

This same strategy can be seen with other Muslim authors. D. Thomas points out that Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's account of the temptation

<sup>27</sup> See Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, 161 (read سلیح for سلیخ); Ibn al-Nadīm, 26.



of Jesus differs from the canonical version due to his own polemical reworking. The wilderness narrative thus “becomes a Muslim story in all its parts and references.”<sup>29</sup> S. Griffith makes a similar observation in reference to Ibn Ishāq’s quotation of John 15:23–16:1 in his *sīra*: “Clearly then, Ibn Ishāq must have felt that he had ample divine authority in the Qur’ān to set matters aright in his quotation from the Gospel of John.”<sup>30</sup>

It is possible, then, that ‘Abd al-Jabbār gathered biblical material from the work of similar Muslim authors (see chapter 4, section 2.2). Indeed, Mingana argues that later Muslim authors relied on ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī for their biblical material.<sup>31</sup> It may also be, in light of the Syriac terminology of the *Critique*, that ‘Abd al-Jabbār gathered biblical material from Christian apologetical works. Or, finally, he may have in fact read the Bible and transformed it on his own. This much is clear: by ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s day the interpretation of the Bible was a major issue of contention in sectarian disputes. Biblical material could be gathered from a variety of sources.

## 2.2. *The Creed*

Information on the historical development of the Creed, on the other hand, is rarely found among Muslim authors. ‘Abd al-Jabbār has evidently taken his account (see chapter 3, section 2.3) from a dis-

<sup>28</sup> Read **ميلاد ياشوع** (ms. 94v), disregarding the editor’s emendation of **ميلاد يسوع**.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas writes: “Among many retouchings, he replaces the canonical ‘Jesus was led by the Spirit’ with the much simpler ‘Jesus left the villages’; he removes references to Son of God and in one place uses the less particular ‘beloved of God’; he eliminates the possibility that Jesus could transform the stones himself by making it clear that God would be the actual agent of the miracle, as the Qur’ān teaches; and lastly he reverses the order of the temptations to give the major significance to Jesus’ insistence that worship should be given to none other than God, and hence his exclusion of himself from veneration. The final result of this reworking is that the episode is changed from an account of the indication of the Son of God at the beginning of his earthly ministry into the test of a human prophet’s obedience to the divine will.” Thomas, “The Bible in Early Muslim anti-Christian Polemic,” 35.

<sup>30</sup> Griffith, “The Gospel in Arabic,” 138.

<sup>31</sup> “If one peruses the articles of the late Professor Goldziher and others: *über Muhammed. Polemik gegen ahl al-Kitāb*, one cannot fail to notice that the Muslim writers cited on pages 374–379 are using the Biblical texts collected and translated by ‘Alī Ṭabarī centuries earlier, apparently without so much as mentioning the latter’s name.” A. Mingana, “Remarks on Ṭabarī’s Semi-Official Defence of Islam,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 9 (1925), 236.

tinctive eastern Christian tradition. He remarks, “about two thousand men gathered at Nicaea. They made a decision but then rejected it. Then three hundred and eighteen men gathered, whom they call the Fathers.” (p. 94, ll. 2–3, cf. pp. 162–3). The tradition that Constantine initially gathered two thousand bishops at Nicaea, only to select later the three hundred and eighteen, is well-known among Arab Christian authors.<sup>32</sup> It is reported, for example, by ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s younger contemporary, the East Syrian Christian Ibn al-Ṭayyib, who has: “two thousand and forty eight bishops gathered. Yet when the opening of the Creed, which the bishop of Jerusalem sent, was read, only three hundred and eighteen of them accepted it. These are the keepers of truth.”<sup>33</sup>

More specifically, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s source for the Creed is an East Syrian Christian author whose Arabic was heavily influenced by Syriac. This is seen in the fact that “catholic” appears as *jāthaliqiyya*, a typical East Syriac/Nestorian form;<sup>34</sup> “apostolic” is *salīhiyya* (cf. Syriac *salīh*) instead of Arabic *rasūliyya*; Pilate is *Ḥilāṭus* (cf. Syriac *Ḥilātūs*), instead of the Arabic *Bilātūs*. This latter form appears, for example, in the Creed of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Christian contemporary Agapius (Ar. Maḥbūb) of Manbij (d. 4th/10th),<sup>35</sup> whose version of the Creed matches a version reported in Syriac by Mārūtā (d. ca. 420), bishop of Mīferqēt (Ar. Mayyāfāriqīn Gr. μαρτύροπολις).<sup>36</sup> Yet the versions of the Creed reported by Agapius and ‘Abd al-Jabbār

<sup>32</sup> See H. Leclercq, who writes “later Arabic manuscripts raise the figure to 2000.” See “Council of Nicaea,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1st edition, 11:44. The Syriac *Synodicon Orientale* is consistent with the Greek tradition that three hundred and eighteen bishops gathered at Nicaea. See p. 20 (French trans. 259).

<sup>33</sup> *Fiqh al-naṣrāniyya*, 2:83. The Bishop of Jerusalem referred to is not Eusebius of Caesarea (d. ca. 340; although Jerusalem was under Caesarea’s jurisdiction until the fifth century). Eusebius of Caesarea, the famous church historian, submitted his baptismal Creed at the Council as proof of his orthodoxy (and perhaps also as a compromise with the Arians, on whose behalf Eusebius of Nicomedia had first submitted a Creed at Nicaea that was rejected), but his Creed was rejected since he left out the critical term *homoousios*. The reference is rather to Macarius (d. ca. 334), bishop of Jerusalem, who played an important part in drafting the Creed that was ultimately adopted by the Council. Macarius figures prominently in other Christian Arabic writings on the Council. See *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 4:3 (1981), 276 and Agapius (Maḥbūb) de Menbidj, *K. al-Umwān*, PO 7:4 (1948), 548.

<sup>34</sup> G. Graf, *Verzeichniss*, 95, cf. 33.

<sup>35</sup> Agapius (Maḥbūb) de Menbidj, *K. al-Umwān*, 548.

<sup>36</sup> See the *Synodicon Orientale*, 22 (French trans. 262–3). Cf. also *The Canons Ascribed to Mārūtā of Maipherqat*, CSCO 439 (1982), 116; English trans. CSCO 440 (1982), 96. On Mārūtā see also *Synodicon Orientale*, 255, n. 2.

are significantly different. Agapius quotes a Creed in his narrative of the Council that is quite close to that which is thought to have been promulgated at Nicaea.<sup>37</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes a developed Creed that resembles instead the more complete Creed of Constantinople (i.e. the “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed”).<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the Creed, ‘Abd al-Jabbār refers on several occasions to a “synod” (*sinhūdas*, e.g. pp. 94, 105, *passim*), a term that appears in the *Critique* in two different ways. One of these is the common meaning of a meeting of Christian clergy (either an ecumenical council or a local meeting).<sup>39</sup> This is the way that ‘Abd al-Jabbār defines the term for his Muslim reader: “They meet together

<sup>37</sup> There are some other significant differences between the narratives of Agapius and ‘Abd al-Jabbār. In Agapius’ account Constantine has his vision of the Cross during a conflict with Maxentius in Italy, not against barbarian armies. While Agapius, like ‘Abd al-Jabbār, reports that Constantine was leprous, he does so in the context of the traditional Christian story, whereby Pope Sylvester baptizes him and the leprosy disappears. See Agapius (Maḥbūb) de Menbidj, *K. al-Unwān*, 540.

The versions of the Creed reported by Agapius and ‘Abd al-Jabbār correspond roughly to the two different versions of the Creed reported by Mārūtā, whose version of the “Nicene Creed” can be found in *The Canons Ascribed to Mārūtā of Maipherqat*, CSCO 439 (1982), 116; English trans. CSCO 440 (1982), 96; The “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed” is on p. 141 (p. 117 of English trans.).

<sup>38</sup> See B.A. Gerrish, “Creeds: Christian Creeds,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 4:143. At the same time ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Creed has significant variations, some of which—such as the place of “one baptism for the forgiveness of sins” ahead of “one holy, apostolic and catholic community”—may be due only to confusion.

There is a closer correspondence between ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s account of the Council and that in the anonymous Nestorian *Chronique de Séert* (The dating of which is uncertain but definitely after the mid 3rd/9th century; See A. Scher, intro. to *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 4:3 (1981), 216; Graf, *GCAL*, 2:195–6. The author of the *Chronique*, following the same tradition of Mārūtā, reports that Helen came from a village named Kfar Faḥār in Mesopotamia, and married a man named Wālāntīnūs who becomes emperor (See *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 4:3 [1981], 264). In the *Critique* (p. 159), Helen comes from Harrān (in Mesopotamia) and marries a man named Bīlātūs (p. 159) or Fīlātūs (p. 93). The *Chronique de Séert* also contains the traditions of Constantine’s leprosy, and locates the site of his conversion on the banks of the Danube against barbarian armies. In the *Chronique*’s version, Constantine is told by the pagan priests that to be healed he must take a bath in the blood of children. He begins to follow their advice by rounding up the children of the city, only to be moved to compassion by the cries that fill the air. Two unnamed men then tell him to seek out instead the bishop (Saint) Sylvester if he desires a cure. Following their advice, (p. 261), Constantine finds Sylvester, is baptized, and his leprosy immediately disappears. See *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 4:3 (1981), 260, 265–6. The *Chronique* is ultimately based on the Syriac works of Mārūtā. On this see Ibn al-Ṭayyib, 1:30. See also O. Braun, *De Sancta Nicaena Synodo*, *Syrische Texte des Maruta von Maipherkat* (Münster: H. Schöningh, 1898), 45–6.

<sup>39</sup> Mārūtā, for example, refers to the Council of Nicaea as a *sūnhedhūs*. See *The Canons Ascribed to Mārūtā of Maipherqat*, CSCO 439 (1982), 116; English trans. CSCO 440 (1982), 96.

whenever they want to permit or forbid something and hold a synod (that means a meeting to make decisions)” (p. 174, ll. 8–9).<sup>40</sup>

In at least one case, however, ‘Abd al-Jabbār uses the term *synod* to refer to a text. After arguing that Christians consistently change their doctrine, he states that the proof for this can be found in the “book known as Acts and in the Synod that they have” (p. 194, l. 3).<sup>41</sup> Here ‘Abd al-Jabbār is almost certainly referring to a text known as the *Synodicon orientale*, a late 2nd/8th century Syriac compilation of thirteen East Syrian (Nestorian) synods, stretching from 410–775.<sup>42</sup> The aforementioned East Syrian Christian Ibn al-Ṭayyib translated the *Synodicon* into Arabic.<sup>43</sup>

### 2.3. *Ibn Bahr̄z and Nestorian (East Syrian) Christians of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Milieu*

In chapter two (sections 3.2, 3.3) I discuss the importance of East Syrian Christianity in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s milieu. East Syrian Christians were not only the most important Christian group in Rayy, they were the dominant Christian group in the entire Persian speaking region of the Islamic world.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, they made particular efforts to court the Muslim political establishment to which ‘Abd al-Jabbār, the Qādī al-Quḍāt, most definitely belonged.<sup>45</sup> This attempt to win favor also had a theological element. Nestorian theologians carefully

<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere ‘Abd al-Jabbār (p. 105) quotes a Christian source, who relates, “We had a synod at which about seven hundred of the Fathers and exemplars gathered.”

<sup>41</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s association of Acts and the *Synodicon* derives from the Islamic concept of scriptural authority. A Christian would associate Acts with the rest of the New Testament, since the standard of authority is the canon which the Church has established. For a Muslim, however, the standard is only the revelation given to an individual prophet. Since Acts, from a Muslim perspective, is a post-prophetic book (although from a Christian perspective it is perhaps the prophetic book *par excellence* in light of the Pentecost event) it can be no more authoritative than a later church document such as the *Synodicon*.

<sup>42</sup> This has been edited and translated into French by J.-B. Chabot in *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la bibliothèque nationale* 37 (1902).

<sup>43</sup> Ibn al-Ṭayyib, *Fiḥ al-naṣrāniyya*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. W. Hage, “Die oströmische Staatskirche und die Christenheit des Perserreiches,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 84 (1973) 2–3, 183ff.

<sup>45</sup> This is seen in, among other things, the relocation of the East Syrian patriarchate in AD 775 from its ancestral center in Seleucia-Ctesiphon to the seat of the caliphate, Baghdād, and the important position of many East Syrian Christians in the ‘Abbāsīd and Būyīd governments. See chapter two (section 3.2) and the excellent work on the relationship of the East Syrian Church and the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate by a number of scholars writing in French. See especially J.M. Fiey’s *Chrétiens syriaques sous les Abbassides*. Cf. also B. Landron, *Attitudes Nestorienne*, esp. pp. 44ff. and 91ff.; H. Putman, *L’église et l’Islam sous Timothée I* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), esp. 92ff.

developed an argument to show that their doctrine is as monotheistic as that of Muslims and utterly unlike the heretical doctrines of Jacobites and Melkites.<sup>46</sup>

This argument, it should be added, was not devised only out of self-interest. The rejection of anthropomorphism was an important concern of East Syrian authors even before the rise of Islam. This concern is what motivated Nestorius' own rejection of *theotokos*, a rejection which caused so much controversy in the fifth century Church. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the East Syrian Church did not follow Nestorius in everything, as their opponents suggested. Moreover, the particular task of survival in the Islamic world no doubt led East Syrian Christians to emphasize their differences with other Christians. Thus the Katholikos Timothy (d. 208/823), in his debate with the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785), condemns the Melkite and Jacobite emphasis on the divinity of Christ. The caliph gives the desired response: "In this matter you believe more rightly than the others. Who dares to assert that God dies? I think that even demons do not say such a thing."<sup>47</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, however, is eager to show that the East Syrians/Nestorians are no more acceptable than other Christians in their view of Christ:

Let it be said to them: Even if the Nestorians said that which the Muslims say about Christ, this would not lessen the report or affect [our] knowledge, for the declaration of three is already there. How could it do so when the Nestorians return to the statement of their brothers, the Melkites and Jacobites, about Christ? (p. 96, ll. 10–12).<sup>48</sup>

Compare this with the comments of Shahrastānī, who takes the opportunity to attack ʿAbd al-Jabbār's school and the Nestorians together: "The way in which the Nestorians add to the gospels is like the way in which the Muʿtazila add to the *sharīʿa*."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Thus the 4th/10th century Nestorian author of the anti-Muslim polemic, *Risālat al-Kindī* has his Muslim opponent say: "The Nestorians, your companions, are by my life the closest and most similar to the statements of the righteous from the *ahl al-kalām wa-l-naẓar* and are those who incline most to our statements" (pp. 5–6).

<sup>47</sup> Timothy, *Apology*, 88.

<sup>48</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār's point here corresponds to the argument of Warrāq (although the latter is not focused on the Nestorians in the way that ʿAbd al-Jabbār is): "These distinctions over terminology are really only an attempt to find what is most apt, for each sect prefers the form of explanation that it considers more eloquent. . . . But despite their differences over explanation and terminology they keep more or less the same meaning, as they themselves admit." Warrāq, *al-Radd ʿalā l-tathlīth*, 69.

<sup>49</sup> Shahrastānī, *K. al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, 252.

‘Abd al-Jabbār later quotes an anonymous Christian author to prove that the Nestorians are no different from other Christians. This author argues that while the Nestorians use particular locutions to describe Christ, the meaning of their statements is essentially like that of other Christian groups:

There are those among us who pronounce, in their articulation and expression, the essence of this issue, stating: “Mary became pregnant with god and begot god and god died.” There are also those who forbid this expression but give its meaning and essence, stating: “Mary became pregnant with Christ in essence, birthed Christ in essence. She is the mother of Christ in essence. Christ is a god in essence, a Lord in essence, the son of God in essence and the Word of God in essence. He is the only son of God in essence. The only father of Christ is [God] and the only mother of Christ is Mary” (p. 102, ll. 12–18).<sup>50</sup>

... These<sup>51</sup> essentially agree with the statement of those who say about her: “She became pregnant with the god and begot the god. The god was killed and the god suffered. The god died.” It is only the articulation and the expression that they forbid. They say: “We have forbidden this expression which our brothers put forth so that we might not be considered suspect for saying ‘she became pregnant with the god, begot the god, the god died, the god suffered and that all of this occurred to and came upon the god who is the father.’ Rather, we say: ‘All of this occurred and all of this came upon Christ.’”

According to us and our sects Christ is entirely a god, true god from true god, from the substance of his father<sup>52</sup> (p. 102, l. 18–p. 103, l. 5).

In a second passage ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes a Christian source who objects to the Nestorian strategy of crafting statements to please Muslims. This source refers to a certain John as his authority:

They say: “The [church] Fathers said, when they recalled what Pilate the Roman and the Jews did: ‘When they crucified the Lord of Glory they recognized Him.’” The Christians say: “These statements are all ours and they contain the truth of our teachings.”

They say: “The blessed John said: ‘The one equal to the Father entered the world in the womb of the Virgin. He was before his fathers, Abraham, Israel and David. He was the son of God before he was called the son of Abraham and David.’”

They say: “This is the truth of our religion. If it is said therein that God is a human or from the genus of humans, or that he appears in

<sup>50</sup> This is seen quite clearly in the teachings of the Timothy, who rejects the expression “Mary gave birth to God” and the expression “Mary gave birth to man”. Instead, Timothy teaches the expression “Mary gave birth to Christ.” On this see Rissanen, 192.

<sup>51</sup> Read **هؤلاء** for **فؤلاء** (ms. 47v).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 123.

various forms and shapes, transferring and transforming, we do not shy away from that. We do not leave out that which the Fathers or the exemplar established in favor of that which is required for debate or necessary for speculation” (p. 99, ll. 7–16).

The “blessed John” to whom this anonymous Christian source refers may be John Chrysostom (d. 407), the famous Patriarch of Constantinople and one of the four Fathers of the Eastern Church. Two different factors make this possible. First, the form of the name John that is given, *ياوانس* (which shows the influence of Syriac),<sup>53</sup> is exactly that which Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī (a Jacobite) uses for Chrysostom,<sup>54</sup> who was held in high esteem by various Christian schools. (At the Council of Ephesus in 431, the camps of Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius both cited him as a witness for their positions). Second, John was admired more for his biblical preaching and piety than for his Christological teaching (The Nestorian *Chronique de Séert* calls him “as zealous and stern as the Prophet Elijah”).<sup>55</sup> While Chrysostom held the orthodox doctrine that Christ was divine and human in one person, he did not find it necessary to speculate on the exact way in which the divine and human were related. This seems to be precisely the example set by the “blessed John” of the above passage.

However, the anonymous Christian source also mentions an “exemplar” and this title appears elsewhere in the *Critique*. ‘Abd al-Jabbār (p. 100) has a Christian attribute John 1:1 to the “exemplar for all of our sects,” which suggests that John the Evangelist is the “exemplar.” Meanwhile, according to the above passage the “blessed John” affirms that Christ “was before his fathers, Abraham, Israel and David,” just as John the Evangelist has Christ proclaim: “In all truth I tell you, before Abraham ever was, I am” (8:58). These factors suggest that the exemplar and the “blessed John” are the same person: John the Evangelist.

In any case, ‘Abd al-Jabbār is not interested in these excerpts due to the theologians referred to therein, but rather due to the criticism therein of the Nestorian attempt to satisfy Muslim theological sensibilities. ‘Abd al-Jabbār wants to reveal the invalidity of Nestorian

<sup>53</sup> *ياوانس* is cognate with the Syriac *yū’annīs* or *yūhanīs*. See Costaz, 409.

<sup>54</sup> See Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, *Petits traités apologétiques*, ed. A. Périer (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1920), 53, who calls him *ياوانس قم الذهب*. The Nestorian *Chronique de Séert* names him *ياوانس قم الذهب*. *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 5:2 (1950), 319.

<sup>55</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 5:2 (1950), 319.



claims that their theological doctrine is like that of Muslims, not that of other Christians. For this reason he also turns to the Nicene Creed and emphasizes that all Christian sects subscribe to its doctrine (see pp. 94, 97, 98). On one occasion, he comments: "Yet you have learned the Creed and its details so return to it. There is more than enough in it to know the error of the Nestorians and of all those who debate on behalf of Christianity" (p. 98, ll. 11–12).

In the *Critique* 'Abd al-Jabbār also names one of those Nestorians: the Metropolitan Ibn Bahrīz, a scholar of Persian origin who lived during the reign of Ma'mūn (r. 198–218/813–833).<sup>56</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm calls Ibn Bahrīz, "in regard to wisdom, close to Islam,"<sup>57</sup> a sign that he embraced the approach of those Nestorians who sought to distinguish their theological doctrine from that of other Christians and liken it to that of Muslims. In the *Critique*, 'Abd al-Jabbār quotes a statement that Ibn Bahrīz made against a Jacobite:

This is demonstrated in the books, written in Syriac, of the church (*bī'a*) present in the districts of *Ahwāz* and elsewhere in the districts of Iraq. Some of this is translated in a letter written by 'Abd Yashū' b. Bahrīz,<sup>58</sup> the bishop (*usquf*) of Ḥarrān and al-Raqqā who became the Metropolitan (*muṭrān*) of Mawṣil and the Jazīra, to a Jacobite priest (*qas*) who was called Bādawī,<sup>59</sup> "You do not deny that the pure Virgin is a god, as you see her, but a person as we see her" (p. 146, ll. 2–6).

The information that 'Abd al-Jabbār gives on Ibn Bahrīz here conflicts with the report of Ibn al-Nadīm, who maintains that Ibn Bahrīz was not the bishop (*usquf*) of Ḥarrān but rather its metropolitan (*muṭrān*).<sup>60</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār has it right; there was no Metropolitan of the East Syrian Church in Ḥarrān.<sup>61</sup> Clearly, then, 'Abd al-Jabbār received

<sup>56</sup> Jāḥiẓ is also aware of the work of Ibn Bahrīz. See J.-M. Fiey, "Ibn Bahrīz et son portrait" (*Parole de l'Orient* 16 [1990–1], 133–7), which contains the excerpt regarding Ibn Bahrīz in Jāḥiẓ's *K. al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*.

<sup>57</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, 26.

<sup>58</sup> The ms. (68r) has *عبد يشوع بن بهرين*.

<sup>59</sup> The ms. (68r) has *بادوسي*, but in light of the Ibn al-Nadīm reference (p. 26) it is clear that the referent is Bādawī. Cf. Stern, "Apocryphal Gospels," 38, n. 1 and Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 37, n. 138.

<sup>60</sup> "Among their judges in religious law (*sharī'a*) and legal opinions (*fatāwā*) is Ibn Bahrīz, whose name is 'Abd Yasū'. He was first the Metropolitan of Ḥarrān and then he became the Metropolitan of Mawṣil and Ḥazza (Read for *Ḥarra*)." Ibn al-Nadīm, 26. Cf. Fiey, "Ibn Bahrīz et son portrait," 137. Ḥazza is equivalent to Irbil, a town to the east of Mawṣil in Mesopotamia.

<sup>61</sup> J.-M. Fiey, who is unaware of the reference in the *Critique*, notes that Ibn al-Nadīm's report on Ibn Bahrīz's position in Ḥarrān conflicts with Christian sources.



information from a reliable source, one unavailable to Ibn al-Nadīm. Nevertheless, Ibn al-Nadīm's biography of Ibn Bahrīz is important, for it confirms that Ibn Bahrīz authored the work to which 'Abd al-Jabbār refers above:

Among [Ibn Bahrīz's] letters and books is the letter addressed to the Jacobite priest,<sup>62</sup> known as Bādawī, in response to two letters which came to [Ibn Bahrīz] from him on the faith. It contains<sup>63</sup> an invalidation of the oneness of the hypostasis as the Jacobites and Melkites maintain it.<sup>64</sup>

Thus 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Critique* contains the only known quotation, albeit brief, from an otherwise lost work of Ibn Bahrīz. Meanwhile, his report that this quotation comes from an Arabic letter that includes translations from Syriac books is important for two reasons. First, it demonstrates one way in which 'Abd al-Jabbār received Syriac sources: through Christian Arabic translations. Second, it proves that he did indeed read Christian Arabic works.

#### 2.4. *The Christian Arabic Mujādilūn*

Above all 'Abd al-Jabbār was interested in the work of Christian apologists, those scholars who wrote expressly to defend Christianity from Muslim critiques. This interest is reflected in comments that 'Abd al-Jabbār quotes from an unnamed Christian:

All of our statements that we have mentioned to you, from the first to the last, about the basis of our religion and the essence that is elucidated regarding it, these are the essence of our religion and our faith. We have on this issue additional [texts] in Syriac and Arabic that we have not mentioned (p. 105, ll. 6–8).

Thus 'Abd al-Jabbār had access to Christian apologies, both Arabic translations from the Syriac, such as the letter of Ibn Bahrīz, and

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Fiey, "Ibn Bahrīz et son portrait," 137. Ḥarrān was situated on the fault-lines of Melkite, Jacobite and Nestorian spheres of interest, but the Nestorians were the smallest group of the three (the Melkite Abū Qurra was also bishop there in the early ninth century). B. Landron describes a three-way disputation that took place in Ḥarrān between participants of the main Christian schools: the Melkite Abū Qurra, the Jacobite Abū Rā'īṭa and the Nestorian Ibn Bahrīz. See Landron, 60.

<sup>62</sup> Read *المرقس* for *الى قس*.

<sup>63</sup> Read *فيهما* for *فيه*.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, 26.

texts originally written in Arabic.<sup>65</sup> At times he specifically cites arguments found in such texts, such as the Christian claim that the Trinity is foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Genesis 1:26):

They interpret that which is in the Tawrāt where God says: “We want to create humankind according to our shape, like us,” saying, “This address is by a group. You hear how He says, ‘We want,’ not ‘I want to create humankind like me.’ Know that the gods are plural and that they are in shape and form of people” (p. 115, ll. 11–15).

Elsewhere ‘Abd al-Jabbār describes Christian apologetic arguments that call not on the Bible but on the Qur’ān for evidence:

They even intrude into the Qur’ān and speak of “We made it descend in the night of Qadr.”<sup>66</sup> They say: “This address is from a group, not from one. They say regarding His statement (Mighty and Exalted): “Do not swear by the Lord of the Easts and the Wests,”<sup>67</sup> that this is one of the gods and lords swearing by the lords . . .” (p. 115, ll. 16–18).

They say: “Muḥammad brought Christianity and our teachings but his companions did not understand him.” They speak about His statement (Mighty and Exalted): “The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He cast into Mary, and a Spirit from Him.”<sup>68</sup>

They say: “But this is what we say, that he is from the substance of his Father. We do not intend with our statement ‘from Him’ that [Christ] is part of Him but rather that he is of the same genus and like Him” (p. 116, ll. 2–6).

In other places ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Christian apologetic sources seek to defend Christian doctrine by calling not on Islamic scripture, but on Islamic theology:

Now, they may say that their statement that God is three hypostases and one substance is like the statement of Muslims “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Benevolent”<sup>69</sup> and like their statement about God that He is Living, Capable, Knowing. Let it be said to them that this is an error on the part of Christians. Their statement about *tawḥīd*

<sup>65</sup> At times ‘Abd al-Jabbār relates a specifically Arabic form of a Christian name, such as Lazarus, which in the *Critique* (p. 113) is: ايلعازر. The prefix does not appear in the Syriac form *Lā’āzar*.

<sup>66</sup> Qur’ān 97:1.

<sup>67</sup> Qur’ān 80:40.

<sup>68</sup> Qur’ān 4:171. Cf. Qur’ān 3:45; ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:111; Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 36.

<sup>69</sup> For the discussion of this particular apologetic defense of the Trinity, see di Matteo, *La divinità di Cristo*, 60–1.

has nothing in common with that of Muslims. Only someone who desires to deceive and to escape an atrocious statement would say this.

For God, according to Muslims, is the Merciful and the Benevolent just as he is the Knowing and the Capable. He is one essence with many attributes and names. Yet God according to Christians is the Begetter (*al-wālid*), not the Begotten (*mawlūd*) Son, and it is not possible for the Father, the Begetter to be the Son, the Begotten. Nor is it possible for the Son, the Begotten to be the Father, the Begetter. Thus it is with the Holy Spirit. The one who says other than this is not a Christian.

For if you put one of them to the test in this way—I mean the evasion of this excessive statement—say: “If you want this to be your statement and to choose this, then what is keeping you from it?” Yet to say that this is the statement of the Christians is a lie and slander. Even if all of the Christians in our day became Muslims, this would not cease to be the statement of those who came before them from the three sects (p. 92, l. 18–p. 93, l. 10).

These are precisely the type of sophisticated apologetical arguments that philosophically minded Christian theologians make.<sup>70</sup> From whom, then, did ‘Abd al-Jabbār learn them? He answers this question later in the text:

As for those who debate and speculate among them, those who devote themselves to supporting Christianity (*nuṣṣrati l-naṣṣrāniyya*) and composing<sup>71</sup> books on that, they are all heretics and *zindīqs*. They count Christ and all of the prophets (peace be upon them) liars, and they consider the [religious] laws ignorance and those who act in accordance with them ignorant. You can hardly find among them someone who is not like this. [Among them are]: Qusṭā b. Lūqā, Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, his son Ishāq, Quwayrī, Matta al-Jarmaqānī, who is also known as Abū Bishr b. Yūnus, who commented on the books of the heretics [i.e. the Greek

<sup>70</sup> The Egyptian Mālikī scholar Qarāfi, in his anti-Christian polemic *al-Ajwiba al-fākhira*, faces similar theological/exegetical arguments from Paul of Antioch’s (d. 1180) *Risāla ilā aḥad al-Muslimīn*. Among these is a point identical to that of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s source above, namely that the Qur’ān, in identifying Jesus as the word of God, affirms Christian doctrine. Paul writes: “There is in the Book [i.e. the Qur’ān] that which confirms our statement, for it names Christ ‘the Spirit of God and His Word.’” P. Khoury, *Paul d’Antioche, évêque Melkite de Sidon* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1964), 74 (Arabic text), 180 (French trans.). See also G. Graf, “Philosophische-theologische Schriften des Paulus al-Rahib, Bischofs von Sidon,” *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie* 20 (1906) 55–80, 160–179. Paul’s letter prompted responses from both Ibn Taymiyya (*al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, see Michel, ch. 7) and Qarāfi (*al-Ajwiba al-fākhira*). Qarāfi quotes Paul’s comments on Qur’ān 4:171 on p. 179.

<sup>71</sup> Read *ويضيف* for *ويضيف* (ms. 91r), cf. Stern, “‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Account,” 150, n. 3.

philosophers]. He perished sometime in the 320's. After him was Yaḥyā b. 'Adī, from whom came the heretics who are in your era, the movement that does not engage in debate (p. 192, l. 15–p. 193, l. 2).<sup>72</sup>

The “debaters” are the famous Christian Arabic philosophers and theologians of Baghdād. This connection becomes clearer still through another reference. In the above quotation 'Abd al-Jabbār calls this group “those who debate and speculate” (*ahl al-jadal wa-l-naẓar*). In another passage, he describes how “the speculators (*naẓẓārīn*) and debaters (*mujādilīn*)” use one of the same apologetical arguments quoted at the beginning of this section:

If you asked the speculators and debaters among them about their statement on Christ, they would say: “Our statement is that he is the Spirit of God and His Word, just like the statement of the Muslims.” Or he might say: “God is one” (p. 92, ll. 8–10).

These Christian Arabic debaters (*mujādilūn*), then, are a significant source for 'Abd al-Jabbār's knowledge of Christianity in the *Critique*. Several of the scholars he names are known only as philosophers: Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq b. Ḥusayn, Ibrāhīm Abū Ishāq Quwayrī and Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus. Yet Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, Qusṭā b. Lūqā and Yaḥyā b. 'Adī are indeed well known as apologists.<sup>73</sup> Their apologetical writings belong to the genre of *adab al-jadal* (“dialectic literature”).<sup>74</sup> These are works that describe some type of contest (*mujādala* or *munāẓara*) between adherents of two different schools of thought, or two different religions. Above (chapter 4, section 1.2) I discuss Islamic examples of such works, including “The Debate of Wāṣil al-Dimashqī” and the letter of pseudo-'Umar.

These treatises are sometimes records of a formal oral debate, often held before the caliph, the Vizier or Amīr. In the 'Abbāsid era, debates such as these took place during official sessions devoted to inter-(or more often, intra-)religious disputation.<sup>75</sup> The caliph al-Mahdī himself is said to have hosted a debate in his *majlis* with the East

<sup>72</sup> This list of Christian scholars also appears on pp. 75–76; a shorter version appears on p. 623.

<sup>73</sup> See D. Thomas' introduction to Arab Christian writing on the Incarnation: *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity*, 52–8.

<sup>74</sup> On this, see E. Wagner, “*Munāẓara*,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 7:565.

<sup>75</sup> “Over the course of time a somewhat elaborate protocol developed for the conduct of these *majālīs*, governing not only the etiquette to be observed, but even dictating the procedures to be followed in unfolding the topics of the discussion.” S. Griffith, “The Monk in the Emir's *Majlis*,” 13.

Syrian Katholikos Timothy, as I have mentioned. More commonly, these debates are entirely written affairs.<sup>76</sup> In such works the Christian apologist often quotes an opponent's treatise, either *in toto* (e.g. Ḥunayn b. Ishāq and Qusṭā b. Lūqā's response to Ibn al-Munajjim) or point by point (e.g. Yaḥyā b. 'Adī's response to Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq), in order to mount pointed theological defenses. Very rarely do these apologists go on the offensive against Islam, although the well-known *Risāla* of Kindī is an important exception to this rule. Generally the authors were conscious of Islamic political hegemony and contented themselves with defending the reasonability of their religion.

#### 2.4.1. *Christian* Mujādilūn: *Timothy*

Among the most well-known and earliest of these defenses is a text known as the *Apology of Timothy*, which purports to be the account of the aforementioned debate between the Katholikos and the caliph al-Mahdī.<sup>77</sup> Although the *Apology* was originally composed in Syriac, it was translated early into Arabic and widely disseminated in that form.<sup>78</sup> Therein Timothy conducts himself with the deference of a loyal subject. He describes the caliph as the representative of God

<sup>76</sup> S. Griffith places such works in a genre he names "epistle-treatise." S. Griffith, "Ḥabīb," 167. Elsewhere, he argues that the "epistle-treatise" (like Islamic anti-Christian polemic, I might add) was not always intended to be read by the opponent. It served as "an apologetical catechism for the use of Christians living in the world of Islam." S. Griffith, "Disputing with Islam in Syriac: The Case of the Monk of Bēt Hālē and a Muslim Emir," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 3 (Jan. 2000) 1, par. 13.

<sup>77</sup> According to a Syriac letter of Timothy, the debate took place in 165/781 in the caliphal courts. See *Les lettres du patriarche nestorien Timothée I*, ed. and trans. R.J. Bidawid (Vatican City: Bibl. Apost. Vatic., 1956), 17–8.; cf. the analysis of the circumstances and content of the debate by van Ess, *TG*, 3:22ff. The historicity of this debate, taken for granted by Mingana, is challenged by François Nau and defended by R. Caspar. See R. Caspar, "Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée et le calife al-Mahdī (II<sup>e</sup>/VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Islamochristiana* 3 (1977), 116–7; Th.R. Hurst, *The Syriac Letter of Timothy (727–823). A Study in Christian-Muslim Controversy* (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University, Washington 1986).

<sup>78</sup> Today three different versions of the text exist. The Syriac version is the longest, followed by the Arabic version edited by S.K. Samir and a shorter Arabic version edited previously by Caspar. These editors all agree that the *Apology* is based on a historical debate, despite the discrepancies between the different versions. Van Ess (*TG*, 3:23) argues that the Arabic versions of the text are more reliable than the Syriac versions. Caspar comments on the spread of the text in its Arabic form: "Vu l'intérêt de ce texte pour l'apologétique des arabes chrétiens, il a dû être traduit assez vite en arabe." Caspar, "Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée et le calife al-Mahdī (II<sup>e</sup>/VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)," 118. The longer Arabic version edited by Samir is in H. Putman, *L'église et l'Islam sous Timothée I*, pp. 211ff. References below are to the Syriac version—as it is the most complete—edited by Mingana.

for the people on earth, a description quite unlike that which he makes in a Syriac letter to a Christian colleague.<sup>79</sup>

There are a number of correspondences between Timothy's arguments in the *Apology* and 'Abd al-Jabbār's arguments in the *Critique*. For example, Timothy insists that the validity of Christian transmission is verified by miracles,<sup>80</sup> while 'Abd al-Jabbār refutes this argument in the *Critique* (p. 174). In the *Apology*, the caliph Maḥdī asks the Christian Metropolitan why, if Jesus prayed towards Jerusalem, Christians prostrate to the East.<sup>81</sup> This is a practice that 'Abd al-Jabbār also points to (p. 149) as proof that Christians are violating the *sunna* of their prophet. Timothy also presents apologetical arguments that are quoted by 'Abd al-Jabbār. He uses the model of the sun and its light to illuminate the doctrine of the Incarnation,<sup>82</sup> a Trinitarian analogy often used by the Church fathers (indeed it is the analogy used in the Nicene Creed), and he argues for the divinity of Christ on the basis of the Qur'ān's description of him as Word and Spirit of God.<sup>83</sup> These are, however, arguments that are commonly found in Christian apologetics to Muslims; there is no reason to assume that Timothy is 'Abd al-Jabbār's source.

Yet two other elements that appear in both the *Apology* and the *Critique* are quite unique and suggest that there is a direct correspondence between the two works. The first is Timothy's use of Qur'ān 90:3 to defend the Incarnation.<sup>84</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār describes how Christians try to interpret this verse in just this way:

They speak about His statement (Mighty and Exalted) "by the begetter and that which He begot."<sup>85</sup> They say that this is the god swearing by himself and his begotten (p. 116, ll. 1–2).

*Sūra* 90 (*al-balad*) begins with the phrase: *lā uqsimu bi-hādhā l-balad*, which classical scholars read as two separate clauses and interpret: "Nay. I swear by this city" (See, Muqātil, 4:701; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 12:584). Their reading is

<sup>79</sup> In Timothy's letter to Mar Sargis, he describes the Muslims as "the new Jews," those who have taken the place, as it were, of the Jews in the time of Christ. Cf. Timothy, *Apology*, 37–9, 80; Rissanen, 42.

<sup>80</sup> See Putman, 242ff.

<sup>81</sup> Timothy, *Apology*, 29.

<sup>82</sup> Timothy, *Apology*, 75, 78.

<sup>83</sup> Timothy, *Apology*, 83.

<sup>84</sup> Timothy, *Apology*, 85.

<sup>85</sup> Qur'ān 90:3. Arberry's translation.

perhaps influenced by Q 95:3, in which the speaker swears by “this city.” By this reading, which ‘Abd al-Jabbār follows, the phrase of 90:3, “the Begetter and that which He begot,” is another object by which the speaker is swearing. The identity of the speaker is traditionally understood to be God, a fact which allows the Christian to construct the argument cited above. Some modern scholars, however, read 90:1 as only one clause and interpret, “I will not swear by this city” (See, e.g., the Qur’ān translations of M. Sarwar and E.H. Palmer). By their reading, then, the speaker will also *not* swear by “the Begetter and that which He begot.”

The second is a non-biblical *logion* with the phrase “morning star,” which Timothy quotes as though it were biblical. Timothy uses it in his argument that Christ is predicted in the Old Testament:

Both the Tawrāt and the prophets proclaim as with the voice of thunder and teach us collectively the divinity and humanity of Christ. . . . It is written: “Who shall declare his generation” (Isaiah 53:8), and “His coming out is in the beginning, from the days of the worlds” (cf. Isaiah 51:9 and Proverbs 8:23–4) and “From the womb before the morning star I have Begotten Thee.”<sup>86</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār, meanwhile, records: “They say, ‘God the father said to his son Jesus Christ, I begot you before I created the morning star’” (p. 121, ll. 3–4).<sup>87</sup>

#### 2.4.2. *Christian Mujādilūn: A monk of Jerusalem*

When it comes to other early accounts of Muslim-Christian *mujādala*, the question of historical authenticity is more problematic. The historicity of the protagonists of Timothy’s *Apology* is beyond question, and the language and tone of their discussion seems appropriate for its reported context. Two other early Christian accounts of Muslim-Christian debates (both of which are, in any case, later than that of Timothy) do not hold up as well to scrutiny. One of them is known as *Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem*, a title coined by K. Vollers, who

<sup>86</sup> Timothy, *Apology*, 56. See the Syriac, p. 128, verso of the ms.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Isaiah 14:12, “How did you come to fall from the heavens, Morning Star (*helel*), son of Dawn?” In this verse Yahweh taunts the Phoenician/Canaanite god (Hebrew *helel*, Latin *lucifer*), who was associated with the planet Venus (hence morning star). Christian tradition, however, following Jerome, considered this a reference to the casting of Satan into hell. In the New Testament, on the other hand, “morning star” is a symbol for Christ. See II Peter 1:19, Revelation 22:16. Note also that morning star (*ḡāriq*) is the title of chapter 86 of the Qur’ān and the subject of its first four verses.

brought this account to light from a manuscript in Egypt. The text relates a series of debates between a Christian monk and several Muslims, among whom is the 'Abbāsīd amīr 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Hāshimī (d. 3rd/9th, Hāshimī indicates that he is from the northern Arabian group, Ma'add, to which the Prophet Muḥammad belonged).<sup>88</sup> The monk meanwhile, is identified as Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī, a Syrian Arab Christian (from the southern Arabian group Qaḥṭān), a figure to whom an anti-Jewish treatise is also attributed.<sup>89</sup> As Vollers fully recognizes,<sup>90</sup> there are a number of reasons to doubt the historicity of this dialogue.<sup>91</sup> G. Marcuzzo, who has more recently edited the dialogue (on the basis of different manuscripts) and translated it into French, tries to reclaim some sort of authenticity for it, but stops short of declaring it authentic.<sup>92</sup>

Questions of authenticity aside, *Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem* offers some noteworthy antecedents to arguments that appear in the *Critique*. Take, for example, 'Abd al-Jabbār's citation of a Christian arguing that Christianity must be the truth since it "is a difficult and exacting religion. Yet great nations and kings have responded to it, with no compulsion, sword, coercion or constraint" (p. 173, ll. 9–10). The Christian protagonist of *Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem*, makes a nearly identical argument, as Stern points out.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, *Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem* and the *Critique* have in common a number of biblical passages, both those which Christians

<sup>88</sup> K. Vollers: "Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 29 (1908), 29–71. Note, however, that this section does not appear in other manuscript traditions of the text, and therefore was excluded by G. Marcuzzo in his more recent edition and French translation thereof: *Le dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade avec 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī à Jérusalem vers 820*, ed. G. Marcuzzo (Rome: Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1986).

<sup>89</sup> See G. Vajda, "Un traité de polémique christiano-arabe contre les juifs attribué à Abraham de Tibériade," *Bulletin de l'institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes* 15 (1967–1968), 138.

<sup>90</sup> Vollers, "Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem," 32.

<sup>91</sup> Notice the symbolic opposition between the Muslim Hāshimī (from a tribe of the northern Arabs, the Ma'add, the people of Abraham, Ismā'īl and Muḥammad) and the Christian Qaḥṭānī (from the same group of the southern Arabs as the famous Christian tribe of Ghassān). A similar opposition of tribes appears also in the next treatise to be discussed.

<sup>92</sup> Marcuzzo comments "un dialogue islamo-chrétien a dû vraiment et fondamentalement avoir lieu à Jérusalem au début du IX<sup>ème</sup> s. entre un moine, appelons-le Abraham de Tibériade, et une haute personnalité musulmane, qui pourrait être 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Hāshimī." *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 101.

<sup>93</sup> See "Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem um 800 AD," 63; Stern, "'Abd al-Jabbār's Account," 150, n. 1.



cite to prove the divinity of Christ, including Lk 1:35,<sup>94</sup> 3:22,<sup>95</sup> Jn 1:1<sup>96</sup> and Jn 10:38,<sup>97</sup> and those that Muslims cite to disprove his divinity, including Mt 24:36,<sup>98</sup> and Jn 12:45.<sup>99</sup> Two Qur'ānic verses which are so important to Muslim-Christian *jadal* regarding Jesus appear in both works: 4:157<sup>100</sup> and 4:171.<sup>101</sup> The above-mentioned analogical argument for the Incarnation, based on the sun and its light, also appears in both works,<sup>102</sup> as does a common Muslim argument: that Christ's act of praying shows him to be a servant of God.<sup>103</sup>

#### 2.4.3. *Christian* Mujādilūn: *Kindī*

Another account of a Muslim-Christian debate, the *Risālat al-Hāshimī ilā 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī wa-risalat 'Abd al-Masīḥ ilā l-Hāshimī* (henceforth: *Risālat al-Kindī*, since both letters seem to be the work of the Christian protagonist), is of an entirely different sort. It is overtly polemical. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the *Risālat al-Kindī* was later translated into a number of languages, including Latin, and enjoyed a continuous popularity to the modern period.

The *Risālat al-Kindī* takes the form of a correspondence between a Muslim (al-Hāshimī, as with the Muslim protagonist of *Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem*) and a Christian (al-Kindī). The English translator of the *Risala*, W. Muir, argues that this is the authentic record of a debate at the court of al-Ma'mūn. There is little evidence, however, to support this theory, even if the work is mentioned by Bīrūnī. Bīrūnī's description of the work gives an *ad quem* date for its composition, but it also suggests that the text is not what it purports to be. He describes it as the record of a debate between the Christian 'Abd al-Masīḥ b. Ishāq al-Kindī and the Muslim 'Abdallāh b. Ismā'īl al-Hāshimī.<sup>104</sup> The symbolic nature of these names is enough to reveal the literary nature of this debate.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>94</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 101 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 497.

<sup>95</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 101 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 445–7.

<sup>96</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 100 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 355.

<sup>97</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 103 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 319.

<sup>98</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 113 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 407.

<sup>99</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 112 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 319.

<sup>100</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 122 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 391.

<sup>101</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 92, 116 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 289, 321.

<sup>102</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 104 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 371, 427.

<sup>103</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 112, 114 and *Le dialogue d'Abraham*, 471.

<sup>104</sup> See Bīrūnī, *K. al-Āthār al-bāqīya 'an al-qurūn al-khālīya*, ed. E. Sachau (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1878), 205.

<sup>105</sup> 'Abd al-Masīḥ (Servant of Christ) vs. 'Abdallāh (Servant of God); Ibn Ishāq (Son

The real author of the *Risāla*, most likely, was a 4th/10th century East Syrian Christian.<sup>106</sup> The author's East Syrian identity, and the fact that the text was read by 'Abd al-Jabbār's younger contemporary Bīrūnī, makes it not inconceivable that it reached the Qāḍī as well. Thus Kindī may be the source of Christian arguments cited by 'Abd al-Jabbār, such as the argument quoted above that the Trinity is foreshadowed in the Tawrāt (Gen. 1:26), where God states: "We want to create humankind according to our shape, like us" (p. 115). Kindī makes the same claim: "Upon His creation of Adam, God said: 'Let Us make the person like us, in our shape.' He (Might and Exalted) did not say: 'I will make or I will do in my shape and like me.'" <sup>107</sup>

Yet the more important correspondences between the *Risalat al-Kindī* and the *Critique* are not of apologetical arguments, but rather of polemical arguments. One such argument relates to Muḥammad and violence. Kindī rejects the Muslim idea of *jihād* and Muḥammad's career of battles and raids in the strongest possible terms. At one point he remarks: "I ask you to inform me about the ways of Satan. Are they not killing, shedding blood, plundering and stealing?" <sup>108</sup> Elsewhere Kindī concludes: "We have not heard of a man other than [Muḥammad] who came and said: 'as for the one who does not accept my prophethood and that I am the messenger of the Lord of the worlds, I will strike him with the sword, plunder his house, and enslave his children.'" <sup>109</sup> On pp. 188–90 of the *Tathbūt*, 'Abd al-Jabbār responds to an argument like this one. He suggests that Christ, according to Christian doctrine, is more bellicose than Muḥammad, since he (being God) sent all of the prophets before him to war.

A second polemical argument relates to Muḥammad and sexual conduct. Kindī's polemic on this point finds no place in the Arabic Christian apologetic literature described above, as it would more than suffice to win the death penalty in an Islamic society. He criticizes, among other things, the tradition that Muḥammad had the sexual prowess of forty men (p. 50), the account of his marriage to Zaynab,

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of Isaac) vs. Ibn Ismā'īl (Son of Ishmael); al-Kindī (one from the traditionally Christian Arabic tribe B. Kinda) vs. al-Hāshimī (one from Muḥammad's clan, B. Hāshim).

<sup>106</sup> On the Kindī/Hāshimī debate, see A. Abel, "L'Apologie d'al-Kindī et sa place dans la polémique islamo-chrétien," *L'orient cristiano nella storia della civiltà* (Rome: Academia dei Lincei, 1964), 501–23. See also A. Noth, "The Prophet's Image in Europe and the West," in "Muḥammad," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 7:379ff.; Gero, "The Legend of the Monk Bahīrā," 49.

<sup>107</sup> *Risālat al-Kindī*, 35.

<sup>108</sup> *Risālat al-Kindī*, 110.

<sup>109</sup> *Risālat al-Kindī*, 113.

his adopted son's wife (p. 50), and the report that Muḥammad had fifteen wives and two slave girls (pp. 51–2). 'Abd al-Jabbār considers it outright hypocrisy for a Christian to bring up this issue: "Among their ignorance and deception is that they denounce Muḥammad for taking women" (p. 190, l. 5). 'Abd al-Jabbār maintains that Christian doctrine is much more immoral, since it holds that God took Mary as a wife.

Evidently, 'Abd al-Jabbār read not only Christian apologetic, but Christian polemic as well.

#### 2.4.4. *Christian Mujādilūn: Abū Qurra, Abū Rā'īṭa, 'Ammār al-Baṣrī*

The preceding three works are based, directly or indirectly, on ongoing oral and written Muslim-Christian disputation, a conversation that presumably began soon after the appearance of Islam. In the 3rd/9th century a new type of disputational work appeared, as philosophically-minded Christians began to write logical apologies in direct response to Islamic polemic. The rise of this literature, according to S. Griffith, is related to the campaigns begun in the 'Abbāsid Empire to convert Christians.<sup>110</sup> As Arabic anti-Christian polemic proliferated, Christian scholars responded by composing Arabic works in defense of their religion. Among the earliest such works are those of a trio of scholars from the first 'Abbāsid century. Felicitously, they represent the three main Christian denominations: the Melkite Abū Qurra (d. 204/820), the Jacobite Abū Rā'īṭa (d. early-mid 3rd/9th) and the Nestorian 'Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. 260/874).

The best known of this trio is the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurra (d. 204/820), bishop of Ḥarrān (the city that plays such an important role in the *Critique*) and author of theological works in Greek, Syriac and Arabic.<sup>111</sup> In one of his Arabic apologetical works, *Fī wujūd al-khāliq wa-l-dīn al-qawīm*,<sup>112</sup> Abū Qurra argues that miraculous signs (*āyāt*) both led to the success of Christianity and prove its validity. He continues by raising a proposition to his Muslim opponent. Take your smartest man and let us train him in the Christian religion. Then send him to Sudan, India or China, where they worship idols, and see if he can convert them. You would claim that

<sup>110</sup> Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic," 126–7.

<sup>111</sup> On his life and compositions, see Rissanen, 20–3.

<sup>112</sup> See 'Abd al-Jabbār's reference to this work, *Mughnī*, 5:144–5.

none of them would accept Christianity even from such an educated and intelligent man, since it is an illogical religion. How, then, could it be that all of the nations accepted Christianity, seeing that the disciples of Christ were simple and uneducated? It must have been due to miraculous signs.<sup>113</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār cites a similar argument in the *Critique*:

You claim miracles and signs for your monks, holy men and leaders in every era and that these have not been cut off or removed, but you have responded to this religion and have not seen a miracle or a sign. Thus it is with those before you, who have responded in the same way. This is enough [proof] for one who seeks the truth (p. 174, ll. 3–7).

A second work attributed to Abū Qurra describes his debates with the Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ in the court of the caliph al-Ma’mūn.<sup>114</sup> The debate of Abū Qurra, or pseudo-Abū Qurra,<sup>115</sup> with the ‘*ulamā*’ has only occasional correspondences with the *Critique*.<sup>116</sup> Yet there is at least one intriguing parallel on the question of Qur’ān 5:116, a verse in which

<sup>113</sup> Abū Qurra, *Fī wujūd al-khāliq wa-l-dīn al-qawīm*, 268. Abū Qurra (p. 265) expands this argument in detail, using the example of St. Thomas’ conversion of the Indians, and arguing that “it was through the power of God, and not human power, that this religion was accepted in the nations.”

<sup>114</sup> In addition to the edition of I. Dick (v.i.), see S. Griffith, “Some Unpublished Arabic Sayings Attributed to Theodore Abū Qurrah,” *Le Muséon* 92 (1979), 29–35.

<sup>115</sup> G. Graf questions the authenticity of this text, which is extant in Arabic and Syriac versions. The attempts of the Arabic version’s editor, I. Dick, to counter Graf’s argument leave the reader unconvinced. See I. Dick’s introduction to *Muḥādalat Abī Qurra ma’a al-mutakallimīn al-muslimīn fī majlis al-khalīfat al-Ma’mūn*, ed. I. Dick (Aleppo: Ignatius Dick, 1999). Much of the content seems to show that it is at best a distant and distorted record of an original debate. On pp. 88–9, Abū Qurra debates a Muslim opponent who maintains that Jesus died, which is either the record of a heterodox view or the Christian author’s confusion of Muslim doctrine. (While the Qur’ān never explicitly states that Jesus did *not* die, it became orthodox Islamic doctrine to maintain so). On p. 93, Abū Qurra argues for the divinity of Christ, the Word of God, by reminding his opponent of the Muslim doctrine that the Qur’ān, the Word of God, is uncreated. This is indeed later Muslim doctrine, but it would be heterodox, to say the least, for a Muslim to have maintained this in the court of Ma’mūn, who made the createdness of the Qur’ān state doctrine. Finally, the Abū Qurra of this text becomes unabashedly polemical at times, attacking the Islamic conception of paradise (pp. 77–8), the Islamic doctrines of *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl*, the acceptability of male concubines in Islam and Islamic divorce law (pp. 94–5). It is hard to imagine that Abū Qurra could have gotten away with such insolence at the caliphal court.

<sup>116</sup> The text opens (70ff.) with a discussion in which the caliph Ma’mūn reprimands Christians for not practicing circumcision (although he never raises the point that is central in the *Critique*, namely that Jesus himself was circumcised). Elsewhere (79–80, 85) the author discusses those Qur’ānic verses that are favorable to Christians, another topic that ‘Abd al-Jabbār never considers.

God asks Jesus if he told the people to take him and his mother as two gods. The author of the Christian apology attributed to Abū Qurra asks his Muslim opponent why God would ask such a question unless He were ignorant of the answer.<sup>117</sup> When ‘Abd al-Jabbār discusses this verse he seems to respond to this same challenge, stating:

This statement is only outwardly an inquiry and query. But this is not possible for God (exalted be His praise), for He only inquires and queries one who does not know what He inquired and asked about. It is only a stipulation to bring out the answer from the one who is asked. This is like His statement to Moses (God’s blessing be upon him), “What is that to your right, O Moses?”<sup>118</sup> He (Mighty and Exalted) knew [the answer to] that better than Moses. [This is similar] to His statement to the devil, “What prevented you from prostrating when I ordered you,” or “when He ordered you.”<sup>119</sup> Yet He (Mighty and Exalted) knew what prevented him better than the devil did (p. 145, ll. 7–13).

The second major apologist of this trio is the Jacobite Ḥabīb b. Khidma Abū Rā’īṭa,<sup>120</sup> whose Arabic apologies have been edited and translated by G. Graf, and analyzed by S. Griffith.<sup>121</sup> Little is known of his life beyond the fact that he was a relative of Nonnus of Nisibis, an author of Syriac responses to Muslim polemic.<sup>122</sup> Abū Rā’īṭa, like his relative, was committed to the intellectual defense of Christianity; he wrote four separate treatises in response to Muslim challenges.

Therein Abū Rā’īṭa develops an argument much like that of Abū Qurra (and that to which ‘Abd al-Jabbār responds), that miraculous signs are the proof of a valid religion; in fact, he considers such signs to be the shibboleth that distinguishes truth from falsehood. It is only Christianity, Abū Rā’īṭa argues, that has the “signs (*āyāt*), miracles (*mufjizāt*), proofs (*barāhīn*) and clear demonstrations (*wāḍihāt*)” to verify its message.<sup>123</sup> This argument is clearly phrased with a Muslim audience in mind, since the Qur’ān suggests that Muḥammad did

<sup>117</sup> *Mujādalat Abī Qurra*, 84.

<sup>118</sup> Qur’ān 20:18.

<sup>119</sup> Qur’ān 7:12. Both *أمرتك* and *أمرك* are among the canonical *qirā’āt*.

<sup>120</sup> On Abū Rā’īṭa, see also Rissanen, 24–5.

<sup>121</sup> See G. Graf, *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb Ibn Khidma Abū Rā’īṭa*, CSCO 130 (1951, Arabic), 131 (1951, German translation); S. Griffith, “Ḥabīb,” 161–201.

<sup>122</sup> See Griffith, “Ḥabīb,” 164–5; A. Van Roey, *Nonnus de Nisibe, traité apologétique* (Louvain: Bibliothèque du Muséon, 1948); J.M. Fiey, “Ḥabīb Abū Rā’īṭa n’était pas évêque de Takrit,” *Actes du deuxième congrès international d’études arabes chrétiennes* (Rome: PISO, 1986), 211–4.

<sup>123</sup> Abū Rā’īṭa in Graf, CSCO 130, p. 135.

not have a sign as other prophets did (see Q 6:37, 13:7, 21:5).<sup>124</sup> It is precisely such arguments, I believe, that led to the popularity of *dalā'il* works, which maintain that Muḥammad not only had signs, but signs greater than those of any other prophet (on which see chapter 4, section 3.1).<sup>125</sup>

There are other parallels between Abū Rā'īta's arguments and those to which 'Abd al-Jabbār responds, such as the argument that the persons of the Christian Trinity are like the divine attributes (*ṣifāt*) in the Muslim concept of God (cf. *Tathbūt*, pp. 92–3). This is an argument that Abū Rā'īta develops with constant awareness of his Muslim opponent's use of theological language.<sup>126</sup>

Meanwhile, Abū Rā'īta also defends Christian practice against a number of Muslim accusations similar to those made by 'Abd al-Jabbār. The order of his defenses, in particular, suggests that he and 'Abd al-Jabbār are participating in the same tradition of Muslim-Christian conversation. Thus Abū Rā'īta defends the Christian *qibla* to the East,<sup>127</sup> as well as the Christian doctrine that circumcision is not a necessary religious practice.<sup>128</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār raises these two issues in the same order:

<sup>124</sup> S. Griffith remarks that the style of Abū Rā'īta "abounds not only with explicit quotations, but with allusions to the Qur'ān and many typically Qur'ānic turns of phrase." S. Griffith, "Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rā'īṭah, a Christian *mutakallim* of the First 'Abbāsid Century," *OC* 64 (1980), 170.

<sup>125</sup> "It was exactly this point about the Prophet that left his later devout followers dissatisfied, so that quite early, driven no doubt in part by their disputations with Christians, they wove around the person and life of the Prophet a network of superhuman features." A. Welch, "Muḥammad," *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 7:375.

<sup>126</sup> Abū Rā'īta in Graf, *CSCO* 130, pp. 3, 7, 13, *passim*. At one point, Abū Rā'īta supports his argument (that God must be one in substance, *jawhar*, but not in number) with Qur'ān 42:11: "There is nothing like him" (*laysa ka-mithlihi shay'*), a verse that 'Abd al-Jabbār quotes (p. 95) while comparing the Christians to the Ash'ariyya. On Abū Rā'īta's rather complicated exegesis of this verse, see Griffith, "Ḥabīb," 179–80.

<sup>127</sup> Abū Rā'īta agrees with his Muslim challenger that the *qibla* of earlier prophets was Jerusalem. This was, according to him, because it was there that "God (praise be to Him) would appear in his Incarnation, become human, and would carry the saving Cross." Abū Rā'īta in Graf, *CSCO* 130, p. 155. Yet Abū Rā'īta argues (pp. 154–5) that the Christians changed the *qibla* with good reason, since the Garden of Eden was in the East, and since it is in the East that Christ will appear in his second coming. It thus represents the beginning and end of creation.

<sup>128</sup> He argues that circumcision was a temporary measure that God imposed on the Israelites: "He marked them with circumcision so they might know that they are the people of God." Abū Rā'īta in Graf, *CSCO* 130, p. 157. God had always intended to bring a new covenant (Abū Rā'īta quotes Jeremiah 31:31 and Ezekial 16:60 to this effect). He concludes: "The pure Injil abrogates the prescriptions of the Tawrāt with its prescriptions." p. 158.

They pray to the East, yet Christ, to the day that God made him pass away,<sup>129</sup> only prayed to the West, to Jerusalem, like David, the prophets and the Israelites before him. Christ was circumcised and imposed circumcision, just as those before him—Moses, Aaron and the prophets—imposed it (p. 149, ll. 4–6).<sup>130</sup>

There is also an important difference here between Abū Rāʾiṭa's writing and the *Critique*. After defending the Christian positions concerning the *qibla* and circumcision, Abū Rāʾiṭa then defends the Christian practice of a forty day fast.<sup>131</sup> As though on cue, ʿAbd al-Jabbār also turns to the topic of the fast after discussing the *qibla* and circumcision, yet he condemns the Christians for practicing a *fifty* day fast.<sup>132</sup> The difference on this point may be due to the fact that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's source was an East Syrian/Nestorian who followed the tradition of a fifty day fast, and that Abū Rāʾiṭa's particular West Syrian/Jacobite community practiced a forty day fast.<sup>133</sup>

Little is known about the East Syrian (Nestorian) of this triad, ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, other than his two apologies for Christianity: *K. al-Burhān* and *K. al-Masāʾil wa-l-aḡwiba*.<sup>134</sup> He wrote both works for a Muslim audience (the latter text opens with a dedication to the caliph, most likely the philo-Muʿtazilī Maʾmūn).<sup>135</sup> ʿAmmār's arguments were refuted by ʿAbd al-Jabbār's Muʿtazilī predecessor Abū l-Hudhayl in a work entitled *K. ʿAlā ʿAmmār al-naṣrānī fī l-radd ʿalā l-naṣārā*.<sup>136</sup> There is reason to believe, then, that ʿAbd al-Jabbār was familiar with ʿAmmār's work.

It is therefore important that in the *K. al-Burhān* ʿAmmār contends that the truth of the Christian religion is shown by the fact that “great kingdoms and many nations with different languages have altogether agreed upon the godliness of the books that they have, despite the differences of land, kingdom and language, and that those

<sup>129</sup> توفاه. Cf. Qurʾān 3:55.

<sup>130</sup> On circumcision, cf. also *Tathbīt*, 117 and 160.

<sup>131</sup> Abū Rāʾiṭa in Graf, *CSCO* 130, p. 159.

<sup>132</sup> *Tathbīt*, 149. See also 117, 164. Maqdisī (1:338) also reports that Christians fast for fifty days.

<sup>133</sup> In the East Syrian Church the great fast (Syr. *ṣawmā rabbā*) lasts fifty days. See A.J. MacLean, “Fasting (Christian),” *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 5:771. Cf. *Kleines Wörterbuch des christlichen Orients*, 164–6.

<sup>134</sup> See M. Hayek, *Ammār al-Baṣrī, apologie et controverses*, 13. See also M. Hayek, “ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī: la première somme de théologie chrétienne en langue arabe.”

<sup>135</sup> See Hayek, *Ammār*, 21ff.; ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, *K. al-Masāʾil wa-l-aḡwiba*, in Hayek, *Ammār*, 93.

<sup>136</sup> See Ibn al-Nadīm, 203.



who passed on [the books] to them performed great signs.”<sup>137</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār, as quoted above, counters a Christian argument that is almost identical to this.<sup>138</sup> Meanwhile, in the *K. al-Masā’il wa-l-ajwiba* ‘Ammār argues that the authenticity of the Christian gospels cannot be questioned, since they have been translated into the languages of numerous peoples, all of whom are in agreement on its content.<sup>139</sup> He also contends that this same fact shows that the people did not adopt Christianity out of *‘aṣabiyya*, “ethnic solidarity.”<sup>140</sup> While ‘Abd al-Jabbār does not respond to this specific apologetic argument, he makes a point to emphasize (p. 154, v.s. chapter 3, section 2.1) that the gospels have been translated into many languages, a fact which to him indicates not their authenticity but their invalidity.

#### 2.4.5. Christian Mujādilūn: Ḥunayn, Qusṭā, Yaḥyā

In the century following the career of the above scholars, a second trio of Christian apologists rose to prominence. They likewise represent the three Christian denominations: the Nestorian Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, the Melkite Qusṭā b. Lūqā and the Jacobite Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī. These scholars worked in the same century (4th/10th) in which ‘Abd al-Jabbār wrote the *Critique*, and he mentions them all therein. Moreover, all three of these scholars wrote treatises in response to the same Islamic *dalā’il* work, namely the aforementioned *Ithbāt nubuwwat Muḥammad* of Ibn al-Munajjim.

The replies of Ḥunayn and Qusṭā, which are contained in the same manuscript, are quite different from one another. Ḥunayn’s reply to Ibn al-Munajjim is brief and philosophical. He begins by criticizing his opponent’s logic, remarking that Ibn al-Munajjim must not have read his Aristotle well.<sup>141</sup> It was likely this argument, or one like it, that led ‘Abd al-Jabbār to reject those Christians who cite Aristotle as an authority. This, to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, is a sign of Christian waywardness: “They say ‘Our evidence in this is from the tongue of Aristotle, from his statement and his principles.’ Yet Aristotle did not believe in a [divine] book, or in a prophet, or in a [religious] law” (p. 193, ll. 3–4). ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s opinion in this respect is significant, since

<sup>137</sup> ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, *K. al-Burhān*, in Hayek, ‘*Ammār*, 41.

<sup>138</sup> *Tathbūt*, 173.

<sup>139</sup> ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, *K. al-Masā’il wa-l-ajwiba*, in Hayek, ‘*Ammār*, 128, 131.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>141</sup> Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, *Risāla*, in *Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne*, 170–2.



it shows his awareness of the involvement of Christian apologists in Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>142</sup> It also differs from the comments of other Muslim polemicists, who argue that Christian scholars shy away from Aristotle, knowing that his principles would prove their religion false.<sup>143</sup>

Yet Ḥunayn's basic argument in defense of Christianity is not based on the philosophy of Aristotle. It deals with the question of compulsion, which Ḥunayn considers the principle manner in which false teaching is accepted.<sup>144</sup> Ḥunayn argues that Christianity is validated (and, by implication, Islam invalidated) by the fact that it "was not accepted because of the force of kings, nor the warring of a Sultan. On the contrary, all of the kings of the Earth resisted it and combated it."<sup>145</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār responds to a similar argument, that Christianity must be true since "great nations and kings have responded to it, with no compulsion, sword, coercion or constraint" (p. 173, ll. 10–11). Moreover, as I argue above (chapter 3, section 2.1, 2.3), many of the narratives in the *Critique*—particularly those on the origin of the Bible, on Paul and on Constantine—are themselves *theologumena* intended to show that Christianity was indeed accepted "because of the force of kings."

As for the letter of Qusṭā, it is both lengthier and less abstract. Qusṭā attempts to disprove Ibn al-Munajjim's logical proofs for the prophethood of Muḥammad and the authenticity of the Qur'ān by citing examples to undermine his opponent's claims.<sup>146</sup> These argu-

<sup>142</sup> Timothy, Abū Qurra and above all Ḥunayn were known as translators of Aristotle into Arabic. See Rissanen, 46–7.

<sup>143</sup> On this, see S. Stroumsa, "al-Fārābī and Maimonides on the Christian Philosophical Tradition," *Der Islam* 68 (1991), 266–76. Yahyā b. 'Adī and Abū Qurra both respond to this argument. See Yahyā b. 'Adī, *Petits traités*, 92. This is in a treatise entitled *Jawāb al-shaykh Yahyā b. 'Adī 'an mas'ala sa'ala 'anhā mukhālīfū l-naṣārā*; Abū Qurra, *Mīmar fī taḥqīq nāmūs Mūsā wa-l-injīl al-ṭāhir wa-taḥqīq al-urthūd-huksiyya*, ed. C. Bacha, *al-Machreq* (1904), 150.

<sup>144</sup> Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, 172. Machiavelli (*Principe*, VI) expressed this in another manner: "Di qui nacque che tutt' i profeti armati vinsono, e li disarmati ruinorono."

<sup>145</sup> Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, 178.

<sup>146</sup> In response to Ibn al-Munajjim's argument that the Qur'ān is pure Arabic, Qusṭā cites a number of foreign words therein. Qusṭā b. Lūqā, *Risāla*, in *Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne*, 108–12. Elsewhere (pp. 122–4), Qusṭā questions the reliability of the Qur'ānic text by arguing that the Greeks collected the poetry of Homer with a more trustworthy method. See also 146–50, where Qusṭā argues that, according to the Muslims' logic, Homer would also be a prophet since his poetry is inimitable. Qusṭā (pp. 112–20) also casts doubt upon Ibn al-Munajjim's assumption that Muḥammad's ability to know the future or the unseen confirms his prophethood, by citing examples from astronomers, dreamers and doctors who can do the same.

ments, however, bear little relation to the arguments taken up by ‘Abd al-Jabbār, as they address the doctrine of *ʿijāz al-Qurʾān* (inimitability of the Qurʾān), a subject that does not appear in the *Critique*.<sup>147</sup>

This is not the case with the arguments of Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, who is the most prolific Christian apologist in the group that ‘Abd al-Jabbār names. Strangely, ‘Abd al-Jabbār describes him as the origin of a movement opposed to *jadāl*,<sup>148</sup> although it is clear that Yaḥyā was personally devoted to this science. It is possible that he is referring to Yaḥyā’s argument that religious matters are superior to philosophical matters and that, consequently, Christianity need not conform to philosophical logic.<sup>149</sup> Elsewhere ‘Abd al-Jabbār expresses frustration with this Christian tactic.<sup>150</sup>

Nevertheless, Yaḥyā was a sophisticated philosopher and adept in building philosophical defenses for Christianity. He responded with meticulous detail to Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq’s anti-Christian polemic, a

<sup>147</sup> Qusṭā’s arguments reveal a detailed knowledge of the Qurʾān. On p. 150, he identifies Qurʾānic passages in which the syntax or word form has been changed to make a verse rhyme, as when the order of Mūsā and Hārūn is switched when a word ending in “ā” is needed for the rhyme. On p. 162, he quotes Qurʾān 53:1 “By the star that descends” and argues that it would be better to have “By the star that rises,” since people always swear by an ascending, and not a descending, star. The former appears only because of the rhyme.

<sup>148</sup> “After him was Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, from whom came the heretics who are in your era, the movement that does not engage in debate (*jadāl*)” (p. 193).

<sup>149</sup> See Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, *Petits traités*, 92, from the treatise *Jawāb al-shaykh Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī ‘an maṣ’ala*. Abū Qurra also makes an argument to this effect. Abū Qurra, *Mīmar*, 150.

<sup>150</sup> In a passage at the conclusion of the *Critique*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār relates that common Christians seek no intellectual proof for their religion but rely blindly on their leaders, with the excuse that religious matters are beyond comprehension:

Now most of the clear-sighted among them say: “Our way is that we are submissive to the leaders and we are convinced of our religion through tradition. We do not demand proof for it. For the matter of [religious] law and the church is not an ordinary matter in any way.” This is what those leaders, who seek to devour their possessions and make fun of them, have put forth. Yet most of [the leaders] are heretics, as we have presented.

With “ordinary” they mean what Aristotle and other heretics say, that it is not possible for the sun, the moon and other heavenly bodies to be broken or separated, or to be hot or cold, humid or parched, sweet or acidic, heavy or light. [Their] ignorance adds to the ignorance of the Christians, doubling it. The [Christians] claim that the [philosophers] said this with proof, while [divine] lordship, prophethood, and [religious] laws are not established on proof. The elite of the Christians and their leaders are more ignorant than the commoners by many levels (p. 209).

Cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s description of the Christians’ rejection of reason: *Tathbūt*, 361. Cf. also Jāḥiẓ, *Radd*, 22.

polemic that influenced ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s thought on Christianity.<sup>151</sup> He also wrote a response to the philosopher Abū Yūsuf b. Ishāq al-Kindī’s anti-Christian polemic,<sup>152</sup> and a number of brief treatises in response to particular Muslim arguments. In one of these, Yaḥyā discusses the biblical description of Moses as a “god to Pharaoh” (Exodus 7:1), in response to an argument like that which ‘Abd al-Jabbār raises in the *Critique*. ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes Exodus 7:1 (p. 117) to argue that Christ’s biblical appellation “son of God” is metaphorical (see chapter 3, section 2.2). This argument is based on the concretization of the term “god;” that is, if it has a metaphorical sense in Exodus 7:1, then it must have the same sense in the New Testament. Yaḥyā, however, argues that “god” may in one place signify the divinity of Christ and in another place mean simply, “anything that is venerated and honored, as when the Prophet David (peace be upon him) said ‘god of gods, the Lord speaks,’<sup>153</sup> or as it is related in the Tawrāt that God (mighty and exalted) said to Moses: ‘I have made you a god to Pharaoh.’”<sup>154</sup>

In a second treatise, *Maqāla fī ṣiḥḥat i’tiqād al-naṣārā fī l-bān* ‘*azza wa-jalla annahu jawhar wāḥid dhū thalāth ṣiḥāt*,<sup>155</sup> Yaḥyā uses the term *ṣiḥāt*, which Muslim *mutakallimūn* use for the divine attributes, to refer to the divine hypostases.<sup>156</sup> By so doing Yaḥyā defines Christian doctrine in Muslim terms—an apologetic strategy that has a long tradition among Christian authors.<sup>157</sup> In this treatise, Yaḥyā describes the Trinity using the model of intellection, a model that he also briefly mentions in his reply to Warrāq.<sup>158</sup> He finds this analogy more appropriate than that of a mirror:

<sup>151</sup> See chapters two and four of the present work; Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic*, 47ff.

<sup>152</sup> See A. Périer, “Un traité de Yaḥyā ben ‘Adī,” *Revue de l’Orient Chrétien* 22 (1920–1), 2–21.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Psalm 49:1.

<sup>154</sup> Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, *Petits traités*, 94–5. Cf. also Yaḥyā’s discussion of the term “God” in *Jawāb ‘an radd Abī Isā al-Warrāq ‘alā l-naṣārā fī l-i’tihād*, 78–9.

<sup>155</sup> See Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, *Petits traités*, 11–23.

<sup>156</sup> Christian authors more often use *aqānīm*, a term borrowed from Syriac.

<sup>157</sup> The earliest record of such an argument may be that of John of Damascus in his *Dialogue Between a Saracen and a Christian*, ed. J.-P. Migne in *Patrologia Graeca* 96 (1864), 1335–1347; also edited (and translated into Arabic) by M. Seale, *Yuhannā al-Dīmahsī fī ḥiwār ma’a aḥad al-sharāḥiyyīn* (Beirut: n.p., 1968). See p. 31 for the Greek text on Jesus as Spirit and Word of God in the Qur’ān. See also R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 486.

<sup>158</sup> See Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī, *Jawāb ‘an radd Abī Isā al-Warrāq ‘alā l-naṣārā fī l-i’tihād*, 11–12.

The comparison [of the Trinity] with the intellect (*ʿaql*), the perceiver (*ʿāqil*) and the perceived (*maʿqūl*) is more accurate and correct, so we will mention it. For we say that everything which is perceived (*yuʿqal*) is perceived by the intellect, and the intellect is one of the things that is perceptible (*maʿqūla*). So it is clear that the intellect can only be perceived by the intellect. And it is clear that the intellect is an existing essence and that the notion of intellect does not necessitate that it be perceiving (*ʿāqil*) or perceived (*maʿqūl*). . . .

Thus [the one who perceives] has three different attributes—I mean that he is intellect, perceiver and perceived—and yet is one essence. . . . So it has been clearly shown how the intellect, the perceiver and the perceived compare to the Father, the Son and the Spirit.<sup>159</sup>

This concept, not unrelated to the Augustinian psychological analogy for the Trinity (memory, intellect, will), also finds a place in the *Critique*. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, however, argues that this analogy is a reflection of the secular origins of Christianity:

This declaration of three of the Christians is like the [belief] of the Roman philosophers, that the intellect (*ʿaql*), the perceiver (*ʿāqil*) and the perceived (*maʿqūl*) become one thing (p. 169, ll. 1–2).<sup>160</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār expands on this argument in a second passage, later in the *Tathbīt*:

[God] says, “Say: O People of the Book, do not go to extremes in your religion, leaving the truth. Do not follow the whims of a people that have gone astray before. Often they have gone astray, gone astray from the straight path.”<sup>161</sup>

This means: O community of Christians, you believed in the prophethood of Moses and the prophets before Jesus, confirming their scriptures. All of them brought a [statement of] pure monotheism, and that He is one god, self-sufficient, pre-eternal, that there is no god but He. They did not know of that which the Christians state regarding substance, hypostases, union and these sorts of things . . . (p. 429, ll. 12–16).

<sup>159</sup> Yahyā b. ʿAdī, *Petits traités*, 18–19, 21.

<sup>160</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār continues: “They also called Hermes, the ancient philosopher, the Threefold Hermes [*harmas al-muthallath*]” (Read *هرمس المثلث وهرمس فيلسوف قديم* for *هرمس المثلث وهرمس فيلسوف قديم* (ms. 79r); Cf. Stern, “Account,” 148, n. 5). He has in mind here Hermes Trismegistus, Ar. *Harmas* (or *Harmīs*, *Hirmīs*) *al-muthallath bi-l-ḥikma*, “Hermes of threefold wisdom” (cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, 327). In Muslim tradition Hermes Trismegistus, known in Greek religion as an incarnate god (the Greek version of the Egyptian Thoth) and the author of philosophical and magical works, became a prophetic/magical character who had (not surprisingly) three incarnations, the first as the Prophet *Idrīs* (or *Akhnūkh*, Enoch). See M. Plessner, “Hirmīs,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 3:463–4. On Hermes in Islam, see the dissertation of K. Van Bladel, Yale University, forthcoming.

<sup>161</sup> Qurʾān 5:77.

So now consider this statement, may God have mercy on you: The substance, hypostases and union are from Aristotle and those like him who maintain that [the world] is uncreated, who consider the Messengers liars and reject their mission. For they say: “If a person knows something, he unifies with it. For the intellect (‘*aql*), the perceiver (‘*āqil*) and the perceived (‘*ma‘qūl*) become one thing. The three are one and the one is three” (p. 430, ll. 1–4).

‘Abd al-Jabbār maintains that the resort to the philosophical model of the intellect shows that the real source of Christian Trinitarian doctrine is the philosophy of heathens, not the religion of the Prophet Jesus. This is part of a larger *theologoumenon*. In the accounts of Paul and Constantine, ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues that Greco-Roman paganism led to the corruption of Jesus’ Islamic religion. Here he suggests that Greco-Roman philosophy also contributed to this process. Ironically, Yahyā himself argues that “Christians did not take their religion from the philosophers, so it is valid for them to have contrary views.”<sup>162</sup>

#### 2.4.6. *Christian Mujādilūn: An Anonymous Literalist*

Despite this argument, scholars like Yahyā did seek to build intellectual positions that were defensible against Muslim attacks. Yet their concern with constructing a theological fortress was considered excessive by some Christians. Something like the conflict between the *mutakallimūn* and the *ahl al-ḥadīth* occurred also in the Christian community. ‘Abd al-Jabbār exploits this conflict to his advantage. The philosophically-minded apologists, according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, “take Christianity as a cover but the Christians are not pleased with them.”<sup>163</sup> In another passage ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes a second Christian source, who opposes the very methods of those apologists:

They say, “The one who pointed out about [our doctrine]<sup>164</sup> that ‘God is truly Begetter and his son was Begotten from him as the light of the sun is Begotten from the sun, or as the word is Begotten from the intellect’ is incorrect. As for us, we do not say that He is Begetter or

<sup>162</sup> Yahyā b. ‘Adī, *Petits traités*, 92, from the treatise *Jawāb al-shaykh Yahyā b. ‘Adī ‘an mas’ala*.

<sup>163</sup> *Tathbīt*, 75. He continues by quoting the Christian priest and scientist Yuḥannā b. Yūsuf (d. ca. 370/980; on whom see Sezgin, 5:298), who argues that these scholars intentionally deleted the more heretical views of the Greek philosophers in order to preserve them.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Yahyā b. ‘Adī, *Jawāb ‘an radd Abī ‘Isā al-Warrāq ‘alā l-naṣārā fī l-ittihād*, 93 and 198.

that He truly has a son through this defective [manner]. Rather, we have presented the statement of the Fathers and the exemplars.

They decided<sup>165</sup> upon this statement in order to avoid falsely representing God with created things that have intercourse and marry. Thus they liken Him to lifeless, inorganic things. They have fallen into evil and not fled from it. They have rejected necessity. For Mary birthed Christ, god of all, with a valid birth, comprehensible in its truth. [This is like] the birth of living, rational beings, but without marriage or intercourse. Yet one who says that Mary did not truly become pregnant with Christ, nor truly birth Christ, and that she is not truly the mother of Christ, is not within the Christian sects. Just as one who says that Christ is not truly god, nor truly the Lord of creatures, is neither a Melkite, nor a Jacobite, nor a Nestorian."

They say, "The exemplar among us has said, 'The hand that the Jews nailed to the wood is the hand which kneaded the clay of Adam and created him. This is the hand that measured the sky and this is the hand that wrote the Tawrāt for Moses'" (p. 104, ll. 4–17).

The anonymous Christian quoted by 'Abd al-Jabbār dismisses the philosophical arguments of Christian apologists. He rejects the analogy of the light from the sun to describe the Trinity, an analogy used by 'Ammār al-Baṣrī and the Nestorian patriarch Timothy.<sup>166</sup> He rejects the analogy of the intellect to describe the same, an analogy used by Yaḥyā b. 'Adī.

In the *Mughnī* 'Abd al-Jabbār argues against the logic of these analogies.<sup>167</sup> Here he undermines them by using the voice of a Christian unashamed of anthropomorphism, one who considers the neat theological formulas of Christian apologies to be a betrayal of the true faith. But who are these Christians who were opposed to the techniques of the apologists? The answer may lie in a reference that 'Abd al-Jabbār makes, in a passage quoted above, to a movement (*madhhab*) of Christians that "do not engage in debate (*jadal*)" (p. 193, l. 2).

<sup>165</sup> Read قَرَرُوا for قَرَرُوا (ms. 48v).

<sup>166</sup> 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, *K. al-Masā'il wa-l-ajwiba*, in Hayek, 'Ammār, 204 and "The Apology of Timothy," 75, 78. On this argument, see also the anonymous 2nd/8th century *Fi tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid*, ed. M.D. Gibson, in "On the Triune Nature of God," *Studia Sinaitica* 6 (1899), 74–8. See also S.K. Samir, "The earliest Arab apology for Christianity (c. 750)," *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid period (750–1258)* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 57–114.

<sup>167</sup> On the analogy of the sun, see 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:81, 102–103; Cf. Warrāq, *al-Radd 'alā l-tathlīth*, 68, 164–70; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, 2:330, 355–6. On the analogy of the intellect, see 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 5:81, 102; cf. Warrāq, *al-Radd 'alā l-tathlīth*, 68, 164–170; Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, 315.

‘Abd al-Jabbār identifies them as disciples of Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī and describes them as “the heretics who are in your era.”

A foreshadowing of their method may be found in the argument of Abū Qurra cited above, in which he maintains that the failure of Christianity to convince by logic is itself a proof that it must have been accepted due to miraculous signs. In his *K. al-Burhān* ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī makes a similar argument:

Let us consider the approval [of religion] and that which one’s mind might invent so that it would find recognition in one’s thoughts and so that the intellect would accept it. You might imagine that this is the cause of the acceptance [of a religion], and not miraculous signs (*āyāt*). Well, I see the Christian religion entirely in contradiction to this [idea]. For the ones who called [people] to it called them to things and informed them of news which one’s mind would not invent, which would not find recognition in one’s thoughts or occur to one’s brain and which one’s intellect would not imagine.<sup>168</sup>

### 3. Syriac Sources

In light of the wealth of Christian Arabic material available to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, there is no compelling reason to posit that he somehow read, or had read for him, a Syriac text. There is no evidence in the *Critique* that he could read Syriac, even if at one point he tells the reader that “*‘Ishū*” is Syriac for Jesus (*‘Īsā*)” (p. 100, ll. 4–5). Most English speakers know that “Jean” is French for “John” yet wouldn’t be able to make heads or tails of *Les jeux sont faits*. And as English speakers like to use French terms like “*chef d’œuvre*” and “*laissez-faire*” to show their erudition, Muslim scholars might make a Syriac reference to impress their reader.<sup>169</sup> Yet Syriac was (and is) a Christian language, generally outside the curriculum of a Muslim scholar. Notice ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s comment: “[The Christians] say regarding evil ones that they are sons of Satans (*shayāṭīn*) and many similar things in their language” (p. 120, ll. 18–19).<sup>170</sup> Muslim scholars who read Syriac were those, like ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, who converted from

<sup>168</sup> ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, *K. al-Burhān*, in Hayek, *‘Ammār*, 36. Cf. ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, *K. al-Masā’il wa-l-ajwiba*, in Hayek, *‘Ammār*, 138–9, where ‘Ammār restates a version of this argument.

<sup>169</sup> See, for example, Ibn Qutayba in Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Wafā*, 72.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Jāhīz, *Radd*, 36.



Christianity. There is also no compelling evidence within the *Critique* that ‘Abd al-Jabbār somehow included a Syriac text within this work, despite the assertions of Pines to the contrary.<sup>171</sup>

It is true that ‘Abd al-Jabbār includes Syriac terms in his work, but now it is clear that he adopted these terms from two sources: local Christian traditions and Christian Arabic texts with arabicized Syriac terms. From the first source no doubt come expressions such as *‘ariq ma’nāthā* in the story of the lazy monk (see chapter 3, section 2.4), or titles such as *rabbān*, with which a Christian addresses a monk (p. 202, l. 6).<sup>172</sup> The importance of the second source is clear from the abundance of Syriac terms in the Arabic writings of the Nestorians Ibn al-Ṭayyib<sup>173</sup> and ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī.<sup>174</sup> That this source is relevant to the *Critique* is seen in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s quotation of Ibn Bahrīz’s letter and his description of it as a translation into Arabic from Syriac. In this way, most likely, Syriac ecclesiastical and liturgical

<sup>171</sup> Pines finds evidence for this, for example, in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s phrase *magh-lūbīn ma’a l-rūm* (p. 157, l. 1; ms. 73r), which in the context should mean “subject to the Romans.” Pines, “Studies in Christianity,” 109, n. 14. Pines argues that *ma’a* here, which is indeed awkward Arabic, is a literal translation of Syriac *lewāt*, a slip that reveals a Syriac document behind the *Critique*. Yet *lewāt* does not do a better job of representing the prepositional force suggested by the context (“to” as in “subject to” or “by” as in “conquered by”). See Payne Smith, 238–9 and Brockelmann, *Lexicon syriacum*, (Halis Saxonium: Max Niemeyer, 1928), 362.

In another case Pines argued at first that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s syntax is Syriac, but later retracted this argument. In *Jewish Christians* (p. 51, n. 189) Pines reads a passage in the *Critique* (p. 200, l. 4) as, سأل لمريم “He asked Mary,” pace the editor, ‘Uthmān, who reads it as, قال لمريم. As Pines correctly points out, the Arabic verb *sa’ala* takes a direct object, with no preposition, and thus his proposed reading would be grammatically impossible in Arabic. It would be possible in Syriac, however, where the preposition “l” is the direct object marker. Yet upon reading the ms. again Pines conceded that ‘Uthmān’s reading was the better one, rendering the sentence perfectly grammatical Arabic. See Pines, “Israel My Firstborn,” 178, n. 3. In another case, ‘Uthmān argues that the text is under Syriac influence, where it again might be read as perfectly normal Arabic. I refer here to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s version of Jn 11:41 (p. 113), the resurrection of Lazarus, where I would read يا ابي or يا ابي instead of يا ايل (in line with Mt 26:39, Mk 14:36, and Lk 22:42; see note in chapter 4, section 2.2).

<sup>172</sup> (Read رباب for رين [95v]). See Crone, p. 88, n. 164. “*Rabbān*” is indeed a Syriac term (meaning “our teacher”); it is the title in the Peshitta by which the disciples address Jesus (e.g. Jn 11:8. Cf. also the use of this Syriac term in the Arabic *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 4:3 [1981], 251).

<sup>173</sup> See Ibn al-Ṭayyib’s *Fiḥ al-naṣrāniyya*, which is filled with Syriac terms transliterated into Arabic. Refer to the glossary of the edition: 2:201ff.

<sup>174</sup> “Sa langue maternelle, sans doute le syriaque. . . .” Hayek, ‘*Ammār*, intro. 41. ‘Ammār himself at one point states that “We name them, in the Syriac language, three hypostases (*aqānīm*).” ‘Ammār al Baṣrī, *K. al-Masā’il wa-l-aḥwibā*, in Hayek, ‘*Ammār*, 162.



vocabulary entered the *Critique*, such as *fātūr* (p. 93, l. 13),<sup>175</sup> which comes from the Syriac *petūrā* (“table”) and is used especially in the East Syrian Church to mean “altar,” and the name that ‘Abd al-Jabbār gives (p. 122, l. 2) to Good Friday, *jum’a ḥashsha* (cf. Syr. *‘erūwtā d-ḥashshā*).<sup>176</sup> ‘Abd al-Jabbār (p. 183, l. 8) also describes the apparel of the priest with Syriac terms, including *kutīn* (Syr. *kūtīnā*) for a linen garment.<sup>177</sup> The terms and names in the *Critique* with a Syriac origin that I mention earlier (chapter 2, section 3.3) might be added to the preceding examples.

#### 4. Jewish Sources

Thus ‘Abd al-Jabbār took full advantage of Christian sources in the *Critique*. What, then, about other non-Muslim sources? In ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s day there were still significant communities of Zoroastrians and Jews in Rayy and the surrounding region.<sup>178</sup> There are only a couple of indications, however, that ‘Abd al-Jabbār was influenced by Zoroastrian sources.<sup>179</sup> This fact, combined with the more pressing

<sup>175</sup> Read فاتور for فاتورة (ms. 43r). See G. Graf, *Verzeichnis*, 82, who refers to M. ‘Amrī, *De patriarchus nestorianorum*, ed. H. Gismondi, 2 vols. (Rome: n.p., 1896), 2:94. The same word is used by the Nestorian Ibn al-Ṭayyib: 2:177. See also above, chapter 2, section 3.3.

<sup>176</sup> Read جمعة حشا for جمعة حشا (ms. 57r).

<sup>177</sup> See Brockelmann, *Lexicon syriacum*, 352–3. This is the term used to describe Aaron’s robe in the Syriac Peshitta, Exodus 39:27, etc. ‘Abd al-Jabbār also states that the priest carries in his hand a كرار, which may come from the Syriac *krūlā*, meaning “hook” or, in this context, a hooked staff. See Brockelmann, *Lexicon syriacum*, 346–7. I am unable to identify another term that ‘Abd al-Jabbār reports, which appears in the ms. (86v) as جودبا and ودار.

<sup>178</sup> M. Morony comments regarding Zoroastrians: “The testimony of Muslim geographers indicates that the Mājūs were still widespread and fairly numerous in Iran and the east as late as the 4th/10th century. . . . They were numerous in al-Jibāl, where they could be found at Rayy and in villages near Qumm. . . .” M. Morony, “Mājūs,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 5:1112. The notable presence of Jews in Jibāl is confirmed by the early 6th/12th travelers Benjamin of Tudela (d. 1137) and Pethahiah of Regensburg, who count 30,000 Jews in Hamadhān, 15,000 in Iṣfahān and 10,000 in Shirāz. Muqaddasī comments that in the province of Jibāl the Jews were more numerous than Christians. On this, see Gabriel, 28–9; “Persia,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 13:311. For ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s anti-Jewish polemic in the *Critique*, see *Tathbūt* 124–5, 132–3; for anti-Zoroastrian polemic, see 179–80, 192.

<sup>179</sup> The most important of these appears on p. 179, where ‘Abd al-Jabbār comments on his familiarity with a Zoroastrian work: “I have verified this from what Aturpāt, the son of Emēt, the *mūbadh* has mentioned, describing how Peshōtan does not eat, drink, urinate or defecate.” Emēt refers to a 4th/10th century Zoroastrian

matter of my ignorance of those sources, compels me to focus on the possibility of Jewish sources to the *Critique*.

#### 4.1. Toledoth Yeshu<sup>6</sup>

Both Stern and Pines consider the possibility that the *Critique* is related to an early Jewish anti-Christian work: the *Toledoth Yeshu*<sup>6</sup> (*tōlēdōt yēshū*<sup>6</sup>, “The Biography of Jesus”). The date and author of the *Toledoth*, a text that varies significantly in different extant manuscripts, are unknown. S. Krauss, who edited and translated various versions of the *Toledoth*, argues that the earliest form of this work was written during the first Christian centuries, perhaps even as early as the time of Justin Martyr (d. ca. 135).<sup>180</sup> Krauss also argues that the *Toledoth* affected the Qur’ānic picture of Jesus. Like the Qur’ān (3:49, 5:110), the *Toledoth* contains the story of Jesus forming a bird from clay and bringing it to life.<sup>181</sup> Moreover, as Krauss argues, the Qur’ān’s defense of Mary’s virginity (4:156, 19:27–32) seems to be a response to a Jewish anti-Christian polemic like the *Toledoth*, which accuses her of conceiving Jesus through illicit sex.<sup>182</sup>

There are some signs, then, of a vague relationship between the ideas of the *Toledoth* and those of the Qur’ān. However, the *Toledoth* and the *Critique* are fundamentally different. The *Toledoth* is unfailingly hostile to Mary and Jesus, portraying the former as a harlot and the latter as a sorcerer, whose power comes not from God but from his

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priest, described as the leader of the Zoroastrians in Fars and Kirmān, editor of chapter three of the Zoroastrian scripture the *Dēnkart*. *Mūbadh* is a Persian title derived from *magū-pat*, “Head of the Mages,” given to a leader of the Zoroastrian priests. It is noteworthy here that Aturpāt is so identified, since the title appears only rarely in the Islamic era. See Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans*, 287, n. 1; M. Guidi, “Mōbadh,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 7:215. Notice also ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s comparison (on pp. 163–4 and quoted above, chapter 3, section 2.3) of Constantine with the Zoroastrian Persian ruler Ardashīr.

<sup>180</sup> The first reliable excerpt of the text, however, is in a ninth century Latin Christian work by Agobard bishop of Lyon. See Introduction to *Das Leben Jesu*, ed. S. Krauss (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1902), pp. 2–5. Cf. H. Schonfield, *According to the Hebrews* (Duckworth: London, 1937), intro.

<sup>181</sup> See *Das Leben Jesu*, 42 (Hebrew), 54 (German translation) and 119 (Hebrew), 125 (German translation). This narrative also occurs in a number of apocryphal gospels including the *Infancy Story of Thomas* (see *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:444), the *Arabic Infancy Gospel*, and the *Armenian Book of the Childhood*. On this, see G. Anawati, “‘Isā,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 4:82. See also D. Thomas, “The Miracles of Jesus in Early Islamic Polemic,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39 (1994), 221–43.

<sup>182</sup> That the Qur’ān’s defense of Mary is directed against the Jews is evident from 4:156, which forms part of an anti-Jewish pericope (including 4:157–8) in which the Jewish claim to have killed Jesus is also countered. See *Das Leben Jesu*, 197–8.

abuse of the mysterious letters of God's name.<sup>183</sup> In its hostility to Mary and Jesus the text is not only anti-Christian but also anti-Islamic, and thus directly opposed to the *Critique*, a text that supports the Islamic teaching of Jesus as a prophet and of Mary as his God-fearing mother. Although both texts have Paul declaring all foods ritually clean,<sup>184</sup> there is little else to suggest that one text is reliant on the other.<sup>185</sup> The account in the *Toledoth*,<sup>186</sup> where Paul (whose true name, according to the account, is Elijah) acts as an agent for

<sup>183</sup> See *Das Leben Jesu*, 40 (Hebrew), 53 (German translation).

<sup>184</sup> See *Tathbūt*, 159 and *Das Leben Jesu*, 48 (Hebrew), 61 (German translation).

<sup>185</sup> Stern and Pines argue that the *Toledoth* and the *Critique* are related, yet they come up with opposite theories about what kind of relationship exists between them. Pines suggests that the *Critique* (or, according to him, the mysterious Judaeo-Christian text that lies behind the *Critique*) came first, and the *Toledoth* was an orthodox Jewish response to it. See *Jewish Christians*, 43. His theory relates closely to that of H. Schonfield, who argues that the *Toledoth* was written in the early Christian era as a Jewish response to the now lost "Gospel of the Hebrews." Pines also points out that both texts describe some sort of conflict at the genesis of the Christian community, quoting a passage from the *Critique* that I cite above (chapter 3, section 2.1): "Now after Christ, his followers conducted their prayers and feasts with the Jews [*yahūd*] and the Israelites [*banī Isrā'īl*] in one place, in their synagogues [*kanā'isihim*], despite the conflict between them over Christ" (p. 152, my translation). He compares this "conflict" with one described in the *Toledoth*: "There was a great war and massacre between them. Many appalling acts and many deaths occurred and much money was lost. People were mercilessly killing their relatives. Yet they did not leave the Torah of Israel, although the Jews could not enter the Temple due to the traitors" (Hebrew 82, German, 109). Pines comments, with remarkable understatement: "*Toldot Yeshu* put the emphasis on the hostility and the fighting" (*Jewish Christians*, 41). He concludes from this that both texts are ultimately concerned with the same question: "whether the Jewish Christians would continue to live as Jews and with the Jews, or whether there would be a clean split" (*Jewish Christians*, 42). His conclusion is that the author of the *Toledoth* is in favor of that split, while the mysterious Judaeo-Christian author of the *Critique* is opposed to it.

However, the conflicts that the two texts describe are patently different. The conflict story of the *Critique* (p. 152) is Islamic; it describes the falsification of Jesus' religion and the disappearance of the true Gospel. The conflict story of the *Toledoth* is Jewish; it praises those Jews who remained faithful to the Torah despite persecution. Incidentally, the idea that there was a war between the Jews and the early followers of Christ is more explicitly stated in the *tafsīr* of Tha'labī (5:33).

Stern's argument goes in the opposite direction of Pines: the *Critique* was written after the *Toledoth*, and 'Abd al-Jabbār borrowed from the anti-Christian ideas of the latter text in writing his treatise. Crone (p. 85, n. 149) seems to see it the same way when she comments: "It is doubtless because Helen appears as the queen of Israel in the *Toledoth* that she has become the wife of Pilate in 'Abd al-Jabbār." She also argues (Ibid.) that this influence can be seen from the fact that in the *Critique* (p. 139) Jesus is crucified in a field of melons and vegetables, while in the *Toledoth* (p. 46, Hebrew, 59, German translation) his body is hidden in a garden. This argument, however, seems to be a case of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, since there is no proof that the *Toledoth* was ever translated into Arabic from Hebrew or Aramaic.

<sup>186</sup> See, for example, pp. 47–8 (Hebrew), 60–1 (German translation) and 82–5 (Hebrew), 109–112 (German translation).

the Jews, separating the followers of Jesus from Judaism, has much more in common with the Muslim narratives, particularly that of Tha'labī, on the origin of the three Christian sects (see chapter 4, section 2.3.1.1). In the *Toledoth*, as in Tha'labī's *Tafsīr*, Paul is courageous, an undercover agent on a mission. In the *Critique*, as 'Abd al-Jabbār puts it, Paul is nothing more than "a wicked and evil Jew" (p. 156, l. 4).

Thus the Paul of the *Toledoth* is unlike the Paul of the *Critique*. Yet characteristics of the latter are found in a biography of Nestorius in the *Toledoth*:

After a time the kingdom of Persia was established; a gentile called Niṣṭor went away from them and babbled against them, as the heretics babbled against the wise, and said to them, "Paul erred in his writing when he said to you that you should not be circumcised; rather it is by a just ordinance that you should be circumcised, since Jesus was circumcised. Jesus said, furthermore, 'I have not come to erase even one word from the law of Moses, but rather to complete all of his words.'<sup>187</sup> Furthermore you are unbelievers since you say that Jesus is God and that he was Begotten of a woman, although the Holy Spirit rested upon him as [upon] the prophets."

And this Niṣṭor was the first one who created a quarrel against the Christians because he beguiled women. He said to them, "I rule that they should not be permitted to take other than one wife." And thus Niṣṭor became loved by the women. And as Niṣṭor was abhorred in their (masc.) eyes, there arose a controversy between them; and accordingly no Christian would pray to the abomination of Niṣṭor and the faction of Niṣṭor to the abomination of the Christians.<sup>188</sup>

The dictates of Nestorius in the first paragraph above do not resemble those of Paul in the *Critique*; they resemble the opinions of 'Abd al-Jabbār himself. This Nestorius blames Paul for annulling Jesus' teaching on circumcision (cf. *Tathbīt*, 149); he quotes Mt 5:17–9 and Lk 16:17 to prove that Jesus did not annul the law of Moses (cf. *Tathbīt*, 149–50, 188); and he maintains that Jesus is not God but rather like the prophets. Yet in the second paragraph the Nestorius of the *Toledoth* acts as the Paul of the *Critique* does, ruling that a

<sup>187</sup> This quotation (a paraphrase of Mt 5:17–9 and Lk 16:17, not Mt 10:41, cf. S. Gero, "The Nestorius Legend in the *Toledoth Yeshu*," *OC* 59 (1975), 110, n. 15) does not appear in Gero's translation. It does appear in the version of the *Toledoth* that Kraus includes in *Das Leben Jesu*, p. 48 (Hebrew), 62 (German translation).

<sup>188</sup> Translation from Gero, "The Nestorius Legend," 110–2. Gero's translation is his own synthesis of various recensions of the text (most of which are edited by Strauss). Other recensions of the *Toledoth* do not contain the Nestorius story at all. See Gero, 109, n. 7.

man should be permitted only one wife. For this he “became loved by the women.” In the *Critique*, Paul makes the same ruling and “in this way he became popular among the women” (p. 157, ll. 19–20).

S. Gero (who considers but rejects the theory of a Judaeo-Christian origin of the *Toledoth*)<sup>189</sup> argues that the portrait of Nestorius in the *Toledoth* is a “popularized distortion of Nestorian christology” and of Nestorius as a “Jew” (although “there is absolutely no evidence that Nestorius was a Judaizer in any ritual matter.”).<sup>190</sup> Gero argues convincingly that the Nestorius story of the *Toledoth* is also related to the biography of a late fifth century East Syrian Christian, Barṣauma of Nisibis. This is evident from certain elements in the *Toledoth* narrative on Nestorius. For example, at the end of the narrative Nestorius flees to Babylon and dies at the hands of women who strike him with heavy keys. These elements are completely absent from biographical literature on Nestorius but match precisely the biography of Barṣauma.<sup>191</sup>

If Gero’s argument regarding the inter-textuality of these two biographies is correct, then the similarities of the *Toledoth* and the *Critique* may be more than a coincidence. Barṣauma was a prominent figure in East Syrian/Nestorian history (he appears, for example, in the anonymous Nestorian history *Chronique de Séert*),<sup>192</sup> and it is likely that his legend was known in the East Syrian community that surrounded ‘Abd al-Jabbār in Rayy. It is possible, then, that just as the author of the *Toledoth* used the Barṣauma legend for his polemical biography of Nestorius, ‘Abd al-Jabbār adapted the same legend for his polemical biography of Paul.

<sup>189</sup> “To be sure, the claim that Nestorius annulled Paul-Elijah’s innovations and reinstituted circumcision could point to the practices of a bona fide Jewish Christian sect; but I think that a simple explanation is that the author of the [*Toledoth*] naively accepted the charges . . . made by Nestorius’ ecclesiastical opponents that he was a Jew or a Judaizer” (p. 113). Although Gero does not cite Pines here, his statement appears as a direct rejoinder to the latter, who argues that, “The fact that Nestorius was denounced by the Council of Ephesus and by various Catholic polemicists as a Jew does not, as it seems to me, account for these statements. A reason for the latter could be found in the hypothesis referred to above, according to which the Nestorian community may have contained Jewish Christians” (*Jewish Christians*, 43).

<sup>190</sup> Gero, “The Nestorius Legend,” 113. I am grateful to S. Griffith for referring me to Gero’s work.

<sup>191</sup> On this see Gero, “The Nestorius Legend,” 114–6. The conflation of these two figures is also seen in an Arabic folk etymology of Nestorius’ name (perhaps influenced by the Greek νηστεία, “fast”) as Ibn al-Ṣawm (“Son of the Fast”), a precise translation of the Syriac Barṣauma. See Gero, 118, n. 74.

<sup>192</sup> *Histoire nestorienne*, PO 7:2 (1909), 100.

4.2. *Muqammiṣ* and *Qirqisānī*

The hypothesis that the *Critique* was directly influenced by Jewish works is more probable in light of the writings of Daʿūd b. Marwān al-Muqammiṣ (d. mid 3rd/9th),<sup>193</sup> a Jewish convert from Christianity. What is known about Muqammiṣ comes from a brief biography in the work of the Karaite Jewish scholar Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Qirqisānī (d. 4th/10th). Writing in Judaeo-Arabic, Qirqisānī recounts how Muqammiṣ, born a Jew, converted to Christianity in the city of Nisibis and learned Christian doctrine in depth under a Christian philosopher by the name of Nānā. Upon discovering the truth about Christianity, however, Muqammiṣ returned to his ancestral faith and wrote two anti-Christian works.<sup>194</sup> Both of these works have been lost, but Qirqisānī includes a quotation from one of them, a book entitled *K. al-Darāʿa*:

Dāwūd b. Marwān [al-Muqammiṣ] says, “When the Christians could not find in the Gospels any decisive regulations about certain things, they claimed that Paul and Peter—who is the Jew Abba Saul the fisherman—laid down for them laws and regulations found neither in the Gospels nor in the Tawrāt, excepting those concerning Sabbath, and that these two men commanded them to obey these laws, saying that these laws were divulged to them by Jesus. They made decisions and passed judgments according to these laws (for some time). At the time, however, when the regulations laid down by Paul and Peter were no longer sufficient to provide for their needs, (a company of) bishops assembled in the city of Nicea and laid down for them (new) regulations in addition to those of these (two men). These new laws were accepted and became the standard authority; but there is no mention of them either in the Tawrāt, or in the Gospels, or in the Canon of Peter and Paul. The Christians believe them to be the laws of God and pass judgment according to them, yet there is no (divine) authority back of it.”

<sup>193</sup> On his death date see S. Stroumsa’s introduction to *Dāwūd b. Marwān al-Muqammiṣ’s Twenty Chapters*, ed. S. Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 16.

<sup>194</sup> See L. Nemoy’s translation of this account in “al-Qirqisānī’s Account of the Jewish Sects and Christianity” (henceforth: Qirqisānī) *Hebrew Union College Annual* 7 (1930), 366. Qirqisānī’s account nowhere calls Muqammiṣ a Karaite Jew, yet later Karaite sources include him as one of their own. S. Stroumsa finds this improbable. She also refutes the suggestion put forward by Pines that Muqammiṣ was among Judaeo-Christians during his Christian period, and the suggestion of Crone that Muqammiṣ was part of a group of philo-Christian Karaites. See her introduction to *Dāwūd b. Marwān al-Muqammiṣ’s Twenty Chapters*, 18–19. Cf. Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 47, n. 176; Crone, 87–8.

(Dāwūd) says: “Whoever examines them knows it. Nor was it only these three hundred and eighteen bishops who laid down for them such regulations, on the contrary, various authorities had made similar prescriptions; and they took their direction from whichever of them they wished. . . . These bishops were at the time of Constantine the Leprous, son of the innkeeper Helena. It was he who introduced the (symbol of the) cross and built (many) churches; he killed Arius because the latter asserted that the Messiah is created. These are the men who established the (Christian) religion. They do not consider lawful any prayer, sacrifice, or worship, except the (form of worship) ordained by these men. . . .” This is the statement of Dāwūd b. Marwān al-Muqammiṣ; I have quoted it literally in order that the absurdity and weakness of the doctrines of the Christians might become clear, in fact too clear and evident to require any detailed explanation.<sup>195</sup>

Thus Muqammiṣ, like ‘Abd al-Jabbār, blames Peter, Paul and the Council of Nicaea for introducing innovations into the religion of Jesus. The difference is that, unlike ‘Abd al-Jabbār, Muqammiṣ does not believe in the prophethood of Jesus, a fact that he makes abundantly clear in a section where he refutes Islamic doctrine on this point.<sup>196</sup> Muqammiṣ is simply arguing that Christian doctrine is not built on prophetic revelation at all, but rather on humans like Paul. He has this argument in common with ‘Abd al-Jabbār, who comments in the *Critique*: “According to [the Christians] Paul is more lofty than Moses, Aaron, David and all of the prophets. When his letters and speeches are read in the church, they stand, venerating and exalting him and his words” (p. 151, ll. 1–3).

Muqammiṣ also emphasizes the role of Constantine in the invention of the Christian religion. Like ‘Abd al-Jabbār, he describes Constantine as a leper and his mother Helen as an innkeeper. Muqammiṣ’ description of Nicaea is also similar to that of ‘Abd al-Jabbār. He is aware of the tradition of the three hundred and eighteen bishops as he is aware of Constantine’s opposition to Arius, who, according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, “spoke intelligibly about their teachings” (p. 98, l. 2).<sup>197</sup> Most tellingly, perhaps, is Muqammiṣ’ statement that

<sup>195</sup> Qirqisānī, 366–9.

<sup>196</sup> Qirqisānī, 369–76. It is this section that forces Pines to suggest that Muqammiṣ was a Judaeo-Christian *only* in his Christian years.

<sup>197</sup> Arius, however, was not killed by Constantine. In fact, due to the influence of Constantia, the daughter of Constantine, he was brought back to Constantinople and was to be readmitted to the Church, when he collapsed and died while walking through the streets of the city.



“They do not consider lawful any prayer, sacrifice, or worship, except the (form of worship) ordained by these men.” ‘Abd al-Jabbār introduces his account of the Nicene Creed by stating: “no one’s faith among them is correct without it” (p. 94, l. 5).

Indeed, Qirqisānī’s account of Muqammiṣ’ teaching is fundamentally in agreement with both the content and logic of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *theologumena* in the *Critique*. Moreover, Muqammiṣ also wrote a chapter in his Judaeo-Arabic work *‘Ishrūn maqāla* on the topic of *dalā’il al-nubuwwa* and his thought generally resonates with that of ‘Abd al-Jabbār.<sup>198</sup>

Finally, it is not insignificant that Qirqisānī, who recorded Muqammiṣ’ statements, was a contemporary of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, and likely spent time in Baghdād (Qirqisān is a village thirty miles away from that city, where ‘Abd al-Jabbār spent much of his career).<sup>199</sup> Moreover, Qirqisānī debated (directly or indirectly) ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Mu’tazilī forerunners, among them Abū l-Hudhayl, Nazzām,<sup>200</sup> Ibn Khallād, and ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s own teacher Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Baṣṭī.<sup>201</sup> Thus there is reason to conclude, from both internal and external evidence, that ‘Abd al-Jabbār was aided by the ideas of Muqammiṣ in his composition of the *Critique*.

#### 4.3. Qiṣṣat mujādalat al-usquf

This conclusion is supported by evidence of a connection between the *Critique* and a second Judaeo-Arabic text, the anonymous *Qiṣṣat mujādalat al-usquf*,<sup>202</sup> a work that dates to the mid 3rd/9th century

<sup>198</sup> See Introduction to *Dāwūd b. Marwān al-Muqammiṣ’s Twenty Chapters*, 25, n. 71 and chapter fourteen of *Muqammiṣ’* work therein (pp. 263ff.). On this work Stroumsa comments, “In overall structure the *‘Ishrūn Maqāla* resembles *kalām* treatises.” Introduction to *Dāwūd b. Marwān al-Muqammiṣ’s Twenty Chapters*, 23.

<sup>199</sup> See “Qirqisānī,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 10:1027.

<sup>200</sup> Against Abū l-Hudhayl and Nazzām he argues that Muslims are reliant on Jewish and Christian reports for their information on Moses and Jesus. See Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf al-Qirqisānī (d. 4th/10th), *Anwār wa-l-marāqib*, ed. L. Nemoy, 5 vols. (New York: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1939–43), 304. On this, see van Ess, *TG*, 3:268.

<sup>201</sup> D. Sklare, “Responses to Islamic Polemics by Jewish Mutakallimūn in the Tenth Century,” *The Majlis*, 137–61. It is noteworthy, too, that later Karaite Jewish scholars, including Yūsuf al-Baṣṭī (Joseph ha-Rō’eh, d. ca. 431/1040) and his student Abū l-Faraj Furqān b. Asad (Jeshua b. Judah), refer repeatedly to the works of ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself. See Sklare, 145, n. 29 and Schmidtke, “Neuere forschungen,” 404.

<sup>202</sup> I am grateful to S. Stroumsa for directing me to this text.



and is influenced by the thought of Muqammiṣ.<sup>203</sup> Like Muqammiṣ, the author of the *Qisṣa* claims to be a convert from Christianity. In the *Qisṣa* he is identified as a former priest named Nestorius. (Once again, the character who bears this name is associated with Judaism, an effect, no doubt, of anti-Nestorian polemics). The author insists on following the Mosaic Law that was practiced and taught by Jesus, quoting Mt 5:17–9 (cf. Lk 16:17) on two separate occasions to support his case. ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes these same verse, also on two occasions, to the same effect (see pp. 149–50, 188). Both authors point out that Jesus was circumcised in support of this argument.<sup>204</sup>

Yet unlike the *Critique*, the *Qisṣa* is a Jewish text, openly hostile to Jesus in a way that is quite reminiscent of the *Toledoth Yeshu’*. The author describes Jesus as a drunkard, remarking scornfully, “even a black slave, purchased for ten dirhems, will be immediately resold if found to have such traits as the propensity to wine-drinking.”<sup>205</sup> Elsewhere the author castigates Jesus for violating the Mosaic Law by sleeping in unclean stables and breaking the Sabbath,<sup>206</sup> an offense for which he deserved death.<sup>207</sup> This hostile tone is understandable. While the Muslim author of the *Critique* considers Jesus a prophet, the Jewish author of the *Qisṣa* considers him a false prophet.

Both authors, however, are interested in constructing similar arguments against Christian anti-nomianism and the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus. Thus many of the biblical passages that appear in the *Critique* appear also in the Jewish text.<sup>208</sup> Both texts also condemn the Christian veneration of the Cross, which they depict as

<sup>203</sup> *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest*, ed. and trans. D.J. Lasker and S. Stroumsa, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1996), 1:19. “It is likely, therefore, that at least an early version of this polemical treatise was circulating in the Muslim world in the ninth century.” *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest*, 1:18. On the relation between the *Qisṣa* and Muqammiṣ, see 1:18–9.

<sup>204</sup> *Tathbīt*, 149, 160; *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest*, par. 124. Incidentally, the editors of the *Qisṣa* point out (1:21) that this argument need not signify that the author of the treatise was a Judaeo-Christian: “The ‘Jewish-Christian’ material in *Qisṣa*, is, thus, a polemical asset and does not reflect the historical identity of the author.” Precisely the same could be said about the “Jewish-Christian” material of the *Critique*.

<sup>205</sup> *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest*, par. 97, cf. pars. 85, 95.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 87.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 127.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. John 20:17 (*Qisṣa*, pars. 43, 141, *Tathbīt*, p. 199); Mt 26:39–40, Mk 14:36, Lk 22:42–4 (*Qisṣa*, par. 53, *Tathbīt*, pp. 113–4); Mt 27:41, Mk 15:34 (*Qisṣa*, par. 54, *Tathbīt*, pp. 122, 139); Jn 12:49 and 14:24 (*Qisṣa*, par. 57, *Tathbīt*, p. 112); the baptism of Jesus (*Qisṣa*, pars. 68, 115, *Tathbīt*, pp. 101, 199); the temptation of Jesus (*Qisṣa*, pars. 61, 142–5, 148, *Tathbīt*, pp. 165–6).

idolatry. ‘Abd al-Jabbār: “In [the true Injīl] there was no mention of the Cross or the crucifixion” (p. 153, ll. 11–12). The author of the *Qisṣa* relates: “As for the Cross, it was installed by a harlot called ‘the mother of Constantine the Little,’ two hundred years after Jesus. In the Bible there is no mention of the Cross whatsoever.”<sup>209</sup>

Most telling, perhaps, is the basic argument in the *Qisṣa* regarding the historical origins of Christianity. Like Muqammiṣ and ‘Abd al-Jabbār, the author of the *Qisṣa* argues that Christianity was formed when the followers of Jesus abandoned the law of the prophets and followed the whims of the pagan Romans. Thus the basic *theologoumenon* that shapes the *Critique* was present in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s day in the ideas of Judaeo-Arabic authors, authors with whom the Mu‘tazila had frequent interaction.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest*, par. 134. ‘Abd al-Jabbār is also aware of the Christian tradition of Helen and the discovery of the true Cross. See *Tathbīt*, 223.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. the comments of D. Sklare, “A common ground of discourse for the Jew and Muslim was furnished by Mu‘tazilite *Kalām*. All of the authors mentioned above were *mutakallimūn* and they shared with their Muslim counterparts a common view of the world, of how religion and revelation worked, and of particular importance, they shared a common conceptual vocabulary for discussing the epistemology of revelation and traditions.” Sklare, 140.



## CONCLUSION

### THE *CRITIQUE* AND THE SECTARIAN MILIEU

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s portrait of Christianity in the *Critique* is marked by a number of themes: the desire of Christians for power, the influence of paganism on their religion, the deception of their religious leaders and their fascination with miracles. In the present work I argue that the direct source of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s concern with these themes was the inter- and intra-religious discussion of his day in which they were the primary issues of contention. I present the Muslim and non-Muslim antecedents to ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s writing in order to make this connection evident. Hence ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Critique* emerges as a product of the sectarian milieu of the medieval Islamic world.

Nevertheless, the *Critique* is also a product of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s particular science—*kalām*—and it is perhaps this fact that keeps it from being a complete portrait of Christianity. True to his vocation as a *mutakallim*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār describes the beliefs of his opponent in the *Critique* only to deconstruct them. He departs from this science only inasmuch as he forgoes the method of *masā’il wa-ajwiba* that dominates other early polemical works on Christianity (including his own *Mughnī*) and uses history, exegesis and anecdote in its place. Happily, this departure yields extraordinary results. It leads ‘Abd al-Jabbār to develop an Islamic history of Christianity, an Islamic reading of the Bible and an Islamic interpretation of Christian practice. However, it must not be forgotten that these results are only by-products of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s primary project, which is simply to build individual arguments, *theologumena*, against his opponent.

Indeed, ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s concern with *theologumena* makes for a work which, when seen as a whole, appears disjointed. For example, he enthusiastically accepts the authority of the Bible when it supports a particular argument, and no less enthusiastically rejects that authority when it contradicts another argument. Similarly, he criticizes Christians for not following the Mosaic Law even though he, as a Muslim, likewise considers this law to be abrogated. In this way, ‘Abd al-Jabbār promotes particular arguments over general

consistency.<sup>1</sup> Yet the apparent inconsistencies in the *Critique* are not due to its author's oversight, but rather to his goal. 'Abd al-Jabbār's concern is not to create one synthetic theory of religion, but rather to defeat Christianity point by point. In this way, his vision of Christianity develops according to the exigencies of religious disputation, not in advance thereof.<sup>2</sup>

It is this fact that separates the *Critique* from the work of a scholar such as Ya'qūbī, whose concern in addressing Christianity is to construct a coherent history of a religion. It is this fact, meanwhile, that connects the *Critique* to the work of the various polemical writers discussed in the preceding pages. As Charfi concludes, that Christianity is completely in error is accepted *a priori* by these writers; what separates them is the method by which they show that this is in fact the case.<sup>3</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār's method is both original and sophisticated. On this basis alone the *Critique* is worthy of notice.

However, in this age of religious dialogue the disputational style of an author like 'Abd al-Jabbār will perhaps not appeal to the reader, who might rather read devotional or literary works that seem less pedantic. Indeed, it did not appeal to some of 'Abd al-Jabbār's contemporaries. Tawhīdī, for one, argues that the way of the *mutakallimūn*, "leads to nothing other than doubt and uncertainty. For religion does not come with 'how many' and 'in what way' at every turn."<sup>4</sup>

To such a reader I would suggest that the importance of religious competition to the development of Islamic doctrine on Christianity should not be underestimated. J. Wansbrough, in his book *Sectarian Milieu*, argues that Islamic historiography of the early period is in many ways the product of a community creating a history; it is apologetics, not *wie es eigentlich gewesen war*.<sup>5</sup> He applies this argument

<sup>1</sup> Above I give other examples of this phenomenon. For example, 'Abd al-Jabbār condemns Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq as the first of the heretics, yet elsewhere explicitly recommends to the reader Warrāq's anti-Christian writings (See chapter 4, section 1.1). Similarly, he magnifies the asceticism of Manicheans and Hindus while downplaying Christian asceticism (See note in chapter 3, section 2).

<sup>2</sup> "Fundamental to the documentation of confessional identity was selection of appropriate insignia from the monotheist compendium of symbols, *topoi*, and theologoumena. What could be called the 'sectarian syndrome' exhibits a lingua franca composed of such elements, whose sole condition of employment is adaptability." Wansbrough, 99.

<sup>3</sup> See Charfi, *al-Fikr al-islāmī*, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Tawhīdī, *al-Imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa*, 1:142

<sup>5</sup> For this reason, Wansbrough concludes (p. 98), one should "posit orthodoxy as the end, rather than the beginning, of the process of doctrinal formulation."

to the development of Islamic self-understanding. From the present work it is evident that the same argument is also applicable to the development of Islamic understanding of Christianity. In both cases sectarian controversy was a formative influence.<sup>6</sup>

This conclusion, moreover, has a significance that transcends academic debate. By recognizing the degree to which sectarian controversy of the medieval period has affected Muslim-Christian understanding, Muslims and Christians have much to gain. For through this recognition the two groups might today be free to understand each other in a new and more irenic manner. Thus ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Critique of Christian Origins*, ironically perhaps, might ultimately make a positive contribution to Muslim-Christian relations.

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<sup>6</sup> Wansbrough (pp. 114ff.) argues that it was the Islamic community’s desire to articulate its religion in a way that would at once prove logically (and scripturally) sound to Jews and Christians that fueled Islamic religious development. C.H. Becker (“Christliche Polemik und islamische Dogmenbildung”) made a similar argument decades earlier. W.M. Watt (*Formative Period*, 243) later responded to Becker on this point. An echo of this process can be heard in the *Critique*, a text written significantly later (385/995) than the period to which Wansbrough is referring. Two examples should suffice: First, ‘Abd al-Jabbār develops an argument that Islam prohibits miracles in the post-prophetic age (p. 181) in order to defend himself from the argument that he himself has constructed, namely that reports of miracles cannot prove a religion’s validity. Second, ‘Abd al-Jabbār emphasizes the concept of *tawātur* and the related concept of *summa* in response to Christian challenges about the Islamic understanding of Muḥammad’s preaching, and in order to challenge the Christian understanding of Jesus’ preaching. In both cases ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s doctrinal position is closely linked with the strategic value of that position for inter-religious controversy.



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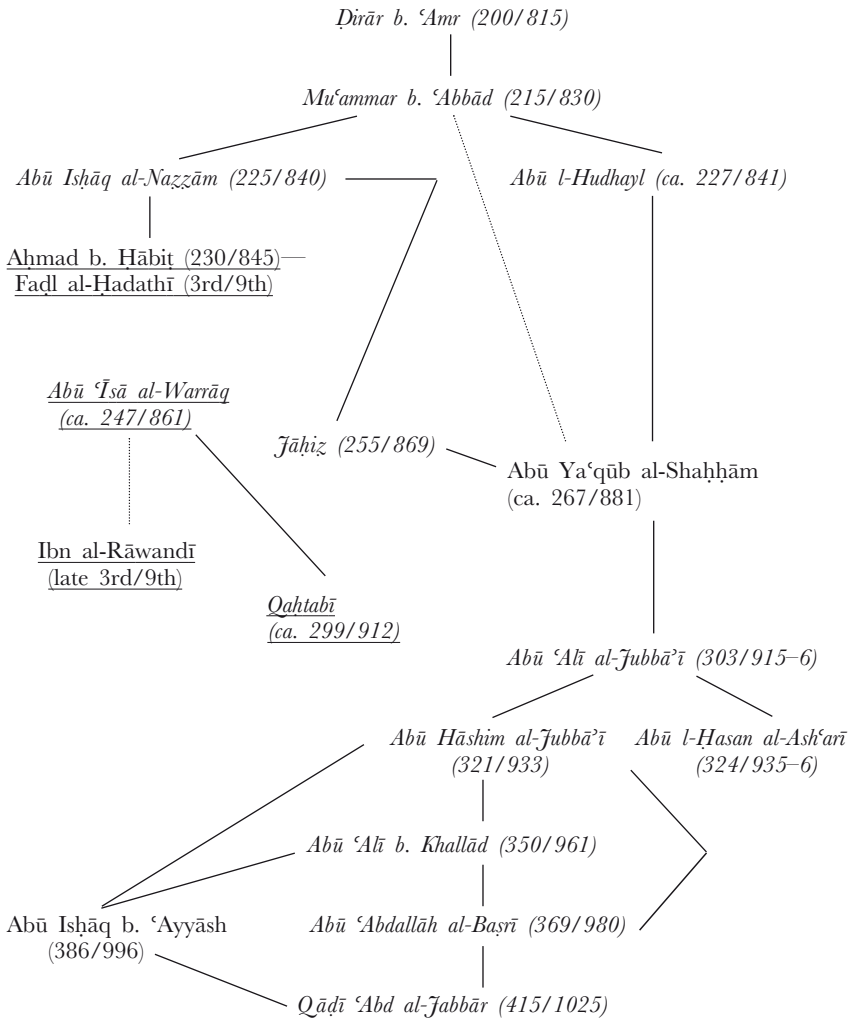
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# APPENDIX ONE

## MU‘TAZILĪ ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMIC: BAŞRAN SCHOOL

*authors to whom anti-Christian polemic is attributed in italics*  
*authors only indirectly connected to the Mu‘tazila underlined*



## APPENDIX TWO

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### APPENDIX THREE

#### OTHER BIBLICAL MATERIAL IN THE *CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS*

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
Jesus ( <i>yashūʿ</i> ) was the Word in the beginning. The Word was with God and God was the Word (100, ll. 3–4).	In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God (Jn 1:1).
John the apostle ( <i>al-salīh</i> ) said, “I preach to you about the one who has always been. We have seen him with our eyes and touched him with our hands” (100, ll. 7–8).	Something which has existed since the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with our own hands (I John 1:1).
He said to the blind man, “Are you a believer in the Son of God?” The blind man said, “Who is he that I might believe in him?” He said, “You have seen him and he is the one addressing you.” He said, “I believe, master,” and he fell down, prostrating (100, l. 17–101, 2).	Jesus heard they had ejected him, and when he found him he said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of man?” “Sir,” the man replied, “tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said, “You have seen him; he is speaking to you.” The man said, “Lord, I believe,” and worshipped him (Jn 9:35–8).
The mother of John, the son of Zechariah, <sup>1</sup> visited Mary who was pregnant with Christ, while the mother of John was pregnant with [John]. She said, “That which is in my womb has prostrated to that which is in your womb” (101, ll. 5–7). <sup>2</sup>	She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. . . . “Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy” (Lk 1:40–44).

<sup>1</sup> Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā, the Qur’ānic name.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 141; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, “Risāla,” 2:323–4.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
When John baptized him in the Jordan, the gates of heaven opened and the Father called, "This is my Son and my beloved, in whom I am pleased." The Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and fluttered upon the head of Christ (101, ll. 9–11; cf. 199, ll. 4–5). <sup>3</sup>	And when Jesus had been baptised he at once came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him (Mt 3:16).
In the annunciation, Gabriel said to Mary, "Behold, you are to become pregnant and give birth." She said to him, "How is this, when no man has touched me?" <sup>4</sup> He said to her, "Our Lord is with you and our god is with you. The hands <sup>5</sup> of the Lofty will come down upon you and the Holy Spirit will come to you. The one who will be born from you will be called holy and the Son of God" (101, ll. 14–7). <sup>6</sup>	"Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son. . . ." Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God" (Lk 1:31, 34–5).
"The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath" (103, l. 12; cf. 117, l. 9).	"The Son of man is master of the Sabbath" (Lk 6:5).
"I am in my Father and my Father is in me" (103, ll. 12–3; cf. 117, l. 10). <sup>7</sup>	"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" (Jn 14:10).
"No one knows the Father <sup>8</sup> except for the Son. No one	"No one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mk 1:10–11, Lk 3:22. Cf. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 141; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, "Risāla," 2:323–4.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Q 3:47.

<sup>5</sup> Pines reads *ayad*, which he interprets "strength," not *aydī* ("hands") in light of the biblical text. The ms. (47r), however, clearly has *aydī*. Moreover, in classical Arabic the form *ayad* is not attested for "strength," which is instead *ād* or *ayd*. See Pines, "Gospel Quotations," 206, n. 53; Lane, 1:136.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, "Risāla," 2:321–2.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Jn 10:38; 14:10, 20; 17:21, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Read *الاب* for *الات*.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
knows the Son except for the Father" (103, ll. 13–4).	except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11:27).
"I am before Abraham. <sup>9</sup> I have seen Abraham but he has not seen me" (103, ll. 14–5; cf. 114, l. 12; 117, ll. 9–10). <sup>10</sup>	The Jews then said, "You are not fifty yet, and you have seen Abraham!" Jesus replied: "In all truth I tell you, before Abraham ever was, I am" (Jn 8:57–8).
"For perpetual life it is necessary only that people witness that you are the One, True God and that you sent Jesus Christ" (112, ll. 1–3). <sup>11</sup>	"And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3).
"The speech that you hear from me is not my own but rather His who sent me. Woe to me if I say something of my own accord" (112, ll. 7–8). <sup>12</sup>	"And the word that you hear is not my own: it is the word of the Father who sent me" (Jn 14:24).
"I do not judge the servants [of God] or make an account of their works. The one who sent me is in charge of this" (112, ll. 10–1). <sup>13</sup>	"It is not I who shall judge such a person, since I have come not to judge the world, but to save the world" (Jn 12:47).
"They know that you sent me. I have mentioned your name to them" (112, ll. 12–3). <sup>14</sup>	"Father, Upright One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. I have made your name known to them" (Jn 17:25–6).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, "Risāla," 2:342.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 122; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, "Risāla," 2:352.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 122; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, "Risāla," 2:352.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Jn 12:49.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jn 5:30. Pines reads this verse in an antithetical relationship to Jn 5:22. See *Jewish Christians*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Pines relates this to Jn 7:28–9. See *Jewish Christians*, 60–61.

Table (cont.)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
“The works that I perform are my witnesses that God sent me into this world” (113, ll. 1–2).	“These same deeds of mine testify that the Father has sent me” (Jn 5:36).
“God anointed me and sent me. I will worship only the one God until the Day of Salvation” (113, ll. 3–4).	“The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord” (Lk 4:18). <sup>15</sup>
They asked him about when the Hour is and he said, “I do not know when it is, nor does any human. No one knows that except God alone” (113, ll. 5–6). <sup>16</sup>	“But as for that day and hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, no one but the Father alone” (Mt 24:36).
A man said to him, “O good one, teach me!” Christ said to him, “Do not say this to me. There is nothing good other than God” (113, ll. 8–9). <sup>17</sup>	“Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone” (Mk 10:17–8).
A man said to him, “Order my brother to divide with me the legacy of my father.” [Christ] said, “Who has made me the distributor between you two?” (113, ll. 9–10). <sup>18</sup>	James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him. “Master,” they said to him, “We want you to do us a favour.” He said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” They said to him, “Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.” . . . Jesus said to them,

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Isaiah 61:1–2.<sup>16</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 127; *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 195; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, “Risāla,” 2:344.<sup>17</sup> Cf. Mt 19:17. Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 121; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, “Risāla,” 2:352.<sup>18</sup> Cf. Mt 20:20–3.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
In his supplications, when he asked his Lord to bring a dead man to life, who was called Lazarus, he said, "O Father, <sup>19</sup> I thank you and praise you, for you answer my supplication at this time and every time. So I ask you to bring this dead man to life so that the Israelites may know that you have sent me and that you answer my supplication" (113, ll. 10–3).	"The cup that I shall drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I shall be baptised you shall be baptised, but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant" (Mk 10:35–40).  "Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I myself knew that you hear me always, but I speak for the sake of all these who are standing around me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me" (Jn 11:41–2).
He was ejecting from his mouth something like clots of blood, being anxious about death. He sweated and was nervous (114, ll. 1–2). <sup>20</sup>	In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly, and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood (Lk. 22:44).
"The spirit itself witnesses to our spirits that we are sons of God" (120, ll. 17–8).	"The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).
All of the Christians and the Jews claim that Pilate the Roman, the king of the Romans, took Christ, since the Jews were complaining about him, and delivered him unto them. They put him on a donkey and made him face the rear of the donkey. Upon his head they made a	Cf. Mt 26–27, Mk 15, Lk 23, Jn 19.

<sup>19</sup> Read يا ايل for يا ابا.<sup>20</sup> Cf. Mt 26:39; Mk 14:36.



Table (cont.)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
<p>crown of thorns and brought him around to punish him. They assaulted him from behind and came up towards his face, saying to him and mocking him, “O king of the Israelites! Who has done this to you!”</p>	
<p>Due to fatigue and affliction he became thirsty and pleaded, saying to them, “Give me water to drink.” So they took the bitter tree, pressed it, added vinegar to its juice and gave it to him. He took it, thinking it was water. When he consumed it eagerly and found its bitterness, he spat it out. But they forced him to drink it and tortured him throughout that day and night.</p>	
<p>The next day, the Friday that [the Christians] call Good Friday, they asked Pilate to have him whipped, which he did. Then they took him, crucified him and pierced him with spears. As he was crucified on the wood, he cried out continually, until his death, “My god, why did you abandon me? My god, why did you leave me?”<sup>21</sup> Then they brought him down and buried him (121, ll. 8–122, 5).</p>	
<p>A loose woman gave him perfume whose value was three hundred dinars. She began to rub [Christ’s] feet with it, rubbing the bottom of his feet with her hair. Then Simon came and</p>	<p>A woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment, and poured it on his head as he was at table. When they saw this, the disciples said indignantly, “Why this waste?”</p>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 124, 144; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, “Risāla,” 2:335.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
condemned that [act] before Christ. He said, "This is wasteful and corrupt. It would have been more proper to give alms with the value of this to the poor" (141, l. 15–142, 3).	This could have been sold for a high price and the money given the poor" (Mt 26:7–9).
A Samaritan woman said to Christ, "You are a Jewish man, and we do not give water to Jews." He said to her, "Everything you said, O woman, is accurate" (143, l. 13–144, 1).	The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?"—Jews, of course, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied to her: If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me something to drink," you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water" (Jn 4:9–10).
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were prevented from sending perfume to Christ on Saturday because of the regulation on keeping the Sabbath (144, ll. 5–6). <sup>22</sup>	When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices with which to go and anoint him. And very early in the morning on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen (Mk 16:1–2).
Christ said, "I considered the ones from this bad tribe to be like boys sitting in the market. Their companions call to them, 'We sang to you and you did not dance. We wailed <sup>23</sup> for you and you did not cry.' John came and neither ate nor drank. You said,	"What comparison can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the market place: We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't be mourners. For John came, neither eating

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Lk 23:56.<sup>23</sup> Read نحنا for نحنا.

Table (cont.)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
'He neither eats nor drinks.' The Son of Man <sup>24</sup> came to you, eating and drinking. You said, 'He is eating and drinking. He enters the houses of fornicators and sits down with sinners.'" (144, ll. 7–10). <sup>25</sup>	nor drinking, and they say, "He is possessed." The Son of man came, eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Mt 11:16–19).
He said to the Israelites, "O snakes, O sons of serpents! You read the book and do not comprehend. You wash the outside of the vessels and the inside is full of impurity. You request a companion on land, sea, plain and mountain. If you find one, you teach him your paths until he becomes more evil than you. You did not enter the kingdom of heaven. You do not let people enter the kingdom of heaven, since you did not enter" (144, ll. 12–6).	Cf. Mt 23
The Christians claim that he exorcized Mary Magdalene and cast out seven demons from her. The demons said to him, "Where do we seek shelter?" He said to them, "Go into these unclean beasts," meaning, the pigs (149, ll. 13–5).	Having risen in the morning on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary of Magdala from whom he had cast out seven devils (Mk 16:9).  Now on the mountainside there was a great herd of pigs feeding, and the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us to the pigs, let us go into them." So he gave them leave (Mk 5:11–12).
He said to his companions, "Act as you saw me acting. Command the people as I have commanded you. Be with them as I was with	"Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and

<sup>24</sup> Read *من البشر* for *بن البشر* (ms. 68v). Cf. Pines, "Gospel Quotations," 197, n. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Lk 7:31–34.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
you. Be for them as I was for you" (150, ll. 4–5; cf. 114, ll. 10–2). <sup>26</sup>	teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Mt 28:19–20).
Paul has said, in a book that they call <i>The Apostle (al-Salīh)</i> , "I have said to them, for how long will you make the people Jews?" (150, ll. 18–9).	How can you compel the gentiles to live like the Jews? (Galatians 2:14).
[Paul] said in <i>The Apostles (al-Salīhūn)</i> , "With the Jew I was a Jew, with the Roman a Roman, with the Aramaean I was an Aramaean" (150, l. 20–151, 1).	To the Jews I made myself as a Jew, to win the Jews; to those under the Law as one under the Law (though I am not), in order to win those under the Law; to those outside the Law as one outside the Law, though I am not outside the Law but under Christ's law, to win those outside the Law (I Corinthians 9:20–1).
[Paul] said to the Jews, "The Tawrāt is a good practice for the one who acts according to it" (151, ll. 5–6). <sup>27</sup>	We are well aware that the Law is good, but only provided it is used legitimately (I Timothy 1:8).
He said, "God (Blessed and Most High) called me to [Christianity]. My story is that I left Jerusalem, and was heading for Damascus. A dark night came upon me, a great wind blew and my sight left me. The Lord called me and said to me, 'O Saul! Would you beat the brothers and hurt the companions of my son? I said, 'O Lord, I have repented.' Then He said to me, 'If it is as you say, go to Ḥanan, <sup>28</sup> the Jewish	Cf. Acts 9:3–18.

<sup>26</sup> See Pines, *Jewish Christians*, 25, n. 92 and Stern, "Account," 133, n. 3.

<sup>27</sup> See also Galatians 3:12 and Romans 10:5. There is no correlation with the letter to the Hebrews.

<sup>28</sup> Read *حَنِان* for *حاييم* (ms. 73r has *حائم*); cf. Stern, "Account," 138, n. 3.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
priest, that he might return your vision to you.' So I went to him and informed him. Then he wiped his hand across my eyes and something like egg shells or fish scales fell from them and I could see as before" (156, ll. 10–6).	
Paul said, "This drink is blood, the blood of the Lord. This wafer <sup>29</sup> is the flesh of the Lord. Whoever doubts that this is the flesh of the Lord and His blood shall not take it and not taste it, for it is not permitted to him" (164, l. 17–165, 1).	For the tradition I received from the Lord and also handed on to you is that on the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it, and he said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way, with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me." Whenever you eat this bread, then, and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is answerable for the body and blood of the Lord" (I Corinthians 11:23–7).
Christ walked between the crops on the day of the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and he had them rub the ears of grain <sup>30</sup> and eat. When the rabbis saw this they said to him "These disciples of yours are doing something that is not permitted for them to do	At the time Jesus went through the cornfields one Sabbath day. His disciples were hungry and began to pick ears of corn and eat them. The Pharisees noticed it and said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing something that is forbidden on the Sabbath."

<sup>29</sup> Read برشان for برشام (pace ms. 78r).

<sup>30</sup> V. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 203.

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
on the Sabbath." Christ said to them, "Did you not read what David did when he was hungry, how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the table of the Lord which was not permitted for him to eat, but only for the priests?"	But he said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his followers were hungry—how he went into the house of God and they ate the loaves of the offering although neither he nor his followers were permitted to eat them, but only the priests? Or again, have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath day, the Temple priests break the Sabbath without committing any fault?" (Mt 12:1–5).
He also said to them, "Did you not read in the Tawrāt that for the priests in the temple the Sabbath <sup>31</sup> was licit, and that they had no blame upon them?" (196, ll. 1–8).	
Luke says in his gospel, "Christ was teaching on the Sabbath in a synagogue where there was a woman who was sick for eighteen years. She was bent over and unable to stretch out her frame. When Christ saw her he said to her, 'O woman, I have let you go from your sickness,' and she immediately recovered. So the chief of the Jews said, 'There are six days on which work is permitted. On [these days] you may treat [the sick] but not on the Sabbath.' So Christ said to him, 'Have none of you sent off his bull or ass to the trough on the Sabbath, gone with it and watered it? Yet this is a daughter of Abraham (peace be upon him), whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, must she not be released from [her] captivity?' (196, l. 16–197, 3).	One Sabbath day he was teaching in one of the synagogues, and there before him was a woman who for eighteen years had been possessed by a spirit that crippled her; she was bent double and quite unable to stand upright. When Jesus saw her he called her over and said, "Woman, you are freed from your disability," and he laid his hands on her. And at once she straightened up, and she glorified God.
	But the president of the synagogue was indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and he addressed all those present saying, "There are six days when work is to be done. Come and be healed on one of those days and not on the Sabbath." But the Lord answered him and

<sup>31</sup> Read سبت for the second هیکل (pace ms. 92v).

Table (cont.)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
<p>Matthew says in his gospel, "When Mary the Virgin's pregnancy with Christ became apparent, Joseph the Carpenter was anxious to divorce her. An angel came to him in a dream and said to him, 'O Joseph the Carpenter, do not doubt your lawful wife Mary. For that which dwells in her is from the Holy Spirit.' He therefore kept from divorcing her" (199, ll. 11-14).</p> <p>Joseph went into his house and said to Mary, "Where is the boy?" (meaning Jesus Christ). She said to him, "I thought that he was with you." He said, "And I thought that he was in the house with you!" They became nervous because of this and were afraid that they lost him. They went out together seeking him. Joseph the Carpenter said to Mary, "You take one road and I will take another, and perhaps one of us will find him."</p> <p>They walked, burning with anxiety. His mother Mary found him and said to him, "O my son, where were you? I thought you were with your father and your father thought that you were with</p>	<p>said, "Hypocrites! Is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and take it out for watering? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years—was it not right to untie this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Lk 13:10-16).</p> <p>Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:19-20).</p> <p>When the days of the feast were over and they set off home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was somewhere in the party, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.</p> <p>It happened that, three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies.</p>

Table (*cont.*)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
me. When he did not see you we became nervous. Your father took a road and I took this road. So where were you, and with whom, for your father is burning with anxiety for you?" He said, "I was in Jerusalem, learning" (200, ll. 4–11).	They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, "My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you," He replied, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:43–9).
Matthew mentions in his gospel, "Christ met with the Jews and spoke to them in parables. When he was done with these parables, he turned and entered his city. When he taught in their synagogues they were amazed, saying, 'From where does this one get such wisdom? Is he not the son of Joseph the carpenter? Are not his mother, who is called Mary, and his brothers Jacob, Simon, Judas and all of his sisters among us? So where did this one get all of this?' They began to look down at him, disdain him and vilify him. Christ said to them 'A prophet is always looked down at in his city'" (200, ll. 12–17). <sup>32</sup>	When Jesus had finished these parables he left the district; and coming to his home town, he taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished and said, "Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? This is the carpenter's son, surely? Is not his mother the woman called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? His sisters, too, are they not all here with us? So where did the man get it all?" And they would not accept him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is despised only in his own country and in his own house" (Mt 13:53–57).
In their gospels, a group of Jews came to [Christ] and asked for a sign from him. He vilified them and said, responding, "The wicked, impudent clan demands a sign. Yet no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the Prophet" (201, ll. 15–6). <sup>33</sup>	Then some of the scribes and Pharisees spoke up. "Master," they said, "we should like to see a sign from you." He replied, "It is an evil and unfaithful generation that asks for a sign! The only sign it will be given is the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Mt 12:38–9).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Mk 6:1–6; Lk 4:16–30. Cf. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 145.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *al-Dīn wa-l-dawla*, 191–2; Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, "Risāla," 2:357.



Table (cont.)

<i>Passage in the Critique</i>	<i>Closest biblical equivalent (New Jerusalem Bible)</i>
He said, "I was a Jewish man and severely loathed the Christians and Christ. I heard them saying that in the Gospel Christ says, 'If the pure Christian says to a tree, 'Stand upon the waves of the sea and do not move,' it will stand [there]'" (204, ll. 10–13).	The Lord replied, "If you had faith like a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea' and it would obey you" (Lk 17:6).

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*Passages in the Critique with no clear biblical equivalent.*

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They say, "Peter said, and he is the earliest in our faith, and the basis of our church, when he was asked about the Son of God, not about the son of people, about the Word of God, not about the word of people, 'He is the one who was among the people and frequented them. He healed those whom the evil one had touched.'" (100, ll. 14–6).<sup>34</sup>

[Christ] said, "I kneaded the clay of Adam and in my presence he was created. I come and go. I go and come." (103, ll. 16–17).

Christ said, "The one God is the Lord of all things. He sent the Son of Man to the entire world that they might move to the Truth" (112, l. 13–113, 1).<sup>35</sup>

He also said, "Far be it from me to bring something forth by myself. I speak and I am amazed at what my Lord has taught me" (113, ll. 2–3).

It is also in the gospel that Christ died without anything touching him (143, l. 13).<sup>36</sup>

[Paul] said to the Romans and others who were the enemies of Moses and the prophets, "The Tawrāt disturbs humans. When its laws will be taken away from the people, religious piety will be perfected. His benevolence will be perfected" (151, ll. 6–8).<sup>37</sup>

[Paul] said, "This was only forbidden by the Tawrāt, but the Tawrāt is entirely evil. When the laws of the Tawrāt will be taken from the peo-

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Peter's address to the Jews (Acts 3) and to the council in Jerusalem (Acts 4). Cf. 'Alī al-Ṭabarī, *Radd*, 145.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Jn 5:30–7.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Jn 19:36.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Romans 10:4; Ephesians 2:15.

Table (*cont.*)

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*Passages in the Critique with no clear biblical equivalent.*

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ple, religious piety will be perfected. His benevolence will be perfected” (158, ll. 17–9).

“Act after me according to what you see” (193, l. 13).

How amazing it is [to find] in their [Book] of Isaiah the Prophet that the most evil, impure and wicked nation is the one that has a foreskin<sup>38</sup> and eats pork and all beasts (195, ll. 9–10).<sup>39</sup>

According to their gospels and reports, when [Christ] was crucified<sup>40</sup> his mother Mary and her children Jacob, Simon and Judas came to him and stopped at his feet. He said to her, when he was upon the wood, “Take your children and depart” (201, ll. 1–3).

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<sup>38</sup> Read الغلف for القلف (ms. 92v).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Isaiah 65:3–4, 66:17.

<sup>40</sup> Read صلب for طلب (ms. 95r).

## APPENDIX FOUR

### EXTANT ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS PRE-DATING THE *CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS*

<i>Kalām-minded</i>	<i>Historical/ Scriptural</i>	<i>Apologetic/ Missionary</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb al-Kindī (d. 3rd/9th), <i>al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā</i>.</li> <li>• Abū ‘Īsā al-Warrāq (d. ca. 247/861), <i>al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā</i>.</li> <li>• Nāshi’ al-Akbar (d. 293/906), section in <i>K. al-Awsaṭ fī l-maqālāt</i>.</li> <li>• Abū l-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī (d. 319/931), section in <i>K. Awā’il al-adilla</i>.</li> <li>• Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), section in <i>K. al-Tawḥīd</i>.</li> <li>• Abū l-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī (d. 381/992), section in <i>al-A‘lām bi-manāqib al-islām</i>.</li> <li>• Abū Sulaymān al-Manṭiqī (d. after 391/100), <i>Kalām fī mabādī’ al-mawjūdāt</i>.</li> <li>• Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), section in <i>Tamhīd al-awā’il</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 246/860), <i>al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā</i>.</li> <li>• ‘Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 240/855), <i>K. al-Dīn wa-l-dawla</i>.</li> <li>• ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī, <i>al-Radd ‘alā l-naṣārā</i>.</li> <li>• Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869), section in <i>Hujaj al-nubuwwa</i>.</li> <li>• Jāḥiẓ, <i>Risāla fī l-radd ‘alā l-naṣārā</i>.</li> <li>• Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Bābawayh (d. 381/991), section in <i>K. al-Tawḥīd</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate of Wāṣil al-Dimashqī, <i>Leiden Oriental MS 951</i> (d. 3rd/9th).</li> <li>• Ibn al-Munajjim (d. 275/888), <i>Risāla ilā Ḥunayn b. Ishāq</i>.</li> <li>• Pseudo-‘Umar II, Letter to the Emperor Leo III (ca. 280/894).</li> <li>• Ḥasan b. Ayyūb (d. late 4th/10th), <i>Risāla ilā ‘Alī b. Ayyūb</i>.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX FIVE

### *The Creed of Ḥasan b. Ayyūb (al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ, 2:319)*

نؤمن بالله

We believe in God:

الآب مالك كل شيء صانع ما يرى وما لا يرى.

The Father, master of everything, creator of what is seen and unseen;

وبالربّ الواحد يسوع المسيح ابن الله الواحد بكر الخلاق كلها وليس بمصنوع اله حق: من اله حق من جوهر أبيه الذي بيده انقنت العوالم وخلق كل شيء

and in one Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of God, first born of all creation; he is not made; true god from true god, from the substance of his Father; by whom the worlds were brought to perfection and everything was created;

الذي من أجلنا معشر الناس ومن أجل خلاصنا نزل من السماء وتجنّس من الروح القدس وصار إنساناً وحبل به وولد من مريم البتول

who, for our sake, the company of people, and for the sake of our salvation, descended from heaven, became incarnate through the Holy Spirit and became man; he was conceived and born from the Virgin Mary;

والم وصلب وقتل أيام قيطنس بن سلاطوس ودفن وقام في اليوم الثالث كما هو مكتوب

he was tortured, crucified, and killed in the days of Pontius Pilate (*Bilāṭus*);<sup>1</sup> he was buried and rose on the third day as it is written;

### *The Creed of ‘Abd al-Jabbār (p. 94)*

نؤمن بالله

We believe in God:

الآب الواحد خالق ما يرى وما لا يرى

The one Father, the creator of what is seen and unseen;

وبالربّ الواحد يسوع المسيح ابن الله بكر أبيه وليس بمصنوع اله حق من اله حق من جوهر أبيه الذي بيده انقنت العوالم وخلق كل شيء

and in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, first born of his Father; he is not made; true god from true god, from the substance of his Father; by whom the worlds were brought to perfection and everything was created;

الذي من أجلنا معشر الناس ومن أجل خلاصنا نزل من السماء وتجنّس من روح القدس ومن مريم البتول وصار إنساناً وحبلت به مريم البتول وولده

who, for our sake, the company of people, and for the sake of our salvation, descended from heaven, became incarnate through the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man; the Virgin Mary became pregnant with him and gave birth to him;

وأخذ وصلب وقتل أمام قبطاس الرومي ومات ودفن وقام في اليوم الثالث كما هو مكتوب

he was taken, crucified, and killed before Pilate (*Filāṭus*) the Roman (*al-rūmī*). He died, was buried and rose on the third day as it is written;

<sup>1</sup> The text is obviously corrupted here (whether by Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, Ibn Taymiyya, or a later copyist or editor it is unclear). Most likely the original had قيطس بن سلاطوس for بنيطي.

وصعد إلى السماء وجلس عن يمين أبيه وهو مستعد للمجيء تارة أخرى للقضاء بين الأموات والأحياء.

he ascended to heaven and sat to the right of his Father. He is prepared to come another time to judge the dead and the living.

ونؤمن بروح القدس روح الحق الذي يخرج من أبيه روح محيية.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth who comes forth from his Father, the life-giving Spirit;

وعممودية واحدة لغفران الخطايا وجماعة واحدة قديسة سليحية جاثقية وقيام أبداننا وبالحياة الدائمة الى أبد الأبد.

and in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; in one holy, apostolic and catholic community; in the resurrection of our bodies; and in eternal life unto ages of ages.

وصعد إلى السماء وجلس عن يمين أبيه وهو مستعد للمجيء تارة أخرى للقضاء بين الأموات والأحياء.

he ascended to heaven and sat to the right of his Father. He is prepared to come another time to judge the dead and the living.

ونؤمن بالرب الواحد روح القدس روح الحق الذي يخرج من أبيه روح محيية.

We believe in one Lord the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth who comes forth from his Father, the life-giving Spirit;

وعممودية واحدة لغفران الخطايا وجماعة واحدة قديسة سليحية جاثقية وقيام أبداننا وبالحياة الدائمة الى أبد الأبد.

and in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; in one holy, apostolic and catholic community; in the resurrection of our bodies; and in eternal life unto ages of ages.

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