The Bible through a Qur'ānic Filter:
Scripture Falsification (*Taḥrīf*) in 8th- and 9th-Century Muslim Disputational Literature

Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation considers the manner in which Muslims viewed the Bible in
disputational literature of the 8th and 9th centuries CE. Muslim views on the Bible have
been dichotomized in recent scholarship into the following categories: *taḥrīf al-maʿnā*
(misinterpretation), which is characterized as the "early" view; and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (textual
corruption), which is characterized as the "later" view. This dissertation challenges this
characterization of "early" Muslim views on the Bible through an examination of the
following: (1) al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's (d. 860 CE) *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* (*The Refutation
of the Naṣārā*), which is the earliest dialectical Muslim refutation of Christian doctrine
and considered the prime exemplar of "early" Muslim views on the Bible; (2) Muslim
disputational literature of the 8th and 9th centuries CE, including the works of Ibn al-Layth
(d. ca. 819), ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. ca. 860), al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868f), and Ibn Qutayba (d. 889); and
(3) Christians perceptions of Muslim views on the Bible, as demonstrated in the works
ascribed, whether legitimately or not, to the Byzantine emperor Leo III (d. 741),
Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. after 816), Timothy I (d. 823), Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭah
(d. ca. 835), ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (d. mid-9th cent.), ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (likely
d. 9th cent.), and Abraham of Tiberias (ca. late 9th cent.).

Through an examination of the aforementioned sources, this study demonstrates,
in contrast to the majority of recent scholarship, that Muslims were advancing charges of
the Bible's textual corruption by the 9th, and likely as early as the 8th, century. As a result,

the dichotomy used between a supposed early charge of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (misinterpretation) and a supposed later charge of *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (textual corruption), is demonstrated to be erroneous. In its place, this dissertation offers a potential framework for assessing Muslim views on the Bible based on the Qur'ān's primacy as the arbiter of scriptural truth.

To my family, for their constant support and encouragement.

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations

AH	*Anno Hegirae,* in the year of the *Hijra*
Ar.	Arabic
attrib.	attributed to
b.	born
CE	Common Era
ca.	*circa*
cf.	*conferre,* compare
ch(s).	chapter(s)
cent.	century
d.	died
ed.	edition, editor
e.g.	*exempli gratia,* for example
esp.	especially
ff.	and following
fl.	*flourit,* flourished
fn.	footnote
ibid.	*ibidem,* in the same place
i.e.	*id est,* that is
K.	*Kitāb*
l(l).	line(s)
loc.	located
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
no(s).	number(s)
p(p).	page(s)
pl.	plural
Q.	Qur'ān
r.	reigned
r	*recto*
ref.	reference
sing.	singular
s.v.	*sub verbo,* under the word
trans.	translation, translator
v(v).	verse(s)
v	*verso*

CMR1	*Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 1 (600-900)*. Edited by David Thomas and Barbara Roggema. Brill: Leiden, 2009.
CMR2	*Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume 2 (900-1250)*. Edited by David Thomas and Alex Mallett. Brill: Leiden, 2010.
EI	*Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 1st edition. Edited by M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R Basset, and R. Hartmann. Leiden: Brill, 1913-1938.
EI²	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs. Leiden: Brill, 1954-2005
EI³	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition. Edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson. Leiden: Brill, 2007 – ongoing.
EQ	*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*. Edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, et al. Leiden: Brill, 2001-2006.
HP	*History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*
NOAB	Coogan, Michael, editor. *New Oxford Annotated Bible,* Third Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
al-Radd	Di Matteo, Ignazio. "Confutazione contro I Cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm." In *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 9 (1921-1922): 301-364.

Chronology

Date (CE)	Muslims	Christians
ca. 718	Purported correspondence between Leo III and ʿUmar II	
720	Death of ʿUmar II	
741		Death of Leo III
ca. 781	Debate between Timothy I and the caliph al-Mahdī	
ca. 796	Ibn al-Layth's *Risālah*	
after 816		Death of Theodore Abū Qurrah
ca. 815-26	al-Qāsim's *al-Radd*	
ca. 819	Death of Ibn al-Layth	
823		Death of Timothy I
ca. 835		Death of Abū Rāʾiṭah
mid 9th cent.	al-Jāḥiẓ's *al-Radd*	
mid 9th cent.	Ibn Qutayba's *Dalāʾil al-nubūwa*	Death of ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī
ca. 850	ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's *al-Radd*	
after 850	ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's *K. al-dīn wa-l-dawla*	
860	Death of al-Qāsim	
ca. 860	Death of ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī	
868f	Death of al-Jāḥiẓ	
889	Death of Ibn Qutayba	
Likely 9th cent.		Death of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Isḥāq al-Kindī
late 9th cent.		Abraham of Tiberias' *Disputation*

Preface

When I first undertook this study, I thought I was going to be charting the historical development of the idea of scripture falsification (*taḥrīf*) in Muslim polemical literature as it developed from an early accusation of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (misinterpretation) to the later accusation of *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (textual corruption). After initial research, I was struck by a disparity I noted between the categorization of Muslim views on the Bible and the conclusions I came to after reading al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's (d. 860 CE) *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* (*The Refutation of the Naṣārā*). His text seemed to be assuming the textual corruption of the Bible, which did not align with the standard categorization of early Muslim views on the Bible. This led to further research and further questions as I grappled with the fact that the conclusions I was reaching contradicted much of the scholarly literature on this topic – though I was encouraged that there were a small number of other scholars whose conclusions also challenged the prevailing categorization scheme. My questions led to some answers (and ever more questions to explore in future projects) as I expanded my examination to texts written by contemporaries or near-contemporaries of al-Qāsim. I became further convinced that al-Qāsim was not unique in his views on the textual inauthenticity of the Bible, but also that Muslim and Christian disputational literature from the eighth and ninth centuries pointed toward similar conclusions. Ultimately, the direction of this project shifted from charting the historical

development of *taḥrīf* to arguing that the dichotomy itself is flawed. I was not, however, expecting it would take me almost 400 pages to prove it.

While I may consider the component parts that make up this study both interesting and indispensable, many readers may not. Some may come across this work due to their interest in the topic of one chapter while finding little of interest in other chapters. With that in mind, I do not expect everyone who picks up this study will read it in its entirety. To that end, I provide brief chapter summaries here as they appear sequentially in this study, followed by a general breakdown of this study's contents based on thematic interest. The former provides a general idea of the flow of the whole study, while the latter should help readers locate the particular chapter(s) that may be of most interest or use.

The Introduction (Chapter 1) outlines the main contributions of this study to the field of historical Muslim-Christian relations: firstly, the contextualization and analysis of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, and secondly, a challenge to the dichotomization of *taḥrīf* as it currently is articulated in scholarship. It also includes a brief outline of my argument and notes conventions regarding dates and transliterations. Chapter 2 traces *taḥrīf* as it has been understood in previous scholarship, and the importance of al-Qāsim's treatise to this topic is established. Chapter 3 then examines the life of al-Qāsim and the milieu in which he wrote his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. Chapter 4 lays out the available manuscripts and editions of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd* and presents an outline of the work. I then examine the treatise in four parts: Chapter 5, on its first part, in which al-Qāsim establishes God's dissimilarity and Jesus' similarity to creation; Chapter 6, on its second part, in which he summarizes Christian doctrines; Chapter 7, on its third part, in which he

refutes God's fatherhood and Jesus' divine sonship; and Chapter 8, on its fourth part, in which he provides an extended portion of Matthew's Gospel that conforms to the principles he established in the first section of his treatise. Chapter 9 examines Muslim disputational literature written by contemporaries and near-contemporaries of al-Qāsim in regard to their views on the Bible, demonstrating that al-Qāsim's views on the Bible's inauthenticity is not unique. Chapter 10 examines Christian perceptions of Muslim views on the Bible, also by contemporaries and near-contemporaries of al-Qāsim, and demonstrates that Christians considered Muslims to be advancing charges of the Bible's textual corruption. Chapter 11 concludes the study and notes projects for further research. There are four appendices: Appendix A includes a table of the contents of the codices in which al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* appears; Appendix B provides a table of the Qurʾān references in al-Qāsim's text with page and line number in al-Qāsim's edition; Appendix C lists the Bible references in al-Qāsim's text, again with page and line number corresponding to Di Matteo's edition; and Appendix D is my translation of section four of al-Qāsim's treatise, which is his version of the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew.

The entire study will likely be of interest to Islamicists in general and more particularly for those interested in Muslim-Christian relations in the 8th and 9th centuries. For those interested in *taḥrīf*, start with the Introduction and continue to Chapter 2. Skip to the second half of Chapter 7, and then read Chapters 8-10 and the Conclusion. For those interested in al-Qāsim's biography, it will be most beneficial to read Chapter 3. While Chapters 4-8 also provide biographical details on al-Qāsim, his *al-Radd* is the primary focus of those chapters, and any biographical details come in relation to analysis of his text. If you are interested specifically in al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, read

the Introduction, Chapters 4-8, and consult all four Appendices as needed. Those interested in Christianity under Muslim rule during the eighth and ninth centuries will find parts of Chapter 3 to be of interest as well as Chapter 10. Those interested in modern scholarly literature related to Muslim views on the Bible should read Chapter 2. Those interested in early Arabic translations of the Bible should read the end of Chapter 3, Chapters 7-9, and consult Appendices C and D. Content related to Zaydism is limited but can be found in the first half of Chapter 3.

It will be apparent to the reader that this study owes a significant debt of gratitude to the work of David Thomas. Indeed, any study dealing with historical Muslim-Christian relations simply cannot help but reference his work, as he has written and continues to write prolifically in this field. To ignore his work or to try to limit its influence on this study out of fear that it might be considered over-reliant on his work would be to ignore his impact on the field and be detrimental to the study of this topic. While there are points on which I come to different conclusions than Thomas does, one cannot but acknowledge the importance of his contribution to this field of study. Furthermore, I am particularly indebted to him for introducing me to al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* when I visited him as a young graduate student looking for a project to work on in the field of historical Muslim-Christian relations. Little did I know at the time I would still be working on the text he recommended all these years later.

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

This study concerns *taḥrīf* (scripture falsification) as it pertains to Muslim views on the Bible. It could have taken a number of directions: the place of Muslim accusations against the Bible in the history of inter-religious accusations of scripture falsification;[1] the manner in which *taḥrīf* was articulated in different genres or epochs; Christian responses to *taḥrīf*; Jewish responses to *taḥrīf*; *taḥrīf* as intra-Muslim polemic; the social milieu of various authors and how their articulation of *taḥrīf* was shaped by and responded to their respective circumstances; etc. In short, there are many ways in which to examine *taḥrīf*, but this study offers two contributions to a better understanding of *taḥrīf* and the history of Muslim-Christian interaction. The first is a contextualization and analysis of the earliest extant dialectical Muslim polemical treatise against Christians: al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's (d. 860), *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* (*The Refutation of the Naṣārā*). The second, which originates from conclusions reached in my analysis of al-Qāsim's treatise and is complemented by an examination of Muslim and Christian disputational literature

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[1] Accusations of scripture falsification are not limited to a Muslim-Christian disputational context, but have a long history within inter-religious polemic. Wansbrough notes that "the charge was traditional: between Jews and Samaritans, Jews and Christians, Pharisees and Sadducees, Karaites and Rabbanites." John E. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, London oriental series (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 41.

of the eighth and ninth centuries, is that the dichotomy between *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (misinterpretation) and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (textual corruption) used in scholarship to categorize Muslim views on the Bible is a false one, in the sense that Muslim writers do not adhere to it.

Al-Qāsim's treatise is particularly well-suited for the examination of early Muslim views on the authority and authenticity of the Bible for the following reasons: (1) it is the earliest sustained Muslim polemical treatise against Christians extant; (2) it is regularly considered in recent scholarship to be the prime exemplar of early Muslim views on the Bible; and (3), it includes extensive quotations from the Bible. After considering al-Qāsim's treatise extensively, I turn to Muslim disputational literature by Ibn al-Layth (d. ca. 819), ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. ca. 860), al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868f), and Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) in order to determine whether al-Qāsim is unique among his contemporaries and near-contemporaries in his view of the Bible. I conclude that while his approach may be atypical and his use of the Bible unrivalled among his contemporaries in regard to the sustained focus on one Gospel, the primacy of the Qurʾān as the arbiter of what is or is not considered authentic in the Bible is common to the other texts considered. Furthermore, I consider Christian perceptions of Muslim views on the Bible in disputational literature in works ascribed, whether legitimately or not, to the Byzantine emperor Leo III (d. 741), Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. after 816), Timothy I (d. 823), Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭah (d. ca. 835), ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (d. mid-9th cent.), ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (likely d. 9th cent.), and Abraham of Tiberias (ca. late 9th cent.) and

determine that they consider Muslims to be advancing charges of the Bible's textual corruption.[2]

While the aforementioned authors are not uniform in their views on the Bible (in the case of the Muslim authors) or in their perception of Muslim accusations regarding the authority and authenticity of the Bible (in the case of the Christian authors), it is evident that the categories currently in use by scholars to describe and dichotomize so-called "early" Muslim views on the Bible from so-called "later" Muslim views are mistaken. Rather, by the beginning of the ninth century, Muslims were advancing, and Christians were responding to, accusations of the Bible's textual corruption.

Due to the importance of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* to the study of Muslim-Christian relations, I consider his text and his milieu in detail. Al-Qāsim's treatise features an impressive display of his ability to understand and synthesize information from a variety of fields as he advances his positions and then summarizes and critiques Christian beliefs. Most importantly, he includes eight chapters of Matthew's Gospel reworked to reflect a qur'ānic understanding of God and Jesus' respective natures rather than how the Christians have understood them. In doing so, his reworking of Matthew must necessarily be based on the assumption that the text itself is not that *Injīl* (Gospel) which was supposed to have been revealed to Jesus according to the Qur'ān, but one that had since been corrupted.

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[2] While there is a possibility that the works of the last two authors considered were actually written after the period generally being considered (750-900), there is nothing in those two texts that is not present elsewhere in texts whose provenance are more firmly attested in the eighth or ninth century. These potentially late texts could be excluded from this study without significantly detracting from my argument. However, because the possibility remains that they were written within the period they are purported to represent, I have included them in my discussion.

While it is important to delineate what this study is, it is equally important to delineate what it is not. With that in mind, it must be noted that the earliest accusation of the Bible's falsification in an Islamic document is in the Qur'ān. This study, however, is not an examination of *taḥrīf* as it is articulated therein. I am not interested in determining here what the Qur'ān "really meant" when it referred to scripture falsification. While understanding how *taḥrīf* is articulated in the Qur'ān is worthy of study, it is not the focus of *this* study. I recognize that the accusation upon which Muslim polemicists are basing their arguments related to scripture falsification might be qur'ānic in origin, but they do not seem concerned with expressing their arguments in those terms. As a result, I feel no compulsion to ferret out the manner in which their views conform to or deviate from what I consider the Qur'ān to have said about scripture falsification.

Furthermore, while the subject of this study is related to arguments of scripture falsification, I presume to make no judgments regarding the veracity of the claims. This study is historical – not theological. I am examining the texts in order to understand better the articulation of the accusation of scripture falsification by Muslim polemicists in the eighth and ninth centuries. It lies beyond the purview of the present study to determine the veracity of Muslim claims about the previous scriptures or the Christian counter-claims.

1.1 The Argument

Due to its chronological priority and subsequent importance in the dichotomy established in the secondary scholarship, the analysis of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd* serves as an effective test of the manner in which early Muslim views on the Bible have been

understood. After examining his work, as well as other Muslim and Christian disputational literature from the eighth and ninth centuries, I conclude that the dichotomization of *taḥrīf* is an erroneous framework for the assessment and categorization of Muslim views on the Bible for the following reasons: (1) the categories are anachronistic and ill-fitting; (2) it cannot explain explicit arguments advancing accusations of the Bible's textual corruption in eighth- and ninth-century Muslim polemical texts; (3) it often relies on a fallacy of composition; (4) it does not adequately address implicit arguments for textual corruption in Muslim polemical texts; and (5) it cannot account for Christian perceptions of Muslim accusations of scripture falsification in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Regarding the first point: the dichotomy forces the texts discussing *taḥrīf* into anachronistic and ill-fitting categories that are not divided in the early Muslim polemical literature; the use of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (misinterpretation) and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (textual corruption) as neat terms to discuss these two grand tendencies are only introduced in 1980.[3] The imprecision of the language used when categorizing specific texts, however, highlights the problem; dividing texts into either of the categories does not reflect the nuances present in the texts and scholars are forced to equivocate when using them to classify Muslim views on the Bible in early polemical texts.

Second, early Muslim polemicists' explicit arguments for textual corruption are often ignored or explained away. As noted above, the categories do not properly account for the full range of thought on the Bible by an author. When a text is considered in

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[3] See Jean-Marie Gaudeul and Robert Caspar, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le *taḥrīf* (falsification) des Écritures," *Islamochristiana* vi (1980).

scholarship to be advancing misinterpretation, explicit arguments for the Bible's textual corruption are ignored or explained away as not representative of their thought generally. While explicit arguments in the Muslim disputational literature for the Bible's textual corruption are limited up until the work of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), they do appear and should not be ignored.

Third, the categorization of early texts as solely advancing charges of misinterpretation often relies on a fallacy of composition: that is, the inference that something is true of the whole from the fact that it is true of part, without a premise showing why it applies logically to the whole. In regard to the topic under discussion, the argument present in modern scholarship, while not spelled out so succinctly, can be framed as follows:

Premise 1: *Fulān* (so and so) quotes verses from the Bible in his treatise.

Premise 2: *Fulān* considers those verses to be sound, but misinterpreted by Christians.

Conclusion: Therefore, *Fulān* considers the Bible to be sound but misinterpreted.

The inference that an author's approach to the Bible as a whole can be categorized by his select inclusion of particular verses he considers to be authentic is mistaken. Selecting specific verses for inclusion to demonstrate a point is hardly sufficient to assume reliability of an entire text, particularly when there appear to be theological motivations for what is excluded.[4] Further, such an argument fails to take into account instances when

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[4] Although his focus is on *tafsīr,* Khaleel Mohammed makes an insightful point in this regard that similarly pertains to polemical literature. He writes, "The *taḥrīf/tabdīl* concept often manifests itself in exegesis, not by an attempted refutation of the supposed biblical distortion(s), but rather by omission of any reference whatsoever–as if to indicate that those narratives are so corrupted that they are not worth considering." Khaleel Mohammed, *David in the Muslim Tradition* (London: Lexington Books, 2015), 19.

al-Qāsim or other polemicists quote the Bible but substantially alter it to conform to Islamic and qur'ānic principles. The assumption that the authors in question would have considered the Bible reliable in its entirety, particularly because they note instances of theological difference between it and Islamic teachings, would require a certain level of naïveté on their part that cannot, in all fairness, be assumed. These polemicists and apologists are concerned with disproving the claims of Christianity; the assertion that they would be willing to concede the reliability and authenticity of their rival's scripture in its entirety simply does not make sense.

Fourth, there is an implicit line of argumentation that can be made based on a close examination of the texts. Through specific polemically motivated changes to the Biblical text, the works point toward an assumption of the textual corruption of the Bible. This is demonstrated through excluded words, excluded passages, altered words, and reordering – all of which are used by Muslim polemicists to bring the biblical passages they quote into greater alignment with qur'ānic and Islamic principles.

Fifth, the responses of Christians in the eighth and ninth centuries to Muslim polemics demonstrate that Christians considered Muslims to be advancing charges of the textual corruption of the Bible.

When these arguments are taken together, a strong case can be made that the dichotomy between *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* used in modern scholarship misrepresents early Muslim polemicists' views on the Bible. As a result, a new classification scheme should be considered that better accounts for the manner in which Muslims have viewed, written about, and used the Bible in their works.

7

1.2 CONVENTIONS

Dates have generally been given according to the Common Era (CE) calendar. When double dates appear (i.e., 220/835), the former will be according to the *Hijrī* calendar and the latter according to the Common Era calendar. If a *Hijrī* year spans two Common Era years and there is not enough specificity to determine in which CE year the date fell, I have indicated this with 'f'. For example, the death of al-Jāḥiẓ is listed as 868f, which indicates the years 868 and 869 because his death was in Muḥarram 255 AH, which spans the December 868 CE and January 869 CE. If only one date appears, it is according to the Common Era calendar and I have omitted "CE."

To the extent I was able I have examined the sources in the languages in which they were written or have been preserved. There is currently no English translation of al-Qāsim's text and all translations of his treatise that appear in this study are my own. I have used Di Matteo's edition of the Arabic text and page and line numbers listed with quotations from al-Qāsim reflect his edition. There are other editions, but I find his to be the least intrusive in terms of punctuation and divisions to the text. While many of the other works I examined have translations available, I provide my own translations in most cases and any instances in which I use someone else's translation are noted. With al-Ṭabarī's *History*, I have tried to include where the information can be found in both the translation and the Arabic text.

I have used Droge's translation (2013) for all direct quotations from the Qur'ān that occur in the texts I examine. Conversely, I provide my own translations for any of the quotations from the Bible that occur in the texts under consideration. I do this because the texts are unlikely to be identical to their corresponding Hebrew or Greek counterparts

(or even an Arabic translation), which is important to consider when discussing issues of textual corruption or misinterpretation. The precise wording often shapes the content, and the inclusion or exclusion of a specific word carries connotations that would otherwise be missed. However, when I quote the Bible in order to compare its representation in the texts to the canonical formulation, I quote from the New Oxford Annotated Bible, 3rd ed. Syriac and Greek sources, which make up a small number of the works considered, were consulted in translation. Any translations of primary sources that are not my own are indicated in the footnotes.

I have consulted the secondary scholarship on the topic in the modern languages accessible to me: English, German, French, and Italian. While the majority of the early research on *taḥrīf* by Western scholars such as Schreiner, Steinschneider and Goldziher was done primarily in German, English has been the dominant language of scholarship on the topic of *taḥrīf*, although authors such as Caspar and Gaudeul (French), and Di Matteo and Griffini (Italian), were consulted in my review of the secondary literature. Unless otherwise noted, any translations of the secondary scholarship are my own.

I follow the guidelines provided by the Library of Congress for Arabic transliterations that appear in this study with one significant exception: I use '*ā*' rather than '*á*' for *alif maqṣūrah*. When I provide a quotation from a secondary work that includes an Arabic word already in transliteration, I have chosen to leave the transliteration as it appears. While this occasionally results in imprecise transliterations in quotations due to over-simplification of transliterated words (e.g., *tahrif* instead of *taḥrīf*), none of the imprecise transliterations result in any confusion regarding the particular word in question. Previously transliterated words from other languages are

9

reproduced as I have found them.

Providing the entirety of every quotation in transliteration would have been tedious with insufficient return on the investment because the non-specialist would not have been able to read the transliteration, and the specialist will want to access the original. I have compromised by including select words in transliteration that I deemed important. I have tried to include transliteration for all technical and/or ambiguous terminology. This includes theological and philosophical terms such as "hypostasis/hypostases" (*uqnūm,* pl. *aqānīm*), "person(s)" (*shakhṣ* pl. *ashkhāṣ*), and "substance(s)" (*jawhar* pl. *jawāhir*), among others. I also include transliteration for important terms that can be rendered different ways in Arabic but with only one word in English, such as "son" (*ibn* or *walad*) and "father" (*ab* or *wālid*). The words I have chosen to transliterate are based on what I consider interesting or important and may not reflect everyone's interest.

Words that have important Islamic or qur'ānic significance that would otherwise be lost in translation and are important to the theological and polemical agenda of the authors under consideration are included with transliteration. This is most pronounced with proper names. For example, Jesus is referred to three different ways in Arabic: Yasūʿ, ʿĪsā, and *al-Masīḥ*. I translate the first two as "Jesus," although I include the transliteration denoting which Arabic word is used because there are specific connotations associated with the use of the different designators (see Chapter 8.4). I have translated *al-Masīḥ* as either "Christ" or, as needed for smoother reading, "(the) Christ." It should be noted, however, that any Christian connotations of divinity associated with "Messiah" or "Christ" should not be carried over into the use of *al-Masīḥ* by the Muslim

10

authors considered in this study.

I have also chosen to leave *Naṣārā* in transliteration rather than provide a translation. There is debate regarding this term, although the majority of scholars translate it as "Christians." While I consider it to have generally referred to Christians when Muslim polemicists use the term in the eighth- and ninth-century disputational literature, it carries qur'ānic significance that translating it as "Christians" does not acknowledge.[5] Rather than referring to themselves as *al-Naṣārā*, Christians self-identified during this period as some "calque of Greek Χριστιανοί. In Syriac, Christians are *mshīḥāyê* (from *mshīḥā* 'Christ'), and indeed Arabic-speaking Christians generally call themselves *masīḥiyya*. Naṣārā, a term apparently based on the name Nazareth (Ar. *nāṣira*), seems in contrast a pejorative term."[6] Also, Reynolds considers it possible that, "with *naṣārā* the Qur'ān means to separate the Christians of its context from the name of Christ, and indeed, from Christianity."[7] Indeed, Griffith has noted, "in most of the passages in the Qur'ān in which *al-naṣārā* are mentioned by name, predominantly in the Medinan *suwar* II (*al-Baqarah*) and V (*al-Māʾidah*), it is a question of the Qur'ān's critique of the behavior of the Jews and *an-naṣārā*."[8] While the Qur'ān is not the focal

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[5] Cf. Qur'ān 2:62, 2:111, 2:113, 2:120, 2:135, 2:140, 3:52, 5:14, 5:18, 5:51, 5:69, 5:82, 9:30, 22:17, 61:14, 71:25. Christians are also referred to in the Qur'ān as part of the '*Ahl al-kitāb*' (People of the Book).

[6] Gabriel Said Reynolds, "On the Qur'anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (*taḥrīf*) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Apr-Jun (2010): 195. De Blois also notes that in Syriac texts, "the usual Syriac word for 'Christian' is in fact *krisṭyān,* plural *krisṭyānē.*" François De Blois, "Naṣrānī (Ναζωραῖος) and Ḥanīf (ἐθνικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 65, no. 1 (2002): 8.

[7] Reynolds, "Qur'anic Accusation," 195.

[8] Sidney Griffith, "The Qur'ān's 'Nazarenes' and Other Late Antique Christians: Arabic Speaking 'Gospel People' in Qur'ānic Perspective," in *Christsein in der islamischen Welt: Festschrift für Martin Tamcke zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Sidney Griffith and Sven Grebenstein (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 85. While I am not convinced of De Blois' proposal that the use of *naṣārā* in the Qur'ān refers to a group of

point of this study, it is no stretch to assume that the Muslim polemicists under consideration would have understood the qur'ānic referent to the term and its associated connotations.

1.3 DEFINING TERMS

The term *taḥrīf* features prominently in this study, and is qur'ānic in origin. It is from the root *ḥ-r-f,* a form of which (*yuḥarrifūna*) appears four times in the Qur'ān in relation to scripture falsification (Q. 2:75, 4:46, 5:13, and 5:41). While I consider it worthwhile to note its origin, this study is not concerned with the Qur'ān directly. I translate *taḥrīf,* as it pertains to this study, as "falsification." In order to differentiate the different types of falsification, I employ the terms commonly used in academic discourse on the topic: *taḥrīf al-maʿnā*, by which I mean falsification of meaning or misinterpretation, and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*, by which I mean falsification of the text or textual corruption. I do not presume to determine whether the falsification of either the interpretation or the text in either situation is considered to have been intentional, although that question deserves to be answered in a further study, and could help better define Muslim views on the Bible.

The terms "early" and "later" appear ubiquitously in the secondary literature to chronologically characterize the different views on the Bible. From my research in the secondary literature, I have generally found that Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) serves as a watershed moment in the history of the development of *taḥrīf*; those before him are considered to be "early" and advance charges of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (misinterpretation),

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Jewish Christians, his conclusion similarly points to the disjunction between *naṣārā* and the terms by which Christians self-identified. See De Blois, "Naṣrānī (Ναζωραῖος) and Ḥanīf (ἐθνικός)," 1-30.

while Ibn Ḥazm begins a more direct charge of *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (textual corruption) and those who follow him incline in that direction. While I consider the dichotomy between "early" and "later" Muslim polemicists to be mistaken, I use the terms because they are convenient designators that are familiar to anyone who has previously read studies on *taḥrīf*. Furthermore, my argument particularly concerns Muslim polemical texts that all fall within what has been labeled as "early" and as advancing *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* to the exclusion of *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*. But, rather than using the cumbersome "so-called early" and "so-called later," I have opted to use the terms "early" and "later" with the awareness that they carry connotations I am attempting to disprove.

Chapter 2
TAḤRĪF IN WESTERN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

This chapter traces the representation of the doctrine of *taḥrīf* (falsification) in the secondary scholarship, with an emphasis on its presentation in Muslim polemical texts against Christians. Eighth- and ninth-century Muslim polemicists' articulations of *taḥrīf* are the central concern of this study. While this survey is generally diachronic, it is more specifically divided into sections based on distinct groups of Western scholars who have produced the most seminal explanations of *taḥrīf* in early Islamic literature. There are four such groups: (1) Christian missionaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who focused on *taḥrīf* in response to Muslim polemicists and who produced works that were influenced by their own polemical and apologetic aims; (2) scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who developed and established the enduring distinction for evaluating the nature and articulation of *taḥrīf* in Muslim disputational literature; (3) scholars in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries who have generally accepted the framework established by the scholars before them and built upon it; and (4) a small group of scholars whose respective works have challenged the prevailing framework and interpretations of specific early polemical texts. Following my discussion of the fourth group, I offer a brief outline of my argument, demonstrating how my research is situated in respect to previous scholarship. While these categories are

to some degree simplifying the nuances of each individual work, when viewing the scholarship as a whole, characteristic trends and similarities that unite scholars into distinct groups begin to emerge.

2.1 WITH THE WEAPONS OF THE ENEMY[9]

The scholarly study of *taḥrīf* in secondary, non-Muslim source material begins in nineteenth-century India. With the increase of evangelical Protestant missionary activity there earlier in the century, a series of *munāẓarāt* – theological disputations between Muslims and Christians similar to the inter-religious court dialogues in the ʿAbbāsid court – were initiated by a Muslim population interested in countering vigorous Christian missionary efforts. The first large-scale *munāẓarah* of this period occurred in Lucknow and took place in the court of the King of Awadh, convened under supervision of the King and the British Resident in 1833. Powell notes:

> While reminiscent in many other ways of medieval *munazara,* there were
> to be some important new elements in the arguments, and the encounter
> though harmoniously conducted, following *adab* procedures of stylized
> debate, was to inaugurate a sequence of embattled confrontations over the
> following two decades.[10]

The Christian disputant, Joseph Wolff, seems to have been almost exclusively interested in what little of the debate concerned prophecy; the outline recorded in his personal diary

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[9] "Mit den Waffen des Gegners." This phrase is borrowed from the title of Christine Schirrmacher's Doctoral Dissertation that captures well the assimilation of Historical-Critical Christian scholarship by Muslim polemicists in their own arguments against Christianity. Her dissertation focuses primarily on the 1854 debate in Agra between Karl Pfander and al-Kayrānawī. See Christine Schirrmacher, *Mit den Waffen des Gegners: Christlich-muslimische Kontroversen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert dargestellt am Beispiel der Auseinandersetzung um Karl Gottlieb Pfanders 'Mīzān al-ḥaqq' und Raḥmatullāh ibn Ḥalīl al-ʿUthmānī al-Kairānawī's 'Iẓhār al-ḥaqq' und der Diskussion über das Barnabasevangelium*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1992).

[10] Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press Ltd., 1993), 117.

focused exclusively on this topic.[11] More detailed Muslim accounts of the event refer to

"alleged alterations in the Christian scriptures" included among the topics discussed.[12]

While the topic may have been limited in this Lucknow debate and even ignored in

Joseph Wolff's recounting of the event, the integrity and authenticity of the Christian

scriptures would be fundamental to the renewed debates between Muslims and

Christians.

 While the Lucknow debate of 1833 was noteworthy as the first large-scale,

munāẓarah-style debate in India between Muslims and protestant Christian missionaries

after India was opened up to missionary endeavors by the British,[13] a debate in Agra in

1854 spanning two days had greater importance in regard to the doctrine of *taḥrīf*, since it

would take up "deviation of the Christian scriptures" as its primary subject.[14] The

disputants were the German Pietist missionary, Karl Gottlieb Pfander (d. 1865 C.E.), and

an Indian Shīʿite Muslim theologian, Raḥmatullāh Ibn Khalīl al-ʿUthmānī al-Kayrānawī

(d. 1891).[15]

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[11] Ibid., 124.

[12] Ibid.

[13] While there were earlier debates in the Mughal court between Muslims and Portuguese Jesuit missionaries, the debates that resulted from increased Protestant activity after it was opened up for missionary activity in the early nineteenth-century during British rule are more pertinent to this study due to their immediacy to the re-introduction of *taḥrīf* as a sustained topic of study in Western scholarship. This is a result of the new tactics of Muslim missionaries based on then-recent critical studies of the Bible. For information on Portuguese Missionary efforts by the Jesuits to the Mughal Empire, see Francis Goldie, *The First Christian Mission to the Great Mogul: or, The Story of Blessed Rudolf Acquaviva, and of his Four Companions in Martyrdom, of the Society of Jesus* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1897); Father Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits: An Account of the Jesuit Missions to the Court of Akbar* (London: Routledge Curzon, 1996); Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2000), 120-122.

[14] Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, 117.

[15] For a biography of Kayrānawī and a general outline of his arguments in the debate, see, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qadir Khalīl, *al-Munāẓara al-kubrā bayna al-shaykh Raḥmat Allāh wa-l-duktūr Fandr* (al-Riyāḍ: Dar Ibn Taymiyyah, 1984 or 1985). While the debate was significant from a historical standpoint, it was

The agenda for the debate, agreed upon by both parties, was to cover a range of topics in the following order: *naskh* (scripture abrogation), *taḥrīf* (scriptural corruption), *tathlīth* (the Trinity), the prophethood of Muḥammad, and, finally, the Qur'ān.[16] Schirrmacher notes, however, "Although it was planned to extend the discussion to subjects of the Trinity (*tathlīth*), the Qur'ān being the Word of God and the sending of the Prophet Muhammad, the debate did not proceed further than the deviation of the Christian scriptures."[17] On the first day of the debate, the discussion was opened by al-Kayrānawī, who focused on the arguments related to the falsification of the Old and New Testaments and the second day of the debate continued on the same theme.[18]

In addition to drawing upon polemical tactics that typified Muslim polemics against the integrity of the Bible since ʿAbbāsid-era *munāẓarāt*, Kayrānawī's arguments also expanded these tactics considerably. Biblical Criticism in the nineteenth century had brought the textual integrity of the Bible into question with the introduction of modern methods and analysis of the biblical manuscript tradition – tactics not utilized by earlier Muslim polemics. Rather than continue rationalistic arguments against Christianity, the Muslim disputants decided to "concentrate instead on a newly formulated attack on the textual integrity of the Christian scriptures, using for the first time, in addition to

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also important at the time. Narayani Gupta notes that, "there was in these days no debate on the scale of the high drama of the Raḥmatullāh-Pfander debates of the 1850s." Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 79.

[16] For a more complete description of the debate, see, Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, 242 ff.

[17] Christine Schirrmacher, "The Influence of German Biblical Criticism on Muslim Apologetics in the 19th Century," in *A Comprehensive Faith: An International Festschrift for Rousas John Rushdoony*, ed. Andrew Sandlin (San Jose: Friends of Chalcedon, 1996), 108.

[18] Schirrmacher, *Mit den Waffen des Gegners*, 124.

evidence drawn from the Bible, arguments and evidence culled from Biblical Criticism recently published in Europe and America."[19]

Pfander was unprepared for Kayrānawī's attack for two reasons. First, Biblical Criticism in Europe only ascended to the height of its influence after Pfander had left Europe in 1825 for the mission field. Second, Pfander's training at the Basel Missiongesellschaft reinforced his "devotional and uncritical approach to biblical studies," due to the conservativism in its curriculum and course of study.[20] Further, "the missionary seminary deliberately tried to keep its students immune from rationalist and critical influences" of other seminaries and even some of its own more liberal faculty.[21] Pfander thus seemed "unacquainted either with critical assumptions or with critical works,"[22] and his ignorance of recent critical studies of the Bible left him overwhelmed, particularly since the debate was focused primarily on the authenticity of the Christian scriptures. Conversely, al-Kayrānawī, the Muslim disputant, was well read in the recent critical scholarship, which had been brought to him by his assistant in the debates, Dr. Wazīr Khan.[23] A missionary observing the debate commented on the Muslim disputants, "What piles of books are these on the table before them? Horne, Michaelis, Strauss, and other authors of England and Germany."[24] Khan had studied Medicine in England in the 1830s and researched Christianity extensively while there. Powell notes that, "As well as

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[19] Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, 246.

[20] Ibid., 133.

[21] Ibid., 133-134.

[22] Ibid., 135.

[23] Oddbjørn Leirvik, *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam* (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1999), 124.

[24] T.G. Clark, letter, dated Agra 22 May 1854, quoted in Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, 246.

reading books in English, he [Khan] collected books of Biblical criticism by German authors, and began the study of Hebrew and Greek. It is probable that he also made arrangements for further publications to be conveyed to him in India."[25] In addition to shifting the focus of the debate to *taḥrīf* more specifically, Kayrānawī drew upon Khan's knowledge of Christianity, and particularly the arguments of modern Biblical Criticism. Not only were they not expecting an Indian Muslim to be familiar with the textual criticism of the Bible current in Europe, Pfander and his team were also unfamiliar with the contemporary scholarship.

Pfander had arrived in India in 1839 CE and had "received the misleading impression that the Muslims of India were [...] on the verge of turning to Christianity."[26] Upon arriving, he had immediately begun translating his own previously written works on Islam and Christianity into Urdu, notably *Mizan ul-Haqq,* which he had originally written in German in 1829 while serving as a missionary in trans-Caucasus Georgia, and then translated into Persian in 1835.[27] Powell argues that this work "was to become the focus not only of the Muslim counter-attack on Christianity which was subsequently to have its starting point in Agra, but would soon afterwards be translated into most of the languages of the Muslim world where its notoriety has survived for the last century and a half."[28] There were concerns within the Christian missionary community, however, with Pfander's *Mizan ul-Haqq.* Samuel Zwemer remarked that there were "urgent reasons for

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[25] Avril A. Powell, "Maulānā Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī and Muslim-Christian Controversy in India in the Mid-19th Century," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1976): 47.

[26] Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, 132.

[27] Powell, "Maulānā Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī," 46.

[28] Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, 132.

revision, as in some respects the argument was not up to date, and was vulnerable in a

few places because of its fanciful character."[29] On account of these needs, a committee of

Christian missionaries charged the British historian and philologist, William St. Clair

Tisdall, who served as the Secretary of the Church of England's Missionary Society in

Isfahan,[30] with extensive revisions. His task was to "correct errors and ambiguity of

language, and to remove all apparent ground for Moslem attacks made upon the book."[31]

One chapter of Pfander's *Mizan ul-Haqq* is entitled "The assertion of

Mohammedans, that the writings of the Old and New Testaments have been Corrupted

and Changed, Refuted." Pfander is clear that he is writing an apologetic rather than an

objective work, although he does provide insight into arguments contemporary Muslims

were advancing in regard to the doctrine of *taḥrīf*. He notes that the claim of corruption

refers specifically to "erasing those passages which referred to the prophetic office of

Mohammed, and inserting other matters."[32] The result of these supposed excisions and

additions, Pfander notes, is the claim that "the books which are now in their [Christians'

and Jews'] hands are neither genuine nor entitled to any respect."[33] Pfander does not

provide names of those who were supposed to have been advancing these claims, though

he notes that Muslims "universally assert" these claims of corruption and that they "have

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[29] S.M. Zwemer, "A New Weapon for the Old Controversy," *The Missionary Review of the World* 34, no. 10 (1911): 748.

[30] For background and influence of Tisdall on Christian missionary activity among Muslims, see Clinton Bennett, *Victorian Images of Islam* (London: Grey Seal Books, 1992), 128 ff.

[31] Zwemer, "A New Weapon for the Old Controversy," 748.

[32] Karl Pfander, *Mizan ul-Haqq*, trans. R. H. Weakley (London: W.M. Watts, 1862), 11.

[33] Ibid.

maintained the above position for so long a time."[34] This general lack of specificity is

endemic in the Christian missionary writings on the topic, and while those texts may not

provide rigorous analysis, one must keep in mind that Pfander's audience is Muslim and

his work is itself an apologetic for Christianity and a polemic against Islam.

Understanding *taḥrīf* was, in his mind, intended for the sole purpose of advancing the

Gospel among Muslims, and the requirements incumbent on scholars engaged in a more

objective study of the topic would not have weighed heavily on his mind.

      Pfander does argue, however, that the Qur'ān does not actually suggest corruption

of the Christian and Jewish scriptures occurred prior to Muḥammad. He notes that

because God charges Muḥammad in the Qur'ān to consult the scriptures of the Christians

and Jews, "it is impossible that God should have directed any one to consult falsified

Scriptures."[35] In Pfander's understanding, Muslim thought on the corruption of the

scriptures must have deviated from its elaboration in the Qur'ān, although Pfander does

not provide any details of that supposed development. Thus, the disparity between the

Qur'ān and the position of Muslim polemicists contemporary to Pfander in regard to the

corruption of the Christian scriptures is noted, but not expounded upon. Still, it provides

evidence of the importance of the topic to the polemical interaction between Muslims and

Christians as well as a supposition that the claims of corruption are textual and have been

part of the repertoire of Muslim polemicists for a considerably long time. Pfander and al-

Kayrānawī's debate in 1854 demonstrates the importance of *taḥrīf* as an argument

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

Muslims used against Christianity that had begun as early as the Qur'ān and taken on new life with the advent of modern biblical criticism.

2.2 MISSIONARIES AND *THE MOSLEM WORLD*

Following Pfander, Christian missionaries continued to show interest in *taḥrīf* because it formed an integral part of the Muslim perception of Christianity and is one of the standard arguments against Christianity they would have encountered.[36] Missionary writings are emblematic of the earliest modern discussions of *taḥrīf* by Western observers. While by no means routinely uniform, given their respective evangelistic and missionary backgrounds, their works are often unconcerned with questions that would advance the understanding of this doctrine beyond what was needed for their own mission-minded purposes.

Much of the scholarship from Christian missionaries related to *taḥrīf* during this period appeared in the journal *The Moslem World*, whose self-description on its inside title page up through the 1930's explains its overarching purpose: "A quarterly review of current events, literature and thought among Mohammedans and *the progress of Christian missions* in Moslem lands."[37] This publication, therefore, was not strictly a journal that was neutral in its aims and goals or approached its subject matter with

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[36] Charles Doughty (d. 1926) noted the prevalence of Muslim arguments for the corruption of the Bible during a conversation he had with Bedouins during his travels through Arabia in the nineteenth century who were unfamiliar with the recent advancements in Biblical criticism. He writes: "They enquired then of the Towrat (the roll of Moses' books), and the *Engīl* (Evangel), which they allow to be of old time *kelam Ullah,* 'God's word;' but since falsified by the notorious ill-faith of Yahūd and Nasāra, only in envy and contempt of el-Islam; and now annulled by the perfect koran sent down from heaven, by the hand of Mohammed, 'The *Seal of the prophets* and the Beloved of Ullah.' The Mohammedan world is generally therefore merely ignorant of our Scriptures." Charles M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1888), 298.

[37] *The Moslem World,* emphasis mine.

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objective distance; it was unabashedly Christian and driven by evangelistic goals in its stated purpose and the general tenor of the articles supported this aim. That is not to say that academic topics were absent from the journal; rather, the vast majority of the topics offer insight into Muslim beliefs, cultures, and similar concepts from a Christian perspective and for evangelistic aims. Still, the sort writing that authors contributed to this journal forms a substantial portion of the secondary scholarship on the topic of *taḥrīf*. To missionaries working in Muslim lands, the study of *taḥrīf* was more than an intellectual exercise; it was an integral component to countering claims against their own personal beliefs that they were encountering with increasing regularity. Their concerns are understandably colored by the nature of their encounter with the topic of *taḥrīf*, particularly as it was used as a current method of argumentation against Christianity.

During *The Moslem World*'s first few decades of publication, there is a clear apologetic focus on Christian missions in the articles, book reviews, and notes on current topics. In its early envisioning, the *Moslem World* journal made no apologies for being explicitly Christian and explicitly missionary in its outlook, purpose, and output. Its first editor was the American missionary and reverend Samuel Zwemer, who helped found the journal, served as its editor for 36 years, and contributed over one hundred articles. Considering the purpose of the journal, Zwemer wrote in his opening editorial, "If the Churches of Christendom are to reach the Moslem world with the Gospel, they must know it and know of it."[38] *The Moslem World* was a product of the World Missionary Conference and a "quarterly magazine had been proposed as a forum for information and

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[38] S.M. Zwemer, "Editorial," *The Moslem World* 1, no. 1 (1911).

ideas" at the conference convened in Cairo in 1906.[39] The suggestion was endorsed by the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, and in 1911 had become a reality. The journal was based out of Hartford Seminary and the contributors were initially selected because they were "leading Islamic Scholars" as well as "active in missions to Muslims."[40] Zwemer envisioned the serial "as a kind of missionary analogue to the journal *Der Islam* and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*,"[41] and Lockman notes that its founding was "clearly part of an effort to reinvigorate and accelerate Protestant missionary work among Muslims."[42]

This emphasis on missions is not to say that the journal ignored academic inquiry, because careful studies could and did contribute to the knowledge of the Muslim world in order to better equip the missionary efforts of the readership. Such studies were included alongside more explicitly evangelistic articles. To that end, reviews of foundational works in the field like *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* and various dictionaries, as well as articles that contributed to a greater academic and scholarly understanding of Islam and its peoples, beliefs, history, and culture make up a portion of the journal. While such endeavors may have been by-products of the more direct goal of evangelism, these contributions cannot be dismissed because they represent an important step in the study and elaboration of *taḥrīf*.

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[39] Roland Miller, *Muslims and the Gospel: Bridging the Gap : a Reflection on Christian Sharing* (Edina: Kirk House Publishers, 2005), 223.

[40] Yohannes Bekele, "Samuel Zwemer's Missionary Strategy towards Islam" (University of Birmingham, 2012), 44.44

[41] Heather Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 92.

[42] Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 103.

One of the earliest articles in *The Moslem World* related to the doctrine of *taḥrīf*, E.M. Wherry's "Some Unfounded Muslim Claims," demonstrates the fundamentally Christian and evangelistic nature of the journal's approach to the topic.[43] In it, Wherry argues states that "One of the most important claims of Islam, and one that is unfounded, is that the Christian Scriptures have been corrupted. Not only are they so corrupted, says the Moslem, but they are so corrupted that they may be said to be no longer extant."[44] Wherry, a Presbyterian missionary to Muslims in India,[45] is responding to the then-contemporary claims of Muslims, which had built upon the previously mentioned critical scholarship of al-Kayrānawī. Wherry notes, however, the distinction between *taḥrīf* as either false interpretation, which he considers to be a charge made by "ancient writers," while textual corruption is advanced by "modern Moslem controversialists."[46] The extent of his discussion of *taḥrīf* ends there, however, as he moves quickly on to tactics a Christian may use to respond to the claims that the Bible has been corrupted.

Arthur Jeffery, although a scholar serving at various universities throughout his career, approaches *taḥrīf* with a Christian outlook that is typical of the articles in this journal. He had begun his work at the Madras Christian College in India and from there was recruited to teach at the newly formed School of Oriental Studies at the American

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[43] Elwood Morris Wherry, "Some Unfounded Muslim Claims," *The Moslem World* 2, no. 3 (1912): 286-300.

[44] Ibid., 287.

[45] See Matthew Ebenezer, "American Presbyterians and Islam in India, 1855-1923: A Critical Evaluation of the Contributions of Isidor Loewenthal (1826-1864) and Elwood Morris Wherry (1843-1927)" (Ph.D., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1998), 218-291.

[46] Wherry, "Some Unfounded Muslim Claims," 288.

University in Cairo in 1921.[47] While he eventually went on to significant philological

work on the Qur'ān, and produced seminal works such as *The Foreign Vocabulary of the*

Qur'ān and *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān*, Jeffery's roots were in

the world of missionary training and he remained committed to Christian enterprises. His

tribute in *The Muslim World* further emphasizes the importance of his Christian faith to

his scholarship. One by his former student states:

> As a minister of the Methodist Church, he was devoted to the missionary
> enterprise and exemplified in his own life and interests a deep Christian concern.
> His scholarship had a Christian purpose, for he believed that only by a painstaking
> and exacting study of Islamic materials could the content of that faith be
> understood and a Christian contribution made to those who followed it. This same
> scholarly Christian concern was expressed in his preaching.[48]

Jeffery, whose work is still recognized for its scholarly contribution to the study of Islam

and the Qur'ān in particular, was still very much concerned with the study of Islam for

the purpose of missionary endeavors.

Jeffery considers the doctrine of *taḥrīf,* as articulated post-Qur'ān, to be referring

to textual corruption. He offers an explanation for its origin in his article, "A Moslem

Torah from India, " which appeared in *The Moslem World*:

> The early controversies with Jews and Christians, however, soon brought
> out the fact that the statements of the Koran had in reality very little in
> common with the *Torah*, the *Zabur*, and the *Injil*, which were "in the
> hands" of his Jewish and Christian opponents. Its stories of Biblical
> personages in particular were quickly seen to be drawn largely from
> Midrashic, uncanonical sources, and probably borrowed by Mohammed
> from certain Judaeo-Christian Gnostic sects which had early penetrated
> into Arabia. It was not possible, of course, for the Moslem apologist to
> admit this borrowing, nor was it possible to deny the fact that the
> Scriptures in the hands of his Christian and Jewish opponents did not

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[47] Gerhard Böwering and Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Preface to *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, by Arthur Jeffery (Leiden: Brill, 2007), ix.

[48] John Badeau, "Arthur Jeffery - A Tribute," *The Muslim World* 50, no. 1 (January 1960): 51.

agree with the Koran. His line of defence was the doctrine of *Tahrif* (corruption).[49]

While offering more than a simple restatement of what Muslims claim, Jeffery's elaboration of the development of *taḥrīf* still lacks detail and notably relies on rhetorical cliché. His claims are perhaps overstated, and we are left wondering to which Muslim apologists he is referring in his summary of the doctrine. He mentions "early controversies" but does not identify these issues specifically. Still, Jeffery attempts to present some historical background for *taḥrīf* as well as impetus for its development and also stamps the origin of the doctrine with at least the vague date of "early controversies with Jews and Christians." He is moving the precedents of missionary scholarship closer to an objective approach, examining not simply the current accusations in order to counter them, but attempting to understand the historical development of *taḥrīf* better.

According to Jeffery, the aforementioned "early controversies" revealed that the Qur'ān's statements about the Bible were inconsistent with the scriptures in the hands of the Christians and Jews. As a result, the doctrine of *taḥrīf,* a reference to textual corruption according to Jeffery, develops to reconcile the disparity. He explains the process in the following manner:

> Ground for this charge was found in the fact that the Prophet himself had accused the Jews of his day of misquoting Scripture and falsely transcribing it for their own ends (cf. ii, 73; xxxvii, 72; v, 45; ii, 154; iv, 48), though as a matter of fact this accusation only applied to certain Jews in immediate contact with the Prophet in his own day. It was sufficient, however, to form a basis on which the theologians could build the dogma of the hopeless corruption of the copies of the Old and New Testament at present in the hands of Jews and Christians.[50]

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[49] Arthur Jeffery, "A Moslem Torah from India," *The Moslem World* 15 (1925): 233-234.

[50] Ibid., 234.

Again, we are left wondering to which theologians Jeffery is referring, although he does note a difference between the Qur'ān's view of the Bible and what Muslim theologians would develop thereafter. It is also curious how an accusation Jeffery considers to be solely directed toward the Jews in the Qur'ān, he later assumes forms the basis for the corruption of the entire Bible. Later scholars, including Montgomery Watt, expanded Jeffery's argument that the disparity between the Qur'ān and the Bible acted as the catalyst for the post-qur'ānic development of *taḥrīf* in Muslim theology, providing details lacking in Jeffery's work.[51]

Jeffery then offers a historicist reading of qur'ānic views of *taḥrīf*, noting that accurate copies of the Jewish and Christian scriptures must exist because "they are appealed to as a witness to the revelation of Mohammed (x, 93; xvii, 102; xvi, 43), the Moslems are to believe in them (xxix, 46; iv, 135) and the Jews and Christians are judged by what they contain."[52] Thus, Jeffery presents a more developed understanding of the impetus for the doctrine's elaboration and its role as an apologetic tool for Muslim writers, using the Qur'ān to argue for the authenticity of the Bible. His work, however, is apologetic in nature and suffers from a lack of clarity in its wording; statements such as "the theologians" and "early controversies" are unspecific to the point of rendering his elaboration of the development of *taḥrīf* unclear.

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[51] W. Montgomery Watt, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible," *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 16 (1955-56): 50-62. Gabriel Reynolds also comes to a similar conclusion as Jeffery, that the Qur'ān's accusation of falsification is directed specifically toward the Jews, while the broader application of the accusation to the entire Bible is a development of medieval Islamic thought. See Reynolds, "Qur'anic Accusation," 189-202.

[52] Jeffery, "A Moslem Torah from India," 234.

The apologetic aim typical of missionary authors during this period is further

evident in the article, "The Bible and Moslems." Written by J. Christy Wilson who

served as a missionary in Afghanistan for 23 years and then as a teacher of Christian

missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the article's opening paragraph

states, "It lays upon those of us who would lead Mohammedans to Christ, the

responsibility of making the Bible central in our work and becoming expert in its use."[53]

Having revealed the unabashedly evangelistic motivation for his study, Wilson lays out

the standard Muslim arguments against the Bible:

> Missionaries who work with Mohammedans know that there are three
> ancient and standard objections to the Bible. 1. It has been abrogated by
> the Koran. 2. It has been changed and corrupted by Christians. 3. Christ
> took the genuine *Injil* of the New Testament back with Him when He
> returned to heaven.[54]

According to Wilson, this appears to be a standard Muslim critique, one which would be

familiar to any missionary working among Muslim peoples. Points two and three are the

most pertinent for the purposes of this study and provide further insight to Muslim

justification for the discrepancy between the Qur'ān's projection of the *Injīl*'s contents

and the Scriptures actually in the hands of the Christians. In this scenario, Jesus took the

original and uncorrupted Gospel back to heaven at his ascension, while what remains has

since been "changed and corrupted" by the Christians. Thus, the Qur'ān's references to

the *Injīl* may not reflect what the Christians possess, although such an argument leaves

room for Muslim polemicists to use anything from the *Injīl* that corroborates their claims

about Jesus or Muḥammad. Wilson's study is not, however, an elaboration of those

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[53] J. Christy Wilson, "The Bible and Moslems," *The Moslem World* 28, no. 3 (1937).

[54] Ibid., 237.

doctrines and their historical trajectory. Nor does Wilson explain his sources of information or provide textual citations or any sort of insight into the manner in which these positions have been articulated throughout the history of Muslim thought. Rather, he simply mentions his observations about this particular topic and proceeds to offer methods of effective evangelism to Muslims and ways in which the Bible can be explained most effectively despite the aforementioned objections.

A name change in 1948 from *The Moslem World* to *The Muslim World* was a final recognition of the journal's underlying shift in tone and purpose. The final clause of the journal's tagline and stated purpose that refers to "the progress of Christian missions in Moslem lands" was removed. The journal became much more ecumenical in its selection of articles and no longer had a Christian or missionary agenda. Sharkey notes that "*The Muslim World* is now an academic journal produced by and addressing an audience of scholars who come from diverse Muslim, Christian, and other backgrounds; its academic constituency today not only lacks an evangelical agenda but might be surprised to learn that the journal's founders once had one."[55] It continues to be published by Hartford Seminary, but as an example of the distance it has come from its Christian missionary and evangelistic roots, its current co-editor is Yahya Michot, a Belgian scholar and convert to Islam.[56]

Although this has not been an exhaustive survey of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Christian missionaries' treatment of *taḥrīf*, it has demonstrated the perennial importance of this topic in Muslim-Christian relations. It has also outlined

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[55] Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire*, 93.

[56] "Faculty Profile for Yahya Michot," Hartford Seminary, accessed August 9, 2015.

some of the attempts at understanding the particulars of a long-standing Muslim argument against the authenticity and authority of the scriptures in the hands of the Christians. The discussion shows the formative role played by earlier missionary encounters and scholarship on *taḥrīf*. This strand of secondary scholarship is bounded by the necessity of responding to active and articulate attacks against the authenticity of the scriptures that these Christian missionaries were then facing. While the missionaries investigating this topic presented their studies with varying degrees of scholarly detachment, their stated purpose is the advancement of Christianity and the conversion of Muslims. With that in mind, their scholarship tended to be less precise, and when they focused on claims and arguments that would lead to a better understanding of *taḥrīf*, the aims and purposes of Christian missionary work still provided the impetus for such enquiry. These Christian authors did recognize, however, that the Muslim claim that the Bible had been corrupted was long-standing. Regardless of their shortcomings, Christian missionaries' responses to the contemporary challenges of Muslim polemicists provide some of the first studies of the topic in modern scholarship.

The importance of *taḥrīf* in Muslim polemic against Christianity is not limited to dusty manuscripts or long-forgotten ideals; rather, *taḥrīf* has remained central to the arguments Muslims have advanced against Christianity. Understandably then, when Muslim polemicists co-opted the arguments of nineteenth-century German scholars of the Bible, the long-held beliefs of Muslims regarding the inauthenticity of the Christian and Jewish scriptures found new life. The Christians missionaries who first responded to Muslim accusations of the corruption of the Bible primarily desired to defend the Christian scriptures. We have seen that their scholarship focused on the apologetic

response to Muslim claims of textual corruption and the defense of the Bible from arguments claiming it had been altered. It is worth noting, however, that while Christian missionaries offered less sophisticated and careful examinations of the doctrine of *taḥrīf* than their later, secular-minded counterparts, their work not only points to the continued importance of *taḥrīf* in interreligious dialogue between Muslims and Christians, but has hints of more objective enquiries into the topic that would be explored by later scholars. It is also worth noting that Christian missionaries' perspective on *taḥrīf* drew upon their specific milieu–with Biblical Critical scholarship attacking the textual integrity of the Bible being employed by Muslim polemicists, it is no surprise then that Christian missionaries understood *taḥrīf* primarily as a charge of textual corruption as opposed to misinterpretation.

2.3 WISSENSCHAFT DES JUDENTUMS

While the previous section of this chapter dealt with *taḥrīf* primarily as it was understood within missiology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is with the development of Islamic Studies independent from Theology and Missiology and their associated polemical and apologetical perspectives that provided the opportunity for greater objectivity in the study of Muslim views on the Bible.[57] Whereas Christians involved in mission work among Muslims were principally interested in the doctrine of *taḥrīf* for the direct purpose of providing an apologetic in response to Muslim arguments, it was the study of the intersection between Judaism and Islam by *Wissenschaft des*

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[57] Jean Jacques Waardenburg, "The Study of Islam in German Scholarship," in *Mapping Islamic studies : Genealogy, Continuity, and Change*, ed. Azim Nanji, Religion and Reason (Berlin: Mouton de Grutyer, 1997), 2.

Judendtums scholars that led to significant advancements in the study of *taḥrīf*, both directly and indirectly. On a more direct level, several scholars whose academic careers had their beginnings in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* wrote works that dealt specifically with the topic of *taḥrīf*. Indirectly, the scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school developed the field of *Islamwissenschaft,* which in turn led to further studies of Islam, of which *taḥrīf* was included.

Wissenschaft des Judentums was the study of Judaism using modern critical methods of research and "a steadily growing group of Jewish scholars laid the groundwork for what today seems so self-evident: that Judaism is an object of Academic interest, as is any other cultural, social and historical phenomenon."[58] Rather than focus specifically on religion, there was a more-inclusive understanding of what was entailed in the study of Judaism that encouraged study of religion, philosophy, history, and other scholarly disciplines as they relate to Judaism. In this understanding, "The agenda of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was thus characterized by the scientific ambition to achieve a comprehensive and objective historical description of Judaism, free of religious prejudices and limitations."[59]

While *Wissenschaft des Judentums,* "Science of Judaism," was framed as an academic endeavor, it had a strong religious component, and the vast majority of scholars engaged in the discipline were themselves Jewish, and many were devout. Meyer notes

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[58] George Kohler, "Judaism Buried or Revitalised? *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Nineteenth Century Germany – Impact, Actuality, and Applicability Today," in *Jewish Thought and Jewish Belief*, ed. Daniel Lasker (Beer-Sheeva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2012), 27.

[59] Reimund and Gad Freudenthal Leicht, ed. *Studies on Steinschneider: Moritz Steinschneider and the Emergence of the Science of Judaism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Leiden: Brill, 2011), xxiii.

that the German Rabbis who were engaged in such study "considered their work to be either in the service of religion or intrinsically a religious task – or both."[60] Further, This religious affiliation, coupled with an endemic lack of institutional recognition of Jewish scholars,[61] led to the founding of a seminary in Breslau in 1854, then two more several decades later for the purposes of developing a rabbinate trained in the academic study of Judaism.[62] There was, however, tension over the nature of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and a concern for it to be considered a legitimate field of academic study. Moritz Steinschneider and Leopold Lunz – both prominent figures in the field – refused positions at Jewish seminaries for fear of ghettoizing the study of Judaism, even to the point that both Lunz and Steinschneider refused to attend the opening ceremony of the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums.[63] That is not to say that scholars like Lunz and Steinschneider did not recognize the (at least in part) religious nature of their endeavor, but rather that they sought to engage in scholarly enterprise that was not confined to the religious sphere.[64] Further, Trautmann-Waller notes that their reservations

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[60] Michael Meyer, "Two Persistent Tensions within *Wissenschaft des Judentums*," *Modern Judaism* 24, no. 2 (May 2004): 105-106.

[61] Trautmann-Waller notes that "Jewish Studies was not established at German universities, and when no scientific institutions existed completely independent of religious orientations and groups, Jewish scholars, in order to earn a living, had to work as preachers, rabbis, private or public teachers, lecturers or to find posts in journalism, libraries, in the Jewish communities or in various institutions with a scientific purpose but also linked to rabbinical training." Céline Trautmann-Waller, "Leopold Lunz and Moritz Steinschneider: *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a Struggle against Ghettoization in Science," in *Studies on Steinschneider: Moritz Steinschneider and the Emergence of the Science of Judaism in Ninteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Reimund Leicht and Gad Freudenthal, Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 103.

[62] Michael Meyer, "The Ideology of Wissenschaft des Judentums," in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Frank and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1997), 713-714.

[63] Trautmann-Waller, "Ghettoization in Science," 81-108. See also, Meyer, "The Ideology of Wissenschaft," 714.

[64] Lunz and Steinschneider were careful to distinguish the purview of their studies from that of religion. See Trautmann-Waller, "Ghettoization in Science," 103-104.

about the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums "seem to have been somewhat justified by its failure to secure official German credentials as a recognized academic institution equal to a university, for it ended up serving mostly as a rabbinical training seminary."[65] Geiger, who did end up taking a position at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums near the end of his life, perhaps placed greater importance on religious identity in the study of Judaism. Seeking to provide a place for both religious and academic endeavor related to Judaism, Geiger had founded the journal, *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Jüdische Theologie* in 1835. In his introduction to the journal, he outlined the two extremes he considered Judaism to have pursued; Orthodoxy and radical enlightenment, and instead sought to find a middle path for such an academic and religious pursuit as *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.[66]

The fact that many Jews had historically lived in Islamic lands, as well as their shared monotheism, meant that many scholars engaged in the scholarly study of Judaism were similarly interested in the study of Islam. In considering the historical situation of Jewish people as part of this new academic enterprise, Heschel notes, "simply in writing Jewish history, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* devoted a disproportionate amount of attention to the history of Jewish life in Muslim lands."[67] A critical methodology from their own study of Judaism coupled with natural interest in the shared tradition of Islam and Judaism paved the way for the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholars to give rise to a

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[65] Ibid., 106.

[66] Kohler, "Judaism Buried or Revitalised? *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Nineteenth Century Germany – Impact, Actuality, and Applicability Today," 41-42.

[67] Susannah Heschel, "Constructions of Jewish Identity through Reflections on Islam," in *Faithful Narratives: Historians, Religion, and the Challenge of Objectivity*, ed. Andrea Sterk and Nina Caputo (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 172.

new field of study: *Islamwissenschaft*. The importance of Abraham Geiger in particular has been noted in this development: "Scholars of Islam for the past two centuries have credited the beginnings of their field to the work of Geiger, whose study of parallels between the Qur'an and rabbinic literature, *Was hat Muhammad aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?*, was published in 1833."[68] Such an endeavor as Geiger's, which looked to the Jewish foundation for Islam, was formative in the field of Islamic Studies, but has had its share of criticism.[69] It was this initial concern with the study of Judaism as an academic endeavor that led to the emergence of *Islamwissenschaft* as its own discipline, although much of the early scholarship in this field that grew out of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is concerned with Islam insofar as it relates to Judaism.

2.4 A DISTINCTION BETWEEN *TAḤRĪF AL-MAʿNĀ* AND *TAḤRĪF AL-NAṢṢ*

The role of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the study of *taḥrīf* is also evident in a more direct manner, as those who would have been considered scholars of Judaism wrote works dealing directly with Muslim polemics against Christians and Jews, and so dealt with *taḥrīf*. Two scholars who are of most interest for the purposes of this study are Moritz Steinschneider (d. 1907) and Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) on account of their foundational impact. Both scholars are products of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school and produced significant works in that regard,[70] and both were also interested in

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[68] Ibid., 170.

[69] See Khaleel Mohammed, "A Muslim Approach to Western Studies of Islam," in *Contemporary Approaches to the Qur'an and Sunnah*, ed. Mahmoud Ayoub (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2012), 203 ff.

[70] Some of Steinschneider's works pertaining to the study of Judaism include: Moritz Steinschneider, *Die geschichtsliteratur der Juden in Druckwerken und Handschriften, zusammengestellt von Moritz Steinschneider* (Frankfurt: J. Kauffman, 1905); Moritz Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen Übersetzungen*

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the study of Islam, and produced seminal works in that field. Steinschneider's and

Goldziher's background in the study of Judaism is evident in some of their scholarship

concerning Islam, and it is understandable then that Muslim polemics, particularly where

it concerns views on the Jewish scripture, would interest them.

Steinschneider is primarily remembered for his pioneering bibliographical works

and catalogues of various library manuscript collections.[71] It has been noted that he "was

not an historian […]. He was primarily a bibliographer who, through a stupendous

familiarity with manuscripts and rare books, was able to elucidate an endless array of

details pertaining to a great variety of subjects in the history of Jewish and cognate

cultures."[72] Steinschneider's work stemmed from the importance he placed on

> comprehensive knowledge of the non-Jewish environment and background. In
> contrast to the prevailing 'isolationist' treatment of Jewish history, he tirelessly
> emphasized that 'Jewish science and literature can properly be understood and
> evaluated only in their interrelations with non-Jewish sciences and literatures.'[73]

It is Steinschneider's work on "cognate cultures" that is of interest to this study, as his

Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache, published in 1877, is of

particular importance to the study of *taḥrīf*.[74] In this work Steinschneider advances his

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des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag des Bibliographen Bureaus, 1893).

[71] For a bibliography of Steinschneider's works, see G.A. Kohut, "Bibliography of the Writings of Prof. M. Steinschneider," in *Festschrift zum achtzigen Geuburtstag Morits Steinschneiders*, ed. H. Malter and A. Marx (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1896), XXXIII.

[72] Salo Baron, *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 276. Some, however, would take umbrage with classifying Steinschneider as "not an historian." See Norman Golb, "Steinschneider as Historian," in *Studies on Steinschneider: Moritz Steinschneider and the Emergence of the Science of Judaism in Ninteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Reimund Leicht and Gad Freudenthal, Studies in Jewish History and Culture (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 477-488.

[73] Baron, *History and Jewish Historians*, 278.

[74] Moritz Steinschneider, *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache zwischen Muslimen, Christen und Juden, nebst Anhängen verwandten Inhalts* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1877).

general project of contextualizing Judaism in relation to its non-Jewish milieu by providing bibliographical information on a number of works by Muslim polemicists that discuss the accusation of *Bibelfälschung* (Bible falsification). While he does not go into great detail on *taḥrīf*, Steinschneider's bibliographical study was crucial insofar as he brought Muslim polemics to the attention of the scholarly world as part of the emerging field of Islamic Studies.

Steinschneider's bibliographical work was complemented by the work of Ignaz Goldziher, another Jewish scholar with roots in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* who had a lasting impact on the development of the field of *Islamwissenschaft*. By the year after the publication of Steinscheider's *Polemische und apologetische Literatur in arabischer Sprache*, Goldziher had published a lengthy article entitled, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb," that examined trends in Muslim polemic against Christians and Jews.[75] While his focus was not exclusively on *taḥrīf*, the dichotomy he established therein for evaluating and categorizing the articulation of *taḥrīf* in the history of Muslim thought has been recognized as foundational, with Waardenburg noting that in it he "gave the general historical framework of Muslim polemics against the *ahl al-kitāb*."[76] This "general historical framework" has influenced scholars after Goldziher and can be observed as the foundation upon which they would build their own studies.

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[75] Ignaz Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländische Gesellschaft* 32 (1878): 341-378.

[76] Jean Jacques Waardenburg, *Muslims and Others: Relations in Context* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 178. It is difficult to find any study of *taḥrīf* that does not quote Goldziher's "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen ahl al-kitāb."

Goldziher's study establishes the distinction upon which further investigations have relied. After treating the general meaning and utilization of *taḥrīf*, he writes of the importance of the topic in regard to Muslim-Christian relations:

> The crux of Muhammedan polemic is the main accusation that Islam brought from the very beginning against *ahl al-kitāb*; namely, that they altered, forged, and twisted their Scriptures. This allegation, which was generally charged in the earlier days of Islam, could be formulated with specificity only after the acknowledgement and securing of information about the contents of relevant writings, in order to develop and explain the particulars of the forgery process.[77]

Goldziher thus provides the academic impetus for further investigation of *taḥrīf*; it is the focal point of Muslim polemic against the People of the Book. He understands it as a charge that the scriptures have been altered, forged, and twisted – encompassing *taḥrīf* in all its permutations. Regardless of the manner in which Muslim polemicists have argued for the falsification of the Christian scriptures throughout history, *taḥrīf* forms the principal accusation and the foundation for understanding the manner in which Muslims have advanced arguments against Christianity.

In addition to demonstrating the importance of *taḥrīf* to the history of Muslim views on Judaism and Christianity, Goldziher is the first in Western scholarship to delineate the two trends of Muslim thought on *taḥrīf*: misinterpretation (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*) and textual corruption (*taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*). This distinction had been recognized earlier in Islamic thought, but it was not until Goldziher's contribution that it is spelled out in detail

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[77] Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb," 364. "Der Kernpunkt der muhammedanischen Polemik ist die Hauptbeschuldigung, welche der Islam von den ersten Anfängen an gegen Ahl al-kitāb erhob, dass diese nämlich ihre Offenbarungsschriften änderten, fälschten und verdrehten. Diese Anschuldigung, welche in der älteren Zeit des Islam ganz allgemein erhoben wurde, konnte erst nach der Kenntnissnahme [Kenntnisnahme] von und sicherer Information über den Inhalt der betreffenden Schriften zu bestimmter Formulirung [Formulierung] gelangen, um die Einzelnheiten [Einzelheiten] des Fälschungsvorganges zu entwickeln und darzulegen."

in the pages of Western academic scholarship. Goldziher's contribution to the field of

Islamic Studies and in particular his role in establishing this distinction between *taḥrīf al-*

maʿnā and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* justify the full quotation that follows. Regarding the first form

of *taḥrīf*, he writes:

> It seems important to us that for knowledge of the nature of Muslim
> polemic, to go into more detail here about it. We can distinguish two main
> schools of thought. The milder, which denies that that accusation refers to
> forgery, interpolation, or tendentious reduction of the Bible, claiming,
> rather, special acknowledgment of the continuous chain of transmission
> (*tawātur*) these texts have for their authenticity. The Bible, which the *ahl*
> *al-kitāb* transmitted, was the same unfalsified one God revealed to their
> Prophet. Only the interpretation of the books had been twisted by them–in
> particular the passages related to a deeper and more correct interpretation
> of the mission of Muhammad and the truth of Islam, which the People of
> the Book deliberately misinterpreted, despite better judgment. The
> followers of that line of thought naturally face the task of tracing those
> passages and ascertaining their proper Islamic exegetical application.[78]

This first articulation of corruption, which Goldziher refers to as the milder charge,

denies that the Bible has been forged, contains interpolations, or has been tendentiously

reduced; rather, its continuous chain of transmission is assured. The Bible in the hands of

the Christians, then, continued to be that same unfalsified Book which God was supposed

to have revealed to Jesus according to the Muslim conception of the *Injīl*. It had not

suffered textual corruption at some point after its supposed revelation to Jesus; it had only

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[78] Ibid., 364-365. "Es scheint uns für die Erkenntnis der Art muhammedanischer Polemik wichtig, darauf hier näher einzugehen. Wir können zwei Hauptrichtungen unterscheiden. Die eine, mildere, bestreitet dass die Beschuldigung sich auf eine Fälschung, Interpolierung oder tendenziöse Kürzung der Bibeltexte beziehe: behauptet vielmehr mit besonderer Würdigung der continuirlichen [sic: kontinuierlichen] Traditionskette (*tawātur*), welche diese Texte für ihre Authentic haben, der Bibeltext, wie ihn die Ahl al-kitab überliefern, sei ungefälscht derselbe, den Gott ihren Propheten offenbarte. Nur die Interpretation der Bücher sei durch sie verdreht worden, und namentlich seien die Stellen, welche eine tiefere und richtigere Interpretation auf die Sendung Muhammeds und Wahrheit es Islam beziehen müsse, durch die Schriftbesitzer, trotz besseren Wissens, absichtlich in falscher Weise interpretiert worden. Die Anhänger diese Richtung stellen sich Natürlicher Weise die Aufgabe, jenen Stellen nachzuspüren und ihre richtige exegetische Anwendung auf Muhammedanisches zu constatiren [konstatieren]."

been misinterpreted by the Jews and Christians. Goldziher does not provide names or works with this articulation of *taḥrīf*, although his example of misinterpretation for the purpose of denying Muḥammad's claim to Prophethood and the truth of Islam leads one to consider, among others, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (ca. 855). This work contains lists of biblical verses used to support the Prophethood of Muḥammad, in direct contradiction to Christian interpretations.[79]

Goldziher then presents the second, less mild version of *taḥrīf*, which, rather than an accusation that Christians misinterpreted their scriptures, instead alleges that the actual text of the scriptures has been corrupted. Goldziher writes: "Another school of thought, to which Ibn Ḥazm belongs: this view rejects *tabdīl* (replacement/substitution) and relates it to the falsification of the text itself, with particular reference to citations from the Torah and *Injīl* in the Qur'ān that cannot be found in the present text."[80] As evidence of Goldziher's importance to the field, almost all later scholars repeat his situating of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) as the figurehead of this version of *taḥrīf*. While the association of Ibn Ḥazm with *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* is understandable due to his extreme contempt for the text of the scriptures, it sets up a problematic distinction. Scholars after Goldziher would follow his lead, but one cannot help but think that by associating *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* with the harsh polemic of Ibn Ḥazm, who takes the charge of textual corruption to its most extreme, a false association is established that does not transfer in every situation, particularly in

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[79] See Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 79-81.

[80] Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb," 365. "Eine andere Richtung der auch Ibn Ḥazm angehört, verwirft diese Auffassung des (*tabdīl*) und bezieht es unter besonderem Hinweis auf Citate des Korans aus dem Taurāt und Injil, welche sich in dem jetzigen Texte nicht vorfinden, auf die Fälschung des Textes selbst."

cases where polemicists present a variety of arguments against the Bible. Earlier

polemicists might question the authenticity of the Bible, but if the vitriol Ibn Ḥazm

expresses toward the biblical text is considered the exemplar of this approach, it is not

surprising that their far tamer views are not considered to be akin to Ibn Ḥazm's.

Regardless of the problematic nature of this association he makes, Goldziher's distinction

between the two charges of *taḥrīf* is crucial to understanding the secondary literature

because it is his two-tracks version of *taḥrīf* that remained as the categories later scholars

used as they further developed this area of study.

Another scholar with interests intersecting the academic study of Judaism and

Islam was Harwtig Hirschfeld, whose article "Mohammaden Criticism of the Bible"[81]

makes him one of the earliest scholars to take a historical approach to the topic of *taḥrīf*

in English. Significantly, Hirschfeld is not responding to the arguments of contemporary

Muslim polemicists, as is commonly seen in the literature from Christian missionaries;

rather, he elaborates on the nature of *taḥrīf* as it is articulated in specific texts; among

them the works of Ibn Ḥazm and al-Jāḥiẓ. Hirschfeld draws parallels between the

accusation of textual corruption advanced by Ibn Ḥazm and his understanding of the

Qur'ān's position. In that regard he writes, "His [Ibn Ḥazm's] object in criticizing the

Bible was to substantiate the charges brought by Mohammed against Jews (and

Christians) of falsifying their holy Writs. His strict way of interpreting the Qorān led him

to take this accusation in its literal sense."[82] Then later, "Ibn Ḥazm was so convinced that

the Bible, as he read it, had been tampered with by the Rabbis, that he reviled it

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[81] Hartwig Hirschfeld, "Mohammaden Criticism of the Bible," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 13 (1901): 222-240.

[82] Ibid., 226.

continually, and only spoke of it with scorn."[83] Hirschfeld also translates a section from

the polemical work of the ninth-century Muslim al-Jāḥiẓ, who Hirschfeld notes considers

the Bible to have been altered and corrupted in the process of its translation and copying.

When he comments on *taḥrīf*, Hirschfeld does so only in direct relation to Jewish history.

In doing so, however, he provides greater historical context for the development of

Muslim objections to the Bible – which by its very nature must in some manner relate to

the Christian scriptures. His work investigates multiple Muslim polemicists and Jewish

responses over the span of multiple centuries and provides a better understanding of the

intersection of Muslim and Jewish relations, particularly as it concerns polemical matters.

2.5 A CHRONOLOGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF *TAḤRĪF*

An important step in the development of the understanding of *taḥrīf* comes from

the work of Ignazio Di Matteo, who wrote the first article dealing specifically and solely

with *taḥrīf* and further cemented the categories Goldziher had established in his work.[84]

In it, Di Matteo explores the manner in which Muslims have interpreted those verses in

the Qur'ān related to the topic. Ananikian summarizes Di Matteo's analysis thus:

> In the Koran *tahrif* means either false interpretation of the passages
> bearing upon Mohammed or non-enforcement of the explicit laws of the
> Pentateuch. As for the text of the Bible, it had been altered neither before
> Mohammed, nor even during his life-time by those Jews and Christians
> who were not favorably disposed toward his mission. No rival text is

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[83] Ibid., 227.

[84] Ignazio Di Matteo, "Il 'tahrif' od alterazione della Bibbia secondo i Musulmani," *Bessarione* 38 (1922): 64-111, 223-260; M. H. Ananikian, "*Tahrif* or the Alteration of the Bible according to the Moslems, Abbreviated and Translated from the *Bessarione*, xxvi, 1922," *The Muslim World* 14, no. 1 (1924): 61-84. He also wrote two other pertinent articles. For his introduction, Arabic edition, and Italian translation of al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā,* see Ignazio Di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i Cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 9 (1921-1923): 301-364. For his analysis of Ibn Ḥazm's polemic against Christianity, see Ignazio Di Matteo, "Le pretese contraddizioni della S. Scrittura secondo Ibn Hazm," *Bessarione* 39 (1923): 77-127.

assumed. The books which they write and give out as divine are not parts of, or substitutes for, the Bible.[85]

Attempting to make sense of a noted disparity between the Qur'ān's pronouncements of the scriptures of the Christians and Jews and later Muslim arguments, Di Matteo demonstrates through a brief examination of the *tafsīr* related to those verses that the Qur'ān and its commentaries, as well as the traditions of Muḥammad's companions, refer specifically to the misinterpretation of the Christian and Jewish scriptures rather than their textual corruption. Importantly, Di Matteo finds that the Qur'ān and early traditions do not claim a rival text; that is, the false interpretations advanced by Christians and Jews that deny Muḥammad's Prophethood do not necessitate a separate text. There is no supposed other, uncorrupted version of the scriptures; rather a mere alteration of interpretation is supposed to have been offered in bad faith to Muslims looking for signs of Muḥammad in the scriptures of the Jews and Christians.

Di Matteo summarizes the positions on *taḥrīf* as expressed by, among others, the following Muslim polemicists: al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 860), al-Masʿūdī (d. 965), Ḥasan b. Ayyūb (d. 10th cent.), al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), Shahrastānī (d. 1153), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), al-Qarāfī (d. 1285), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1327), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), al-Biqāʿī (d. 1480), and al-Hindī (referred to previously as Kayrānawī, the author of *Iẓhār al-Ḥaqq* and disputant in the 1854 Agra debate with Pfander).[86] Di Matteo's examination of each scholar is brief; although the range of his examination is impressive in its breadth. He sums up their general position

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[85] Ananikian, "*Tahrif* or the Alteration of the Bible," 70.

[86] Di Matteo, "Il 'tahrif'" 223-258.

on the topic of *taḥrīf*, generally in line with the categories established by Goldziher. Ananikian sums up his position, noting that "while the Koran and the early traditionists recognize the genuineness of the Biblical text, the polemists coming much later are divided on the question, some adhering to the older view and others explaining *tahrif* as corruption of the text."[87] He considers that al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā*, "establishes the general principle that Christians have given false interpretations, for which they have fallen into error."[88]

Di Matteo follows Goldziher's categories of misinterpretation and textual corruption as the two ways scripture falsification had been articulated and notes that they have been referred to as *taghyīr al-lafẓ* and *taghyīr al-maʿnā*, although he considers *taḥrīf* to be reserved for alteration of words rather than sense.[89] He finds, however, that a great number of the polemicists assert that the Christian and Jewish scriptures have been both misinterpreted *and* textually corrupted. He does not draw out the significance of polemicists utilizing both tactics in their respective works, but it is worth noting that there he presents a more nuanced view of *taḥrīf* than simply labeling polemicists' works as espousing one or the other. He considers the following polemicists as those who believe *taḥrīf* is primarily due to misinterpretation: al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm, al-Masʿūdī, Hasan b. Ayyūb, Shahrastānī, Fakhr al-Din Rāzī, Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Khaldīn, al-Biqāʿī; and he considers the following polemicists to articulate *taḥrīf* in their respective works as

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[87] Ananikian, "*Tahrif* or the Alteration of the Bible," 84.

[88] Di Matteo, "Il 'tahrif' " 223. "Stabilisce il principio generale che i cristiani abbiano dato ai passi biblici una falsa interpretazione, per cui siano caduti in errore."

[89] Ibid., 68.

primarily textual corruption: Bīrūnī, Ibn Ḥazm, Qarāfī, Saʿīd b. Ḥasan of Alexandria, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and al-Hindī.

Although he describes these general categories and attempts to work within them, Di Matteo will often label a polemicist as primarily in one camp but with occasional leanings the other way. Ibn Khaldūn, for example, is categorized as firmly within the misinterpretation camp, but "he [Ibn Khaldūn] would admit that some errors may have slipped into the text."[90] Di Matteo does not explore the implications to the two-category system of classification Goldziher had established when confronted with polemicists who advance charges of misinterpretation *and* textual corruption simultaneously, nor does he note the inadequacy of the labels, despite needing to stretch their boundaries beyond their very definitions. Forcing this dichotomy onto the idea of *taḥrīf*, in which some authors are labeled as proponents of misinterpretation while others are labeled as proponents of textual corruption, allows little room for a nuanced understanding of *taḥrīf*, in which the needs, genre, audience, and purpose of the authors determine the manner in which they approach the Christian scriptures. Further, there is no recognition by Di Matteo of how assigning authors to more than one camp is problematic to the categorization scheme. By admitting that those he considers to be primarily advancing charges of misinterpretation would consider there to be some textual corruption in the Bible, he has rendered the categorization scheme meaningless.

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[90] Ananikian, "*Tahrif* or the Alteration of the Bible," 81; Di Matteo, "Il 'tahrif' " 243.

Another progression in the study of *taḥrīf* is Erdmann Fritsch's study, *Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter*, published in 1930.[91] In it, he discusses a number of Muslim polemicists and apologists beginning with al-Hāshimī (ca. 820) up through an anonymous text from 1455. Among others, he discusses the works of some of the authors examined in this present study: ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī, al-Jāḥiẓ, and al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. Fritsch considers "Der Vorwurf der Bibelfälschung" (The Accusation of Bible Falsification), using the categories established by Goldziher and grouping polemicists in the same manner as Di Matteo into either those who advance accusations of "falsche Auslegung" (false interpretation),[92] or "*taḥrīf* im radikalen Sinne von Textfälschung oder Textveränderung"[93] (textual corruption). While Fritsch does not use the terms that would later define the discourse (i.e., *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*), he points in that direction by using the word *Interpretationsfälschung,* which he glosses with the Arabic, *tabdīl al-maʿānī* (alteration of the meaning).[94]

Frants Buhl, writing the article on *taḥrīf* in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* in 1936, notes initially that the concept refers to "corruption of a document, whereby the original sense is altered."[95] He then lists the various ways in which this might occur: alteration of the written text, omission of portions, interpolation, or misinterpretation, and he argues that this is a qur'ānic accusation against both the Jews and Christians. However, he notes in a way that is indicative of his era by referring to the

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[91] Erdmann Fritsch, *Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter, Beiträge zur Geschichte der muslimischen Polemik gegen das Christentum in arabischer Sprache* (Breslau: Müller & Seiffert, 1930).

[92] Fritsch includes al-Qāsim in this group. Ibid., 56.

[93] Fritsch considers Ibn Ḥazm the first to advance this accusation. Ibid., 56-57.

[94] Ibid., 57.

[95] Frants Buhl, s.v. "Taḥrīf," in *EI.*

Qur'ān as the work of Muḥammad, that, "How he [Muḥammad] pictured this alteration to himself is not clear from his words and perhaps he had no very definite idea of it: he was more concerned with the fact itself than with how it was done."[96] According to Buhl, this ambiguity in the Qur'ān over the nature of *taḥrīf* results in later polemicists "coming to hold very divergent views in their opinions of the facts lying at the basis of the charge."[97] However, he argues interestingly that the charge of text alteration was "usual in the early centuries after Muḥammad."[98] Buhl provides Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) as the example and juxtaposes him with the much earlier al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 860). He considers al-Qāsim's text to articulate an accusation of misinterpretation; that is, the biblical text was sound and Christians and Jews were only guilty of misinterpreting it.[99] Buhl's chronology is confusing, however; he states that textual alteration was the typical charge in the early centuries after Muḥammad, but the earlier work by al-Qāsim he considers to advance charges of misinterpretation while the later work by Ibn Ḥazm he considers to advance charges of textual corruption. Regardless of the chronological confusion, al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is again promoted as the classic example of a charge of misinterpretation rather than textual corruption.

After the work produced by Christian missionaries and academics up through the first few decades of the twentieth century, there is a significant period when little scholarship was produced on *taḥrīf*. One notable exception during this period is the work of William Montgomery Watt. While he did not write substantially on the topic of *taḥrīf*,

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

Watt's importance in the field of Islamic Studies warrants his inclusion in this study. His 1953 article, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible," offered a contribution to the study of *taḥrīf*, and was considered important enough to be included in a compilation of his articles republished in 1990.[100] In fact, Watt himself considers this article to be "probably the most important article" included in the compilation.[101] In this article, Watt outlines four assertions the Qur'ān makes about the Bible and concludes,

> The Qur'ān does not put forward any general view of the corruption of the text of the Old and New Testaments. It makes clear allegations of the concealment of passages. It also makes the accusation of *taḥrīf* ('corruption' or 'alteration') but by this does not mean tampering with the written text (except perhaps in copying it), but – to judge from the examples – means the employment of various tricks in the course of dealings with Muslims.[102]

Watt next delineates what he considers to be three phases of the development of *taḥrīf*: (1) its articulation in the *sīra*; (2) early attempts to prove Muḥammad being foretold in the Bible; and (3) later traditions discouraging the questions of Christians and Jews and the use of copies of Christian and Jewish scriptures, due to their corruption.[103] His article is brief, but his attention to the historical development of the doctrine is interesting, particularly in regard to the third point. He notes, "Some of the traditions express a moderate attitude, according to which the questioning of Jews and Christians seems to be permitted, but Muslims are told to adopt a non-committal attitude to what they hear or to test it by the Qur'ān."[104] Although Watt is not making a point in his work about early

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[100] Watt, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible," 50-62; W. Montgomery Watt, *Early Islam: Collected Articles* (Edinburgh: Edibnburgh University Press, 1990).

[101] Watt, *Early Islam: Collected Articles*, ix.

[102] Ibid., 78.

[103] Ibid., 79-85.

[104] Ibid., 84.

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Muslims polemicists and their approach to the Scriptures, it applies well and provides the framework from which the hermeneutical method of early Muslim polemicists can be better understood when it comes to their approach to the scriptures of the Jews and Christians. Ultimately, Watt's contention is that *taḥrīf*, when it is articulated as complete textual corruption of the Bible, was not a qur'ānic accusation but was first articulated by scholars in the first Islamic century. This concern with the Qur'ān's articulation of *taḥrīf* is a regular interest of Christian scholars and there seem to be particular pains to divorce the Qur'ān's presentation of the scriptures of the *ahl al-kitāb* from any conception of textual corruption.[105]

In another of his more recent works more broadly related to Muslim-Christian relations, Watt devotes only four pages to the doctrine of *taḥrīf*.[106] Referring to areas of early Muslim conquest with large Christian populations, Watt argues that this close contact between the peoples of the two faiths implied that

> the Muslims living in these provinces had opportunities of conversing with Christians, and some of the Christians were able to produce strong arguments against Islam by showing the discrepancies between the Qur'ān and the Bible. The Qur'ānic perception of Christianity, when applied in this situation, was clearly inadequate. It could not be abandoned, however, without rejecting the Qur'ān, and so Muslim scholars began to elaborate some aspects of that perception in such a way as to weaken the anti-Islamic arguments.[107]

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[105] See Gordon Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2010), ix. Martin Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible," in *Christian Presence and Witness Among Muslims*, ed. Martin Accad (Neufeld Verlag Schwarzenfeld: Occasional Publication, 2005); Martin Accad, "The Diversity of Muslim Views and Use of the Bible During the Medieval Period: What Promise for the Future of Christian-Muslim Dialogue?," *Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies Research Briefings* 2, no. Autumn (2014).

[106] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1991).

[107] Ibid., 30.

Thus, according to Watt, *taḥrīf* as an accusation of textual corruption of the Christian Scriptures grew directly out of the polemical relationship between Muslims and Christians. It served as a means for Muslims to combat anti-Islamic arguments against the Qur'ān, and because Christians were using the Bible in their arguments against Islam, Muslims had to respond by challenging the authenticity and authority of the Bible. According to Watt, because Christianity and the Bible were not actually identical to their description in the Qur'ān, *taḥrīf* was a way in which the blame could be shifted from the Qur'ān to the Christians, and it was developed for precisely that reason.[108]

Watt does note that throughout the history of Muslim thought on this topic has been expressed in various ways. He mentions early references to the general corruption of the Scriptures (the dialogue between the catholicos Timothy I and the caliph al-Mahdī in 781 CE), but suggests Ibn Ḥazm as the main proponent of the view that *taḥrīf* refers to textual corruption. Conversely, al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm is advanced as the proponent of the view that *taḥrīf* refers to a corruption of meaning.[109] It is important to note that Watt appears to be basing his claim about al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm on the work of previous scholars, stating that this is "apparently" al-Qāsim's understanding.[110] Watt only explores the topic in a cursory manner, as it relates to its historical development. After pointing out the two different forms of *taḥrīf*, he concedes, "there were also some intermediate views."[111] It is evident that, when Watt claims "there has so far been no detailed study of

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[108] This is similar to the argument proposed by Arthur Jeffery in Jeffery, "A Moslem Torah from India," 233-234.

[109] Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions*.

[110] Ibid., 33.

[111] Ibid.

the way in which this doctrine of corruption was elaborated,"[112] his own work was not meant to fill that void

2.6 Continuing Old Trends

In 1980 Jean-Marie Gaudeul and Robert Caspar collaborated on an article on *taḥrīf* entitled, "Textes de la Tradition musulmane concernant le *Taḥrīf* (*Falsification*) des Écritures" that served as important guide and reintroduced the topic to scholarship after the previously mentioned lull.[113] In their article, important texts related to *taḥrīf* are gathered and presented in Arabic with corresponding French translations and Gordon Nickel notes that one of the article's strengths is "the authors' careful composition of questions to ask of the material."[114] They provide the range of words related to the topic in the Qur'ān, definitions of *taḥrīf* in the primary source material, and the standard distinction of *taḥrīf* into textual corruption and misinterpretation. Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), as is common, provides the classic example of articulating *taḥrīf* as textual corruption, while they cite Avicenna (d. 1037), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), and Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) as representatives of the charge of misinterpretation. As far as I have been able to tell thus far, it is the work of Caspar and Gaudeul that first introduces the specific terms *taḥrīf al-maʿnā/maʿānī,* which they define as "une fausse interprétation des textes authentiques," and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ,* which they define as "*falsification du* texte", in order to

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Gaudeul and Caspar, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le *taḥrīf* (falsification) des Écritures."

[114] Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering*, 20.

explain more clearly what scholars since Goldziher had been referring.[115] Although their

definitions for *taḥrīf* are drawn from the works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 976) and

Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905),[116] the categories are applied across the range of historical

disputational literature.

In 1984, Fr. Thomas Michel published a work entitled, *A Muslim Theologian's*

Response to Christianity – a translation of and introduction to Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Jawāb*

al-Ṣaḥīḥ.[117] In it Michel continues Goldziher's and Di Matteo's bifurcation of the

doctrine of *taḥrīf* into the two distinct forms, further demonstrating the pervasive nature

of this categorization scheme, and highlighting the distinction between early and later

Muslim polemicists; the former considering the Bible to be sound but misinterpreted

while the latter considered it to be textually corrupted. He writes in his introduction to the

text:

> The term *tahrif* finds its origin in the Qur'ān. In its verbal form it indicates
> an accusation hurled four times (4:46, 5:13, 5:41, 2:75) against Jewish
> leaders and carries the meaning that they quote their Scriptures wrongly
> out of context. On this basis a distinction was made early in the polemical
> tradition between *tahrif al-lafz*[118] and *tahrif al-maʿna*, the first referring to
> actual text distortion and corruption, the second referring to the false and
> distorted interpretation of basically sound texts.[119]

He comments further,

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[115] Gaudeul and Caspar, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le *taḥrīf* (falsification) des Écritures," 61.

[116] Ibid., 65-78.

[117] Fr. Thomas Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ* (New York: Caravan Books, 1984). Michel does not fully transliterate Arabic names and words in his work. All citations from Michel are taken directly from his text as they are written. Considering the context of this study, none of the improperly transliterated words are likely to cause confusion.

[118] *Taḥrīf al-lafẓ* (falsification of the word) is used in the academic literature interchangeably with *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (falsification of the wording), although the latter is more common.

[119] Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response* 89-90.

The early Muslim polemicists, such as ʿAli al-Tabari, the Zaydi al-Qasim ibn Ibrahim, and al-Hasan ibn Ayyub, applied the concept of *tahrif al-maʿna* to the Christian as well as Jewish scriptures. The later polemicists of the Ashʿarite school, such as al-Baqillani, al-Ghazali, and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, also approached the Bible as basically sound in its text but misinterpreted by Christians and Jews.[120]

While this division facilitates classification of authors and their works, it does not necessarily present a clear picture of the organic development of the doctrine, nor does it allow for much nuance in each author's respective understanding and elaboration of the doctrine. Rather, authors are divided relegated into one camp or the other, with Ibn Ḥazm generally serving as the watershed—prior to his work *taḥrīf* was understood as corruption of meaning, while after Ibn Ḥazm, *taḥrīf* was understood as textual corruption. Mcauliffe has stated similarly: "two parallel trajectories can be traced through centuries-long interplay of polemic and apologetic which launched these works. One line of exegetical analysis has occupied itself principally with scorning the Jewish and Christian scriptures, while the other set about searching them."[121]

Theodore Pulcini's dissertation deals primarily with Ibn Ḥazm, but he outlines *taḥrīf* in earlier texts – al-Qāsim's (ca. 815-826), Ibn al-Layth's (c. 795 CE), al-Jāḥiẓ's (mid 9th cent.), and ʿAlī ibn Rabban al-Ṭabarī's (mid 9th cent.) included. Concerning Ibn al-Layth's understanding of *taḥrīf*, Pulcini's assessment is limited. He characterizes Ibn al-Layth's position as one of advancing misinterpretation, noting that Ibn al-Layth considers Christians' unwillingness to accept Muḥammad's prophethood "was obviously

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[120] Ibid., 89.

[121] Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 144.

because they had distorted the proper sense of their scriptures."[122] He next turns to al-

Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā,* and after summarizing a portion, he writes, "This

extensive use of passages from the Gospel clearly indicates that al-Qāsim finds the

Christian scriptures trustworthy enough to serve as a basis for his arguments."[123] And

further, "If interpreted correctly, al-Qāsim argues, the Bible, and the gospels in particular,

teach the truth; therefore he exhorts the Christians to observe the Torah and the Gospel –

but genuinely, not as they have erroneously come to interpret it."[124] Mark Beaumont has

stated similarly, arguing that, "al-Qāsim believes that much of Jesus' teaching recorded

by Matthew was genuine, but he takes issue with the way Christians interpreted Christ's

teaching."[125] Furthermore,

> Al-Ṭabarī shares al-Qāsim's conviction that the sayings of Jesus in the gospels
> can be read in line with Islamic teaching and that Christians should be persuaded
> to return from their creedal beliefs about Jesus' divinity to the primitive and
> authentic voice of Jesus himself that proclaimed his subordination to God as His
> messenger."[126]

Beaumont and Pulcini, like others, consider early Muslim polemicists to be solely

advancing charges of misinterpretation rather than any form of textual corruption.

Without taking the texts in their entirety into account, Pulcini and Beaumont unfairly

generalize conclusions that can logically be made in regard to one aspect of a text to its

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[122] Theodore Pulcini, "Exegesis as Polemical Discourse: Ibn Ḥazm on Jewish and Christian Scriptures (Volumes I and II)" (Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh, 1994), 98.

[123] Ibid., 102.

[124] Ibid., 103.

[125] Mark Beaumont, "Muslim Readings of John's Gospel in the ʿAbbasid Period," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19, no. 2 (Apr 2008): 181.

[126] Ibid., 182.

entirety. The hermeneutic they and others use is problematic and leads to unwarranted conclusions about the entire text that should instead be limited to specific aspects.

Pulcini diverges, however, regarding his interpretation of al-Jāḥiẓ's *al-Radd ʿalā l-naṣārā.* He notes that it is similar in some regards to al-Qāsim's treatise, but while al-Jāḥiẓ considers the Torah's fault to lie in its translation, "[his] critique of the Christian scriptures is much less restrained,"[127] and he even goes so far as to call the authenticity of the Gospels into question, particularly that of Luke.[128] Pulcini thus recognizes at least the explicit charges of textual corruption in al-Jāḥiẓ's work. Regarding ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla,*[129] Pulcini writes, "In short, in this work, he does not question the integrity of the biblical text itself; rather, he casts doubt on the interpretation that Jews and Christians have given to it."[130] Pulcini notes, however, that ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā,*[131] which does not survive in its entirety, seems to offer a different perspective. In it, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī quotes extensively from the Christian and Jewish scriptures, yet also notes contradictions. Pulcini concludes, "While certainly not considering the Christian scriptures to be perfect, Ibn Rabban [ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī] sees them as trustworthy on the whole – at least trustworthy enough to provide reliable corroboration for his arguments."[132] Pulcini's analysis of ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī is short-sighted

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[127] Pulcini, "Exegesis," 105.

[128] Ibid., 106.

[129] ʿAlī ibn Sahl Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* [Book of Religion and Empire], ed. and trans. A. Mingana (Manchester: 1922).

[130] Pulcini, "Exegesis," 109.

[131] For the edition of this work, see ʿAlī ibn Sahl Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, ed. I.A. Khalife and W. Kutsch, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 36 (1959), 115-148. For the French translation, see ʿAlī ibn Sahl Rabban al-Ṭabarī, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* [Riposte aux chrétiens par ʿAlī Al-Tabarī], trans. Jean-Marie Gaudeul (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, 1995).

though, as he does not consider the manner in which ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's biblical prooftexting

requires careful selection of verses that support his argument to the exclusion of the rest

of the Bible. Pulcini incorrectly transfers his conclusions about one aspect of ʿAlī al-

Ṭabarī's text onto his entire approach.

Of particular importance to a growing body of scholarship on *taḥrīf* is Martin

Accad's catalogue of early Muslim uses of the Gospel as a series of four articles in the

journal, *Islam and Muslim-Christian Relations*.[133] Accad provides another dimension to

the study of this doctrine by providing 1,270 Gospel references used as a defense of Islam

and as arguments against Christianity in 23 works by 20 different Muslim authors. These

include scholars from the ninth to fifteenth centuries: al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm, al-Jāḥiz, ʿAlī

al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Qutayba, al-Yaʿqūbī, (Pseudo-) ʿUmar II, al-Nāshī al-Akbar, Abū al-Qāsim

al-Balkhī, Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Masʿūdī, al-Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, Abū

al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Juwaynī, (Pseudo-) Ghazalī, al-

Shahrastānī, Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.[134]

In addition to providing the author, text, verse reference, and page number where

biblical references can be found in the respective texts, Accad also establishes a series of

exegetical symbols associated with each reference based upon his research. He does this

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[132] Pulcini, "Exegesis," 111.

[133] Martin Accad, "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table (Part I)," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, no. 1 (2003); Martin Accad, "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table (Part II)," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, no. 2 (2003); Martin Accad, "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table (Part III)," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, no. 3 (2003); Martin Accad, "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table (Part IV)," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, no. 4 (2003).

[134] For the list of texts Accad considers for each of these authors, see Accad, "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table (Part I)," 68-69.

in order to "discover the exegetical strategies adopted by the authors under study, the exegetical themes they derive from their examination of the Gospels and their underlying attitudes towards them."[135] He observed these categories: There is no god but God; Jesus was a human servant; Jesus was a prophet and apostle; Jesus was not God for he related to another God; Jesus was not Son but son; The *Injīl* is an authoritative document, part of the revealed books; The *Injīl* is a reliable document for Ḥadīth interpretation; Islamization of the Gospel text (reinterpretation through translation); *Taḥrīf*; Christians are unfaithful receivers of Jesus' message; Islam and Muḥammad are the fulfillment of Christianity; Qur'ānic notions of paradise conform with biblical notions; Muḥammad was truly a prophet; and Muḥammad was the promised Paraclete.[136] His category "*Taḥrīf*" is problematic since he does not clarify whenther he is referring to *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* and *taḥrīf al-ma ʿnā*; rather, he notes the distinction between the two positions when he explains this exegetical symbol, but then ignores the distinction when he analyzes the texts, instead using one symbol to refer to *taḥrīf* generally.

His explanation of the development of *taḥrīf* is pertinent: he claims; "I believe it can be demonstrated that until the time of Ibn Ḥazm in the eleventh century, the accusation of *taḥrīf* in the sense of 'intentional corruption of the Holy Scriptures' was virtually non existent"[137] despite noting that "grave and serious suspicions were raised against the integrity of the text,"[138] and that he would not claim "that Muslim authors

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[135] Ibid., 69.

[136] Ibid., 69-76.

[137] Ibid., 73.

[138] Ibid.

considered the Gospels to be at the same level of authority and reliability as the Qur'ān."[139]

Accad's work generally adhered to Goldziher's distinction of *taḥrīf* as the development of corruption of meaning to corruption of the text, while also highlighting the general position that early polemicists proposed misinterpretation while later polemicists argued for textual corruption. He does this by arguing that there is a clear difference between later accusations of textual corruption and the use of the Gospels by earlier Muslims. He notes three positions Muslims have taken toward the Bible apart from textual corruption, which he refers to as *taḥrīf*. They are: (1) considering the Bible as an authoritative historical document;[140] (2) using the Bible as the criterion for judging *ḥadīth* material;[141] and (3) reinterpretation of the Bible through "subtly retranslating it."[142] Accad provides al-Qāsim as an example of this third and final approach, and he includes a small portion of his reworked text in translation. He argues that through this process of Islamic retranslation, which he considers subtle, "several authors were trying to safeguard the Gospel's authority by making its language and style more familiar to other Muslims."[143] Accad then proceeds to offer a history of the development of the doctrine of *taḥrīf*, again noting that al-Qāsim considers the problem not to be "in the text itself," but rather "in its misguided interpretation on the part of Christians,"[144] despite

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[139] Ibid., 72-73.

[140] Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible," 42.

[141] Ibid., 42-43.

[142] Ibid., 44. We will see in our examination of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd* in a later chapter that Accad's conception of what constitutes 'subtly retranslating' is problematic.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid., 50.

recognizing immediately thereafter that al-Qāsim does not consider the Gospels to meet the criterion of sound transmission.[145] On this point, Accad is at odds with Goldziher's classification as noted above, in which those who advance charges of misinterpretation acknowledge the continuous chain of transmission of the Bible supporting its authenticity.[146]

Accad makes equivocations with the work of al-Jāḥiẓ also, noting that his concern over errors of transmission does not imply corruption of the text.[147] Accad similarly explains away ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's mentions of "'contradictions' (*tanāquḍ*), 'abominations' (*kabāʾir*), *taḥrīf*, and 'corruption' (*fasād*)," by claiming that he "is talking about Christian *misinterpretation* of the biblical text, rather than about actual *textual* corruption."[148] Accad interpretive framework is confusing – when al-Qāsim does not explicitly advance charges of textual corruption, it must mean that he only implied misinterpretation,[149] yet when al-Jāḥiẓ and ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī advance more explicit charges of the textual corruption of the Bible, Accad argues that they actually mean misinterpretation.

Mu'nim Sirry has further developed the idea of a gradual shift from misinterpretation to textual corruption among Muslim polemicists, stating, "The prevalent view among early Muslims has apparently been that Jews and Christians had only misinterpreted their Scriptures, not falsified them. Gradually, however, a theory of

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[145] Ibid., 51.

[146] Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb," 364.

[147] Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible," 51-52.

[148] Ibid., 52. Italics for emphasis appear in the original.

[149] Al-Qāsim's challenge to the Bible's transmission is an explicit argument for textual corruption, which Accad casts aside.

conscious falsification (*taḥrīf*) of the Scriptures on the part of the Christians evolved."[150]

This concept of a gradual development from misinterpretation to textual corruption has become a standard interpretive framework for the study of *taḥrīf* in Islamic thought on the Christian and Jewish scriptures, although the catalyst for this gradual shift is often unclear. There is, however, a problematic association in Sirry's definition. He sets up the common distinction between misinterpretation and textual corruption but then forces an association of conscious falsification onto the definition of textual corruption, and in doing so redefines *taḥrīf* to exclusively mean textual corruption; a position hinted at by Accad but not explicitly established.[151] While some polemicists do argue that the text has been corrupted with malice aforethought, this is not universal to the polemicists who advance some degree of the charge of textual corruption. The simple acknowledgment that the text has been corrupted in some manner, be it conscious or not, necessitates a classification of textual corruption and the ability (necessity?) of polemicists who espouse such a view to discard portions of the Bible they consider to be in contradiction to Islamic and qur'ānic teachings, while simultaneously allowing them to preserve the portions they consider to be theologically consistent.

Hava Lazarus-Yafeh's *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism,* deals specifically with the doctrine of *taḥrīf* in relation to the Jewish scriptures, and, in her own words, is an attempt "to study medieval Muslim authors' knowledge of, and attitudes toward, the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)."[152] Understandably, the text focuses

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[150] Mun'im Sirry, "Early Muslim-Christian Dialogue: A Closer Look at Major Themes of the Theological Encounter," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 16, no. 4 (2005): 371.

[151] Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible," 42.

[152] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, xi.

on Jewish scriptures and only briefly deals with the Christian scriptures insofar as they relate to a particular point of discussion. Camilla Adang has also elaborated on *taḥrīf* as it relates to the Jewish Scriptures in *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*.[153] In this work, Adang traces the use and understanding of the Jewish scriptures through nine authors: ʿAlī b. Rabban al-Ṭabarī (d. 865 CE), Ibn Qutayba (d. 889 CE), al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 905 CE), al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE), al-Masʿūdī (d. 956 CE), al-Maqdisī (d. after 966 CE), al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013 CE), al-Birūnī (d. 1050 CE), and Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064 CE), placing them in their "social, religious, and political context," followed by their specific contacts with Jews.[154] Chapter seven of Adang's work deals with the doctrine of *taḥrīf* explicitly and how each of the nine authors in question interpreted the concept. Adang writes,

> In each of these three cases [the debate between Timothy I and the caliph al-Mahdī, the *Risāla* of al-Kindī, and the letter to ʿUmar II ascribed to Leo III], the Christian respondent argues against the suggestion by his Muslim opponent that the very *text* of the scriptures has been corrupted. In the epistle of Ibn al-Layth, on the other hand, *taḥrīf* is clearly interpreted as a distortion of their *sense*: whoever looks in the books of the Prophets will find Muḥammad mentioned, but the People of the Book have obscured these references by changing their interpretation. Ibn al-Layth categorically denies the possibility of passages having been added to, or omitted from, the scriptures, and professes his belief–and Caliph Hārūn's–in the authenticity of these scriptures.[155]

Thus, in Adang's assessment, there is no possibility that Ibn al-Layth advances anything other than a charge of misinterpretation, and she extrapolates from his particular quotations from the Bible that he considers the entire text to be authentic and sound,

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[153] Camilla Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible : from Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*, Islamic philosophy, theology, and science, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996).

[154] Ibid., 23-109.

[155] Ibid., 224.

although grossly misinterpreted. While her work does not explicitly deal with the

interpretation of *taḥrīf* as it relates to the Gospels, the texts of many of the authors she

considers concern both the Jewish and Christian scriptures and some of the principles

these authors use in their approaches to the Jewish scriptures are similarly applied to their

approach to the Christian scriptures.

Mark Beaumont has argued that the works of al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm and ʿAlī ibn

Rabban al-Ṭabarī demonstrate they believed there to be theological continuity between

the Bible and the Qurʾān. He writes:

> There were those who found aspects of the qurʾanic Jesus in the Christian Gospels
> and who quoted from them to demonstrate the continuity between the Qurʾan and
> the Christian account. Ninth-century examples are found in the *Refutations of the*
> *Christians* by al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī al-Rassī (c. 820 CE) and ʿAlī ibn
> Rabbān [Rabban] al-Ṭabarī (c. 850 CE).[156]

Continuing, Beaumont claims, "al-Qāsim believes that much of Jesus' teaching recorded

by Matthew was genuine, but he takes issue with the way Christians interpreted Christ's

teaching."[157] And further,

> Al-Ṭabarī shares al-Qāsim's conviction that the sayings of Jesus in the gospels
> can be read in line with Islamic teaching and that Christians should be persuaded
> to return from their creedal beliefs about Jesus' divinity to the primitive and
> authentic voice of Jesus himself that proclaimed his subordination to God as His
> messenger.[158]

This interpretation by Beaumont does not take into account the entirety of al-Qāsim's or

ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's texts. Regarding the former, Beaumont ignores his explicit and implicit

arguments for textual corruption. Regarding the latter, Beaumont considers ʿAlī al-

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[156] Mark Beaumont, "Muslim Readings of John's Gospel in the ʿAbbasid Period," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19, no. 2 (2008): 179.

[157] Ibid., 181.

[158] Ibid., 182.

Ṭabarī's opinions of select proof-texts as evidence that he considers the entire text to be authentic.[159] This approach is common throughout the secondary scholarship, although a close reading of the texts will demonstrate the flaws in this hermeneutical method.

Beaumont's wording is somewhat confusing, and seems to hint at the possibility of ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī and al-Qāsim arguing for something more than simple misinterpretation of the scriptures. In addition to limiting wording like "*aspects* of the qur'ānic Jesus" and "*much of* Jesus' teaching recorded by Matthew," Beaumont states, "He [ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī] shares with al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm the conviction that the Jesus of the Qur'an can be found in the Christian gospels and that it only requires the 'qur'anic' Jesus to be quoted from them for Christians to see the truth of the Islamic version of Christ."[160] It is in this quotation of the "qur'ānic" Jesus that the crux of the matter lies: Beaumont ignores ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's and al-Qāsim's process of filtering out the offending Gospel material that obscures this 'qur'ānic' Jesus. Rather than note this problem, Beaumont continues:

> There were those who found the qur'anic Jesus in the Christians gospels and quoted from them to demonstrate the continuity between the Qur'an and the Christian account. Their intention was to demonstrate the ultimate truth of the Qur'an where there was an apparent clash with Christian teaching about Christ. In the ninth century, al-Qāsim and al-Ṭabarī both referred to numerous sayings of Jesus in the gospels that they believed could fit into an Islamic view of Jesus, in order to try to prove to Christians that their creedal faith in Christ misinterpreted the original teaching of their master.[161]

Thus, despite recognizing that al-Qāsim and ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī were forced to be selective in their inclusion of Gospel passages in order to filter out any hints of a non-qur'ānic Jesus

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[159] Mu'nim Sirry agrees with Beaumont's conclusions, noting about ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's *Kitāb al-dīn wa-dawla*: "One of the interesting things about this book is its relatively positive evaluation of the reliability of the biblical text." Sirry, "Early Muslim-Christian Dialogue: A Closer Look at Major Themes of the Theological Encounter," 372.

[160] Beaumont, "Muslim Readings of John's Gospel in the ʿAbbasid Period," 185.

[161] Ibid., 194.

contained therein, Beaumont concludes that misinterpretation was the underlying

foundation for their accusation.

Gordon Nickel's dissertation and subsequent monograph dealing with *taḥrīf*

attempt to demonstrate continuity between the Qur'ān's pronouncements on *taḥrīf* and

that of the early *tafsīr* tradition.[162] His work lays out the qur'ānic basis for *taḥrīf* and the

semantic field of tampering therein, which includes verbs related to confounding,

concealing, substituting, tampering, twisting, and forgetting.[163] From there, he explores

the manner in which Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 767) and Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī comment

on the verses containing the aforementioned verbs falling within the semantic range.

Nickel determines that,

> examination and analysis of the commentary passages has shown that the
> exegetes of the formative period did not in the first instance understand the
> Qur'ānic verses of tampering to mean the textual corruption of the earlier
> scriptures. Rather, they interpreted the verses to mean a range of actions of
> tampering done mainly by Jews, mainly contemporary with the prophet of Islam,
> and mainly related to the Torah.[164]

Nickel's thesis does not reach so far as to argue that all genres of Muslim literature

adhered to this claim, but he disagrees with a number of scholars who have understood

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[162] Gordon Nickel, "The Theme of "Tampering with the Earlier Scriptures" in Early Commentaries on the Qur'ān" (Ph.D., University of Calgary, 2004); Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering*. He has also written an article and a book chapter dealing with *taḥrīf*. See, Gordon Nickel, "Early Muslim Accusations of Taḥrīf: Muqatil Ibn Sulayman's Commentary on Key Qur'anic Verses," in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2007); Gordon Nickel, "Muqātil ibn Sulaymān on the Verses of Tampering," *Islamic Culture* 76, no. 3 (2002).

[163] Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering*. See chapter 3 in particular.

[164] Ibid., 223.

early Muslim exegetes to consider the Qurʾān to be advancing charges of the textual corruption of the Bible.[165]

Nickel limits his conclusions to exegetes of the formative period, specifically Muqātil and Ṭabarī, and he notes that they came to these conclusions in part because of the "constraints of the *tafsīr* genre."[166] These constraints were not similarly imposed upon Muslim polemicists working outside the exegesis of the Qurʾān, and Nickel's recognition of the limitations upon *mufassirūn* to remain within those confines is integral to understanding the importance of genre in the articulation of *taḥrīf*. In more direct regard to the authors under consideration in this study, Gordon Nickel sums up the previous scholarship and notes that

> as representative of the view of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā*, a number of scholars have highlighted the approach of al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm. Though a work of polemic, and written relatively early (9ᵗʰ C.), his "Refutation of the Christians" envisioned corruption to the interpretation of the Bible, but not to the text itself.[167]

This has been the predominant assessment by scholars concerning the articulation of *taḥrīf* by early Muslim polemicists, of whom al-Qāsim is often considered the classic example.

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[165] He notes a number of scholars who disagree with his position and consider the Qurʾān to be advancing charges of *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* in their respective texts: Gordon Darnell Newby, s.v. "Forgery," in *EQ*; Uri Rubin, s.v. "Children of Israel," in *EQ*; Gerhard Böwering, s.v. "Chronology and the Qurʾān," in *EQ*; Frederick Denny, s.v. "Corruption," in *EQ*; Shari Lowin, s.v. "Revision and Alteration," in *EQ*; Charles J. Adams, s.v. "Qurʾān: The Text and its History," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Nickel contrasts the aforementioned texts with what he considers to be the following more "carefully nuanced" works: Kate Zebiri, s.v. "Polemic and Polemical Language," in *EQ*; Camilla Adang, s.v. "Torah," in *EQ*. Walid Saleh's soon to be published review of Nickel's work offers an important critique, noting that he is dismissive of scholars (noted above) and evidence (particularly Q 2:79) that disagree with his position.

[166] Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering*, 224.

[167] Ibid., 22.

Sabine Schmidtke has investigated *taḥrīf* and the reception of Biblical materials

by Muslims and she continues the general trend established by previous scholars of

dichotomizing *taḥrīf* into misinterpretation or textual corruption. She referred to the issue

of Muslim apologists and polemicists quoting the Christian Scriptures in order to support

Muḥammad's prophethood in an address at the Institute for Advanced Studies in

Princeton:

> A similar tendency can be observed in the Muslim discussion of alteration
> of the early scriptures at the hands of the Jews and Christians. It is obvious
> that the charge of alteration of the earlier scriptures conflicts with the
> claim that the Bible contains predictions of the Prophet Muḥammad–a
> claim that presupposes the integrity of the biblical text. Nevertheless, both
> notions were regularly employed by Muslim authors polemicizing against
> Judaism and Christianity. To alleviate the evident contradiction, different
> views were formulated as to the form and extent of the alleged distortion.
> While some Muslim scholars maintained that Jews and Christians had
> deliberately distorted the biblical text beyond recovery, others held that it
> was rather their interpretation that needed rectification, while the text itself
> has not remained untainted.[168]

While she recognizes that there was a range of opinion on *taḥrīf*, her assumption that

using select quotations from the Christian scriptures in support of Muḥammad's

prophethood being foretold "presupposes the integrity of the biblical text," is endemic to

the scholarship on *taḥrīf*, yet flawed. Muslim polemicists and apologists were much more

pragmatic than such a statement would allow, and one cannot assume they would have

accepted the authenticity or authority of the Bible in its entirety simply because they cite

select verses for their own ends. Rather, we can assume Muslims recognized that they

could use quotations from Christian and Jewish scriptures for their own purposes,

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[168] Sabine Schmidtke, "Muslim Perceptions and Receptions of the Bible," recorded October 27, 2014, Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton, NJ, accessed August 22, 2015, https://video.ias.edu/schmidtke-lecture.

supplying their own interpretations in line with Islamic doctrines, while not simultaneously assenting to the authenticity of the entire text.

2.7 CHALLENGING THE CATEGORIES

While a significant majority of the recent scholarship on *taḥrīf* has categorized early Muslim polemicists as solely advancing charges of misinterpretation, there are a handful of scholars who challenge the validity and usefulness of this distinction, and provide the foundation upon which this dissertation stands. David Thomas is a prolific scholar on issues related to historical Christian-Muslim relations. He has authored numerous articles, books, and served as the editor of many more. His work dealing with ʿAlī al-Tabarī's and al-Qāsim's use of the Gospel in their polemic against Christianity is especially pertinent to the present study, as he challenges the consensus of scholarly opinion on the articulation of *taḥrīf* in al-Qāsim's treatise by highlighting the ways in which his text demonstrates a charge of the textual corruption of the Bible.[169] Thomas notes that a "more neutral attitude toward the Bible suggests that many Muslims were aware that it contained useful examples to support their arguments, even though the text as a whole may not be reliable."[170] He considers ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī and al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm to typify this approach, although he notes the former is more concerned with reinterpretation in order to find Muḥammad foretold in the Scriptures, while the latter goes so far as to edit and rewrite the text. While describing the manner in which al-Qāsim deals with the Gospel of Matthew in his treatise, he writes in a footnote, "I. di Matteo

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[169] David Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7, no. 1 (1996).

[170] Ibid., 31.

[…] says, al-Qāsim does not accuse the Christian of corrupting the actual text of scripture, but we shall see his reworking presupposes the text has been contaminated."[171]

Thomas then provides examples of various features of al-Qāsim's text pointing to that reworking, and thus his conclusion that al-Qāsim considers the text to have undergone some form of contamination. Thomas concludes his article by noting that al-Qāsim's "*Radd* provides clear evidence that knowledge of the Bible and sophisticated methods of reading it did exist at a very early stage. His achievement must rank as one of the most accomplished examinations of Christian scripture by any Muslim author."[172] Yet, it must be noted that this examination of Christian scripture by al-Qāsim involves an extensive revision to its theological content to bring it in to conformity with Islamic beliefs. Some of the revisions to which Thomas draws attention will be expounded upon in Chapter 8.

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[171] Ibid., 38. It should be noted that David Thomas's recent article, "Muslim Conception of the Gospel" for the third edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, reflects the general scholarly consensus on *taḥrīf* and he is silent about his earlier challenges to it. He writes: "From the third/ninth century onwards, almost every Muslim who wrote about Christianity regarded the Gospels in the possession of Christians as unreliable, although understandings about the actual form of their unreliability varied. On one side were authors who were prepared to use the text of the Gospel as though it was untainted. Among these, the Zaydī Imām al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 246/860) argues, in his *Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā* ("Refutation of the Christians"), on the basis of five witnesses attested in the Gospel—God the Father, the angels, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the disciples—that Jesus was no more than human (al-Qāsim, 321–2) and goes on to paraphrase the early chapters of Matthew in order to show that nothing there supports the doctrine of Christ's divinity (al-Qāsim, 325–31). While al-Qāsim makes no direct comment about the status of the text and it is possible that he was simply citing it without accepting its textual integrity, the heavy reliance he places on it and the extensive use he makes of it suggest that he had few qualms about its textual integrity." And that "both [ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī and al-Qāsim] approach the Gospel by accepting it as more or less textually incorrupt although in need of proper interpretation to restore its meaning." David Thomas, s.v. "Muslim Conception of Gospel," in *EI³*.

[172] Ibid., 37.

Reynolds, building on the work of Thomas,[173] draws parallels between al-Qāsim and the later Muslim polemicist ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025 CE), noting that one of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's quotations from the Bible is "entirely non-canonical. It is changed for the purposes of his argument," and that

> this same strategy can be seen with other Muslim authors. D. Thomas points out that Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's account of the temptation 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.'[174]

In another article, Reynolds goes so far as to dismiss the validity of misinterpretation as an actual accusation advanced by Muslims that encompasses an entire approach to the Bible. He argues instead that, "Muslim scholars who accuse Jews and Christians of misinterpretation do not mean to imply thereby that the Bible has not been altered. Instead they employ the idea of *taḥrīf al-maʿānī* for the sake of argument."[175] Misinterpretation, in Reynolds' estimation, is only advanced as an accusation against the Bible for polemical purposes. Muslims who accused Christians of misinterpreting their scriptures did not then look to the Bible "as a source for new or improved religious thought."[176]

A recently published article by Martin Whittingham offers a challenge to the idea of the '*deux grandes tendances*' of *taḥrīf* as noted by Gaudeul and Caspar, among others. Whittingham questions the value of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* as a useful category for

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[173] Reynolds explicitly draws a connection between his own argument and Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic." See Reynolds, "Qur'anic Accusation," footnote 3, p. 189.

[174] Gabriel Said Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu: ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins*, Islamic History and Civilization. Studies and Texts (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 199-200.

[175] Reynolds, "Qur'anic Accusation," 189.

[176] Ibid., 190.

understanding Muslim views on the Bible, citing Reynolds who argues that it "is almost without exception used only for the sake of argument, in order to show that Christians have betrayed their own Scripture. It is a strategic tactic, not a medium of constructive exegesis or theological speculation."[177] Building on Reynolds' challenge to the category, Whittingham poses questions to the works he is considering (*al-Radd al-jamīl* by (Pseudo-) al-Ghazālī, and *al-Radd* by Ibn Khaldūn). Most pertinent to this study is his question: "To what extent is the category of *taḥrīf maʿnawī* a useful analytical tool in exploring Muslim views of the Bible?"[178] His analysis points to potential categories between misinterpretation and textual corruption, and he concludes,

> The preceding discussion of *Al-radd* and Ibn Khaldūn indicates that neither author should be classified as upholding the view that only the interpretation and not the text of the Bible is corrupted. A more refined classification needs to be developed, perhaps based on the distinction between accidental and deliberate error.[179]

Although neither of the works considered by Whittingham is examined in the present study, his conclusions have implications for the understanding of *taḥrīf* as it is articulated in Islamic thought more generally. The analysis of four other polemical texts in a later chapter demonstrates that similar problems exist with the current categorization scheme, problems that simply cannot account for the variations and nuances of each author's position.

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[177] Reynolds, *Muslim Theologian*, 85.

[178] Martin Whittingham, "The Value of *taḥrīf ma'nawī* (Corrupt Interpretation) as a Category for Analysing Muslim Views of the Bible: Evidence from *al-radd al-jamīl* and Ibn Khaldūn," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, no. 2 (2011): 210.

[179] Ibid., 220.

While *taḥrīf* may not be the *Kernpunkt* of Islamic thought on Christianity that Goldziher claims it is, its importance to the history of Muslim-Christian relations is clear. My purpose, however, is not to determine the importance of the topic, nor to claim that this study is monumental or that the particular authors I am investigating are the most influential or important to the genre or in their milieu. This inflation of one's topic occasionally occurs in scholarly texts, perhaps as a means of justifying the time and energy spent, or perhaps from prolonged exposure to a single text or author. I recognize the limited influence of the authors I am investigating in this study: al-Qāsim's works seem to have been unknown outside the Zaydī community; Ibn al-Layth's text was not particularly influential to the point that Byzantinists were unaware of its existence until recently,[180] al-Jāḥiẓ was more well-known, although not primarily for his *Radd*; and the work of ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī, while important, was often overshadowed by other authors writing on similar themes. Recognizing that the texts in question were not monumental studies with lasting influence does not negate the importance of the topic; rather it helps demonstrate that there was widespread interest in Islam's place in relation to the scriptures of the Jews and Christians and a number of Muslim authors were concerned with determining their authenticity and authority.

Having established the trends within the previous scholarship related to *taḥrīf,* it is clear that the prevailing categorization scheme is flawed and should be re-examined. A

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[180] I. Rochow, "Zu den diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Byzanz und dem Kalifat in der Zeit der syrischen Dynastie (717-802)," in *Novum Millenium. Studies on Byzantine History and Culture Dedicated to Paul Speck*, ed. C. Sodes and S Tacács (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 305-325; Barbara Roggema, s.v. "Ibn al-Layth," in CMR1, 347-353.

few scholars noted above have already begun that process on a limited basis and my present study is based upon their work. While I am not, at this point convinced by Whittingham's potential solution, his recognition of the problem and suggestion to reconsider the predominant classification scheme is a springboard for the present study.

<div align="center">2.9 Conclusion</div>

The dichotomy established by Goldziher and Di Matteo that has been accepted and continued by the majority of scholars is flawed. It forces Muslim polemical literature into anachronistic and ill-fitting categories. While this does not mean that the categories are inherently flawed, the evidence points to further problems with the categories, and thus they must be reconsidered. The categories are clearly ill-fitting, as is evident in the imprecise language many authors use in their categorization of authors and their respective approaches to the biblical text. "Except,"[181] "generally,"[182] "partly,"[183] "basically,"[184] "at least,"[185] "relatively,"[186] and "virtually"[187] are among the words scholars have used when classifying texts as exemplifying either misinterpretation or textual corruption. The imprecision of such language points to the problem with the current categorization; it simply does not reflect the nuances present in the texts and scholars are forced to equivocate when using these categories to classify Muslim views

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[181] Ananikian, "*Tahrif* or the Alteration of the Bible," 77.

[182] Ibid., 80.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response* 89, 90.

[185] Pulcini, "Exegesis," 111.

[186] Sirry, "Early Muslim-Christian Dialogue: A Closer Look at Major Themes of the Theological Encounter," 372.

[187] Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible," 73.

on the Bible in early polemical texts. Early Muslim polemicists do not appear to be working within one category of *taḥrīf* or the other and are certainly not knowingly working within the framework as it was established by Goldziher. While recognizing that early Muslims were not using these categories would not preclude later categorization along these lines if the evidence led in that direction, the fact that they are ill-fitting demonstrates that the current scheme is insufficient for proper categorization of Muslim views on the Bible.[188]

Scholars have recognized that some form of the idea of *taḥrīf* is elaborated in the Qur'ān and in various genres of Muslim literature throughout history. Its precise meaning has been interpreted in various ways in different texts, which is in part due to a changing understanding of the idea that is discernible in the primary source material, and in part due to the refining of scholarly interpretation as well as variance of opinion among the scholars. Muslim apologists and polemicists in the nineteenth century continued centuries-old arguments against the authenticity of the Bible with vigor as a response to intensified Christian missions, primarily in British India. This naturally initiated an interest among Christian missionaries in the doctrine, although their understanding of it was limited and focused primarily within the context of then-current debates. The result from their effort was not so much an objective study of the topic but rather a continuation of Muslim-Christian debates that had begun in the eighth century. It was the work

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[188] Although Muslim reformist interpretations of the Qur'ān lay outside the scope of the present study, it appears that the categorization scheme is also problematic for analysis of such texts. Mun'im Sirry argues, "It seems the dichotomy between *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (distortion in the actual text) and *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (distortion in the meaning of the text) is too simplified of an analytical tool to explore Muslim reformers' views of the Bible." In, Mun'im Sirry, *Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'an and Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 130.

emerging out of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* that inaugurated a more rigorous and objective investigation into *taḥrīf* that was continued by other Western scholars. Goldziher was foundational in that regard; he was the first to articulate the fundamental distinction of two different forms of the doctrine of *taḥrīf*—corruption of meaning and corruption of the text. Di Matteo expounded upon that distinction and dichotomized the topic along chronological lines, arguing that there is a gradual diachronic shift in *taḥrīf;* a charge of misinterpretation is prevalent among earlier Muslims while textual corruption is prevalent later. This dichotomizing of *taḥrīf* into misinterpretation and textual corruption, which has been understood to generally advance along chronological lines from the former to the latter, persists to this day. This distinction has characterized the work of early Muslim polemicists under the category of understanding *taḥrīf* as misinterpretation to the exclusion of any form of textual corruption.

There have been challenges to this interpretation of *taḥrīf*'s distinction into misinterpretation and textual corruption. Notable among them is an article by David Thomas focusing on the use of the Bible by al-Qāsim and ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī, and an article by Martin Whittingham in which he challenged the very categorization scheme and proposed the possibility of refining the current classification according to the distinction between accidental and deliberate error. Although such challenges are limited in number, they highlight the need for a reexamination of the primary texts and an evaluation of the current classification scheme of *taḥrīf*. Further, Thomas and Whittingham point to the necessity for further studies and the possibility for significant and important future

research. While Goldziher's assertion that *taḥrīf* is the "crux of Muslim polemic"[189] against Christianity might be overstated, the distinction he established concerning *taḥrīf* has held sway for more than a century and is in need of refinement.

It is necessary, then, to reexamine the early polemical literature more closely as one component of that distinction in the interest of more effectively classifying and appropriately understanding the manner in which Muslims have articulated their respective positions on the Bible. To that end, al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* serves as an important landmark both historically because his is the earliest Muslim polemical treatise against Christians that is extant, and in the modern notion of *taḥrīf* because he serves as the prime exemplar of what the majority of scholars consider to be the early Muslim view on the Bible, i.e., *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (misinterpretation).

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[189] Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitāb," 364.

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Chapter 3
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF AL-QĀSIM B. IBRĀHĪM

 This chapter begins by focusing on al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm – opening with the available sources for biographical information on him followed by his biography, the geographical setting in which he wrote his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, his interactions with Christians and access to Christian scripture and theological literature, as well as his religious and sectarian affiliations and subsequent relationship to the prevailing religious and political powers of the day. I discuss the tension between al-Qāsim's status as a Zaydī imam and his lack of what are often considered requisite qualifications of political activism for such a position by arguing for a less stringently-defined conception of the imamate by the Zaydī community in the ninth century.

 I next turn to the milieu in which al-Qāsim wrote his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, examining Fusṭāṭ's founding and history up through the ninth century. I draw attention to its inter-religious and diverse composition leading up to and at the time of al-Qāsim's residence there in the early ninth century, all of which provided impetus and materials for the authorship of his treatise. Al-Qāsim was unique among the Muslim polemicists considered in Chapter nine in regard to the location in which he was writing. I investigate the manner in which al-Qāsim's location expressed its influence on his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. In doing so, I consider the Christological disagreements among the ecclesiastical

divisions of eighth- and ninth-century Arabic and Egyptian Christianity, noting the intra-Christian polemical texts of three prominent writers of the period: the Melkite, Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. ca. 823); the Jacobite, Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī (d. ca. 830); and a theologian of the Church of the East, ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (d. ca. 845). While these Christian writers were not in Egypt, al-Qāsim is conversant with the Christological disputes in works such as theirs and potentially could have had access to them. It is this divided Christianity, and its resultant and continuing theological disputes, to which al-Qāsim would have been exposed and with which he and other Muslim polemicists of this period demonstrate familiarity in their respective polemics against Christianity.

I conclude this chapter with an examination of the evidence for the Arabic translation of the Bible. Because the Bible is central to the topic of *taḥrīf*, it is important to consider its availability, or at least the possibility of its availability to the Muslim polemicists of the eighth and ninth centuries I am considering in this dissertation. After a discussion of the recent scholarship on the evidence for the earliest Arabic translation of the Bible I argue that, despite the disagreement over the precise where and when of the earliest Arabic Bible translation, the likelihood of a *terminus ante quem* for the earliest Arabic translation of the Bible is in the middle of the eighth century due to the available evidence from a number of different sources.

3.1 SOURCES FOR AL-QĀSIM'S BIOGRAPHY

Although biographical sources are limited for the life of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAli, we are able to form at least an outline of some of the more important events of his life. Zaydī biographical sources for

the life of al-Qāsim require a measure of skepticism, as they were written at considerable

distance from the events they purport to relate and filter his life through the prism of his

influence on the Zaydī community. Regardless of the extent to which the Zaydī partisan

biographies represent the actual events of al-Qāsim's life, their collective portrayal of

him reflects the continual and growing importance of al-Qāsim within the Zaydī

community, even after his death.

Prior to outlining the events of al-Qāsim's biography, a brief overview of the

available literature for such a task is in order. Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Ḥasanī's (d. 963) *al-*

Maṣābīḥ fī-l-sīra wa-l-tārīkh is the earliest source that contains biographical information

on al-Qāsim.[190] Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahāni's (d. 967) *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn* is focused on

members of the Prophet's family who were killed and so does not concern al-Qāsim

directly, but it includes limited biographical information about him, particularly in

relation to the events surrounding the death of his brother Ibn Ṭabāṭabā who was killed

leading a Zaydī rebellion.[191] Al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq Abū Ṭālib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Hārūn

al-Buṭḥānī (d. 1033) also included a biography of al-Qāsim in his *al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-*

aʾimma al-sāda.[192] Ḥumayd b. Aḥmad al-Muḥallī's (d. 1254) *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya fī*

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[190] It can be found in manuscript form in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan and in microfilm in the Ambrosiana Microfilms Collection at the Medieval Institute at Notre Dame University. Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī, *al-Maṣābīḥ fī l-sīra wa-l-tārīkh*, MS Milan, Ambrosiana – B83, . It has also been edited, see Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī, *al-Maṣābīḥ fī l-sīra wa-l-tārīkh*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad al-Ḥūthī (Amman: IZbACF, 2002). Ansari and Schmidtke note that "The *Maṣābīḥ* also served as one of the main sources for the *Kitāb al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda* by the Imām al-Nāṭiq bi-l-Ḥaqq Abū Ṭalib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Buṭḥānī (d. 424/1033)." Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, "The Literary-Religious Tradition among 7th/13th century Yemenī Zaydīs: The Formation of the Imām al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim (d. 656/1258)," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 2 (2011): 170.

[191] Abū al-Faraj ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: 1949).

[192] R. Strothmann produced an edition and translation into German of the few pages concerning al-Qāsim. See Rudolf Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," *Der Islam* 11 (1911): 49-52, 76-78. For an

manāqib aʾimmat al-Zaydiyyah also has pertinent details related to the life of al-

Qāsim,[193] and although it is based upon al-Nāṭiq's *Kitāb al-Ifāda,* al-Ḥasanī's *al-*

Maṣābīḥ, and al-Iṣfahānī's *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn* Ansari and Schmidtke note that it "adds

other valuable material that is otherwise lost."[194] A brief biography can also be found in

Samṭ al-nujūm al-ʿawālī by ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Shāfiʿī al-

ʿĀṣimī al-Makkī.[195]

Apart from these Zaydī sources, there is information that can be gleaned from

Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*,[196] as well as limited auto-biographical

details in al-Qāsim's own writings. The most important secondary source for al-Qāsim's

biography is Wilferd Madelung's seminal work, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die*

Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen.[197] I am, however, not quite as skeptical of the Zaydī

edition of the entire text, see Abū Ṭālib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Hārūn al-Buṭḥānī al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq, *al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda* (Yemen: Manshūrāt Markaz Ahl al-Bayt, 2001). The manuscript is held in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin but is also available in high definition color photos online. Abū Ṭālib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Hārūn al-Buṭḥānī al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq, *al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda*, MS Berlin, Glaser – 37, Staatsbibliothek, folios 25v ff. <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/u/0/asset-viewer/glaser-37-composite-manuscript/IgEghe8iLdAW8w?hl=en&l.expanded-id=VQEst7xvUD_wIg>.

[193] Ḥumayd b. Ahmad al-Muḥallī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya fī manāqib aʾimmat al-zaydiyyah*, British Library MS Or. 3786, British Library, 2b-15b. Madelung edited a portion of the text, but did not include the section related to al-Qāsim, in Wilferd Madelung, *Arabic Texts Concerning the History of the Zaydī Imāms of Ṭabaristān, Daylamān and Gīlān*, Beiruter Texte und Studien (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländen Gesellschaft, 1987). For further information on al-Muḥallī and his *Hadāʾiq al-wardiyya*, see Abdullah al-Shamahi, "al-Imam al-Manṣūr 'Abdullah b. Ḥamzah b. Sulaymān (d. 614/1217): A Biography by his Disciple al-Faqīh Ḥumayd b. Ahmad al-Muḥallī (d. 652/1254) in his work al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyyah fī manāqib aʾimmah al-zaydiyyah, v. 2: a critical edition" (Ph.D., University of Glasgow, 2003), 70-91.

[194] Ansari and Schmidtke, "The Literary-Religious Tradition among 7th/13th century Yemenī Zaydīs: The Formation of the Imām al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim (d. 656/1258)," 170.

[195] ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Shāfiʿī al-ʿĀṣimī al-Makkī, *Samṭ al-nujūm al-ʿawālī*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-ʿilmiyyah, 1998), 195.

[196] Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1960).vol. 8; Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1968).vol. 9

[197] Wilferd Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1965).

biographical sources for details concernings al-Qāsim's life and status as an imam within the Zaydī community.

3.2 AL-QĀSIM'S BIOGRAPHY

Al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib al-Rassī was born in 169/785 in Medina to a Zaydī family[198] with five other sons: Muḥammad (commonly referred to as Ibn Ṭabāṭabā), Ḥasan, Aḥmad, ʿAlī, and ʿAbd Allāh.[199] Al-Qāsim's father, Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ṭabāṭabā, took part in the unsuccessful uprising of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, known as Ṣāḥib al-Fakhkh, in 169/786 at Fakhkh against the ʿʿAbbāsid caliph, Mūsā al-Hādī.[200] A number of those involved were killed, but Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ṭabāṭabā was among those who escaped and he is said to have fled to Abyssinia.[201] He was later able to return to Medina, and then to Kūfa, although he continued to remain in hiding with his family.[202] After Hārūn al-Rashīd's ascension to the caliphate he declared an amnesty in 786/7 that allowed a guarantee of safe-conduct to

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[198] Al-Rāzī mentions that Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ṭabāṭabā's wife is Muḥammadiyyah, a descendant of Muḥammad b. Ḥanafiyyah who was a son of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. While al-Rāzī does not mention explicitly that this woman is al-Qāsim's mother, no other wife of Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ṭabāṭabā is mentioned. Further, Muḥammadiyyah is mentioned in the immediate context of the birth of all of Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ṭabāṭabā's sons, and it is seems plausible that she was the mother of al-Qāsim. See Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Razī, *Akhbār Fakhkh*, ed. Maher Jarrar (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1995), 158.

[199] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 87. The more recent work of Asad Ahmed does not include ʿAlī among al-Qāsim's brothers. See Asad Ahmed, *The Religious Elite of the Early Islamic Ḥijāz: Five Prosopographical Case Studies* (Oxford: Prosopographica et Genealogica, 2011), 251. According to al-Rāzī's account, Ṭabāṭabā's eldest son was born in Abyssinia after he fled the battle of Fakhkh, and the rest were born in Medina while he was in hiding. See al-Razī, *Akhbār Fakhkh*, 158. Jarrar notes that there is a discrepancy in the chronology of the *Akhbar Fakhkh* concerning the actions of Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ṭabāṭabā immediately after the battle of Fakhkh: during a period not exceeding three months, Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ṭabāṭabā's oldest son was supposed to have been born in Abyssinia, then he returned to Medina where the rest of his sons were born, and then went to Kūfa and was imprisoned. The sequence of events might very well be true, but they have been truncated into an impossibly short period. See ibid., 57.

[200] al-Razī, *Akhbār Fakhkh*, 153, 300. See also Madelung, *Der Imam*, 86.

[201] al-Razī, *Akhbār Fakhkh*, 158.

[202] Ibid.

those who had fled or who had gone into concealment, and Ṭabāṭabā is mentioned among those who took advantage of the amnesty and came out of hiding.[203]

Al-Qāsim's childhood and adolescence are largely unmentioned in the biographical sources, but it is likely he grew up in Medina, in part because his *ḥadīth* teacher was the Medinan Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn ʿAbī ʿUways (d. 817),[204] who appears consistently as al-Qāsim's source for legal traditions.[205] On account of Abī ʿUways' skill in Qurʾān readings and Arabic, Madelung and Abrahamov both consider it likely that under his tutelage al-Qāsim obtained his mastery of Arabic and ability to write in *sajʿ* (rhymed prose), a style characteristic of his entire œuvre.[206] Apart from those limited details, there is no further information about al-Qāsim's youth.

Al-Qāsim is next mentioned in the biographical sources after his move to Egypt, which would have been sometime before 815.[207] Al-Nāṭiq claims that after the Kūfan

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[203] al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 8:234.

[204] Abū Bakr ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn ʿAbī ʿUways was a nephew of the eponymous founder of the Mālikī legal school, Mālik b. Anās.

[205] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 88.

[206] Binyamin Abrahamov, "The Ṭabarastānī's Question," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 11 (1988): 16; Madelung, *Der Imam*, 88.

[207] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 49. There is some chronological confusion in al-Nāṭiq's version of events that cannot be reconciled. Al-Nāṭiq mentions that al-Qāsim went to Egypt when he was 26 or 27, and that he was there for about 10 years before he left. It is also clear that al-Qāsim had arrived to Egypt before his brother's death, which was in 815. It is also stated that al-Qāsim left Egypt in 826 under suspicion of sedition. This would mean al-Qāsim would have stayed in Egypt for about ten years, like al-Nāṭiq claims, but if al-Qāsim was born in 785, as seems to be the case, he would have been 26 or 27 between 809 and 811 and thus been in Egypt for closer to 15 years if he stayed until 826. Further, al-Qāsim died in 860 and was supposed to have been 75 at the time of his death. Thus, the fixed points we have for the chronology are his birth in 785, his move to Egypt before 815, his move from Egypt in 826, and his death in 860 at the age of 75. Absent convincing evidence that one of these more established dates is incorrect, I think it is more likely that al-Nāṭiq's claim that al-Qāsim was 26 or 27 at the time of his move is incorrect.

Zaydīs recognized Ibn Ṭabāṭabā as imam,[208] he sent al-Qāsim to Egypt from Kūfa as his emissary to proclaim the *daʿwah* and secure followers.[209] Al-Nāṭiq's proposed reason for al-Qāsim's move to Egypt is unlikely for the following reasons: (1) the sources are inconsistent on this point;[210] (2) al-Qāsim disagreed with his brother's anthropomorphist beliefs and likely disregarded his claim to the imamate over this issue;[211] (3) Madelung notes that the sources on Kūfa that contain extensive detail on the events of that time do not mention anything of the role of al-Qāsim;[212] and (4) al-Qāsim is not considered a threat to the caliph worth addressing until at least four years after the failed rebellion of Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, and then only on account of his own growing following.[213] The likelihood of al-Qāsim going to Egypt to secure followers to his brother's claim to the imamate is possible, but not particularly plausible. That said, there is not another catalyst mentioned for al-Qāsim's move to Egypt, although it is possible that it was on account of strong Shīʿite sympathies in the region. Van Ess notes that in Fusṭāṭ, "the Muslims who were

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[208] al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, 523; Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 49; Abrahamov, "The Ṭabarastānī's Question," 16; Madelung, *Der Imam*, 89.

[209] al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq, *al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda,* MS Berlin, Glaser – 37, 24b.

[210] It appears in al-Nāṭiq's work but not the other biographies of al-Qāsim.

[211] According to a tradition of Muḥammad b. al-Manṣūr, al-Qāsim is reported to have said upon hearing of the death of his brother: "I wept and my eyes poured forth a bucket or two [of tears], then I elegized him in a poem, though he was known somewhat for anthropomorphism" (*fa-tanaḥḥabatu fa-araqtu min ʿaynī sajlan aw sajlayn thumma rathīthu bi-qaṣidah ʿalā annahu kāna yaqūlu bi-shayʾin min al-tashbīḥ*). al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, 553. While al-Qāsim clearly has affection for his brother and is saddened by his death, his quick qualification to distance himself from Ibn Ṭabāṭabā's association with anthropomorphism leads me to conclude with Madelung and Abrahamov that al-Qāsim's theological differences with his brother likely would have prevented his recognition of Ibn Ṭabāṭabā as imam. Considering those factors, it is unlikely that al-Qāsim would have been enlisted by Ibn Ṭabāṭabā as an emissary to Egypt.

[212] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 89.

[213] This will be discussed in greater detail below.

initially assigned parcels of land (*khiṭaṭ*) belonged primarily to the South-Arabian tribes.

Thus, the early spread of Shīʿite ideas is explained; they probably had ties with Kūfa."[214]

In 815, al-Qāsim's brother Ibn Ṭabāṭabā was killed leading a rebellion in Kūfa

with the help of the military leadership of Abū al-Sarāyā.[215] Al-Ṭabarī recounts the event

as follows:

> In this year, on Thursday, the tenth of Jumādā II (January 26, 815), Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm b. al Ḥasan b. al Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib rebelled at Kūfa, proclaiming the cause of 'The one well pleasing [to God] from the house of Muḥammad' and of acting in conformity with the Book (the Qurʾān) and *sunnah*. This is the person known as Ibn Ṭabāṭabā. The one who took charge of affairs for him in the conduct of war and who acted as commander of his forces was Abū al-Sarāyā.[216]

According to a tradition in *Maqātil al-ṭalibiyyīn*, al-Qāsim is reported to have said, "the

death of my brother was reported to me when I was in the Maghrib,"[217] and al-Nāṭiq

claims that "before his death, Muḥammad [Ibn Ṭabāṭabā] had said he would have chosen

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[214] Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesselschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), V:716. "Die Muslime, denen dort Parzellen (*khiṭaṭ*) zugewiesen wurden, gehörten anfangs vor allem südarabischen Stämmen an. So erklärt sich die frühe Ausbreitun shīʿitischer Ideen; man hatte vermutlich Beziehungen zu Kūfa."

[215] Al-Nāṭiq's biography of al-Qāsim includes this event but refers to al-Qāsim's brother Muḥammad death as martyrdom (*ustushhida*). Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 76. See also al-Muḥallī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya,* British Library MS Or. 3786, 5r-5v. Cook notes that according to Zaydī teaching, "One who performs the duty [rebellion against unjust rule] (and is killed) is a martyr (*shahīd*)." Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 228. The Zaydī community, then, considered al-Qāsim's brother's failed rebellion against the ʿAbbāsids as justified aggression against illegitimate rule and his death in that effort as martyrdom.

[216] Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Reunification of the ʿAbbasid Caliphate: The Caliphate of al-Maʾmūn A.D. 813-833/A.H. 198-218*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, trans. C.E. Bosworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 32:12-13; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 8:528. A fuller version of the events according to a Zaydī perspective can be found in al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, 518-536. A brief synopsis of the revolt can be found in B. Scarcia Amoretti, s.v. "Ibn Ṭabāṭabā," in *EI²*.

[217] al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, 553.

al-Qāsim to succeed him if he were present."[218] It is well-established that al-Qāsim was in Egypt when he heard the news of his brother's death, but al-Nāṭiq's contention that Ibn Ṭabāṭabā wanted al-Qāsim to be imam after him seems unlikely given the inconsistency in the sources on this point as well as the theological disagreements between the brothers noted above. Furthermore, al-Iṣfahānī recounts the event differently, noting that on his deathbed, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā desired the new imam to be ʿAlī b. ʿUbayd Allāh, without mentioning that he desired al-Qāsim for the position first.[219]

The failed rebellion and death of Ibn Ṭabāṭabā brought with it two significant consequences for al-Qāsim: first, he was looked to by some in the Zaydī community to continue his brother's rebellion against unjust rule and claim the imamate; and second, the caliph al-Maʾmūn sent men to capture him lest such potential designs toward rebellion come to fruition. Regarding the first point, Zaydī sources claim that upon his brother's death, al-Qāsim sent out propagandists to proclaim his message and

> The people of Mecca, Medina, and Kūfa, and the people of al-Rayy, Qazwīn, Ṭabaristān, and al-Daylam pledged their loyalty to him, while the people of justice from Baṣra and al-Ahwāz wrote to him, urging him to reveal himself and announce the *daʿwah*.[220]

The extent of his acceptance by people in all these lands is possibly to be an overstatement of the case; such widespread acceptance would have been unprecedented and would likely have led to some more organized rebellion or even greater acknowledgment in the sources. Still, it is possible that al-Qāsim was able to attract at

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[218] al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq, *al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda,* MS Berlin, Glaser – 37, 25a-25b. For further discussion on this source, see also C. van Arendonk, *Les Debuts de l'Imāmat Zaydite au Yemen,* trans. Jacques Ryckmans (Leiden: Stichting de Goeje, 1960), 99; Madelung, *Der Imam,* 89.

[219] al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn,* 532.

[220] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 76.

least a small following in the decade after his brother's death because the caliph al-Maʾmūn chose ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, whom he had appointed governor of the region between al-Raqqa and Egypt in 206/821f, to capture and/or kill al-Qāsim.[221]

Al-Maʾmūn's choice of ʿAbd Allah b. Ṭāhir for this purpose is interesting given that earlier during ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir's tenure in Egypt, al-Maʾmūn was concerned he was inclined to give his allegiance to al-Qāsim.[222] Al-Ṭabarī recounts:

> So al-Maʾmūn sent a man secretly to ʿAbdallāh instructing him, 'Go forth to Egypt in the guise of one of the Qur'ān reciters and ascetics, and summon a group of the great men of state there to the allegiance of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm b. Ṭabāṭabā (al-Rassi), recounting his virtues, his learning and his merits. After that, get in touch with one of ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir's confidants and then go to ʿAbdallāh himself, summoning him and making attractive to him the giving of allegiance to the ʿAlid. Ferret out in a manner which dispels doubt about his innermost intentions, and report back to me what you hear from him.[223]

Al-Maʾmūn's agent eventually approaches ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir personally and tells him "all about his merits; his learning and his ascetic way of life."[224] ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir refused to pledge allegiance to al-Qāsim and instead reaffirms his gratitude to al-Maʾmūn.[225] ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir's allegiance to al-Maʾmūn rather than to al-Qāsim is thus confirmed when he is commissioned to capture/kill al-Qāsim, although he is ultimately unsuccessful.

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[221] Ibid. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir was eventually placed at the head of the caliph's troops in the campaign against Naṣr b. Shabath, who was not only a partisan of al-Amīn, but had earlier sought out al-Qāsim's brother in Medina for the purpose of joining his rebellion. After success in Egypt, ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir became governor of Khurāsān in 214/829f where he continued as governor into the reign of al-Muʿtaṣim and quashed the rebellion of the ʿAlid pretender Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim. See E. Marin, s.v. "ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir," in *EI²*. For more details of the failed revolt, see al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 9:5ff.

[222] It is unclear when this event takes place, but it would have had to have been sometime before al-Qāsim left Egypt in 826.

[223] al-Ṭabarī, *The Caliphate of al-Ma'mun*, 32:169-170; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 8:615.

[224] al-Ṭabarī, *The Caliphate of al-Ma'mun*, 32:170; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 8:615.

[225] al-Ṭabarī, *The Caliphate of al-Ma'mun*, 32:170; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 8:616.

Because al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh* is not a partisan Zaydī biography, it provides evidence establishing an outside perspective on the status of al-Qāsim. The particular episode in Ṭabarī recounted in the previous paragraph reveals that al-Maʾmūn was concerned about al-Qāsim's following in Egypt, even among the "great men of state" – to the extent that al-Maʾmūn is concerned of his own partisans' faithfulness. There is, however, no current or immanent insurrection mentioned in his account;[226] rather, al-Maʾmūn recognizes al-Qāsim's importance among the Zaydī community in Fusṭāṭ on account of "his virtues, his learning and his merits" – all of which are characteristics corroborated in Zaydī sources. Still, the growing following and influence of al-Qāsim remained a concern of al-Maʾmūn and eventually leads him to send troops to quash any possibility of al-Qāsim leading a rebellion.

The first quarter of the eighth century was a particular turbulent period in Egypt, with the fourth *fitna* having left Egypt virtually outside the ʿAbbāsids' control as al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn's attentions were elsewhere occupied.[227] ʿAbd Allāh b. Tahir had been sent by al-Maʾmūn to bring Egypt back under ʿAbbāsid control in 825. Al-Ṭabarī recounts the ensuing events between ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir and ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Sarī, who had seized some of Egypt, including Fusṭāṭ.[228] There is no mention that al-Qāsim is involved in al-Sarī's rebellion, but after drawing the attention of al-Maʾmūn, al-Qāsim was forced to flee Egypt around 826 under suspicion of seditious activity and is said by

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[226] *Khurūj* (rising up) against illegitimate rule is generally considered requisite of any Zaydī imam. The importance of *khurūj* as it relates to al-Qāsim and his position as the putative imam of the Zaydī community will be discussed below. See Chapter 3.3.

[227] See Ps.-Severus Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *"HP,"* 4:542 ff, in *Patrologia Orientalis 10*, ed. and trans. B. Evetts, (1915) 428 ff.

[228] al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 8:609-614.

al-Nāṭiq to have been forced to go into hiding in the region of the Ḥijāz and Tihāma.[229].

During this period, however, he remained active. He sent out propagandists, and a group

of al-Qāsim's supporters from the family of his paternal uncle are said by al-Nāṭiq to

have gone to Balkh, al-Ṭālaqān, al-Jawzajān, and Marw al-Rūdh, in order to gain further

support for al-Qāsim.[230] The resultant requests of the people in those regions for al-Qāsim

and his son to join them was prevented due to the fact that he was still being pursued.[231]

Whether al-Qāsim's contact with people in these regions at this time was to actually

support a claim for the imamate is unclear. He is, however, known to have been

influential in the development of Zaydism in these regions[232] and it is at least possible

that some of those who were with him in Egypt fled to those regions and helped cement

his status and importance to the Zaydīs among them prior to any concrete claims to the

imamate.

The timing of events in al-Qāsim's biography is unclear once he leaves Egypt.

The general sequence can be determined, but confirming particular dates is problematic.

Al-Nāṭiq's (d. 1033) biography mentions that after leaving Egypt for the Ḥijāz and

Tihāma, al-Qāsim's whereabouts are made known to those looking for him, and the army

of al-Maʾmūn was on its way to Yemen to look for him but he chose to stay hidden

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[229] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 76. Madelung argues that al-Qāsim returned to Medina upon leaving Egypt. See Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "Al-Rassī," in *EI²*; Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm," in *CMR1*, 540-541.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Ibid.

[232] See Richard Martin, Mark Woodward, and Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Muʿtazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1997), 40. Also, Madelung, s.v. "Al-Rassī," in EI²; Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "Zaydiyya," in EI².

among the Bedouin people there.[233] During this period, al-Qāsim intended to go to

Medina but his companions informed him that the army was on its way to Medina and the

Ḥijāz and it would thus be impossible for him to travel there. Al-Nāṭiq states that al-

Qāsim took advantage of his time and while he hid among the Bedouin in that area he

"persisted in carrying the *daʿwah*, separated from his home country and frequently

coming and going in regions and lands, patient in difficulty, and diligent in revealing the

dīn (religion) of God."[234]

Al-Māʾmūn's death in 833 did nothing to alleviate the precarious nature of al-

Qāsim's situation. Instead, when al-Muʿtaṣim became caliph he intensified his pursuit of

al-Qāsim, sending heavy troops under the command of Bughā al-Kabīr and Ashinās,[235]

who had previously served together in Iraq.[236] As a result, al-Qāsim was forced to flee

again and in doing so, separated from his companions. Al-Nāṭiq interprets this particular

chain of events as one of al-Qāsim's lost opportunities to reveal himself as imam,[237]

although this proclivity to interpret all events as evidence for the status of al-Qāsim as

imam is pervasive in the Zaydī biographical literature and should be considered more as

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[233] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 76. One possible way to read this is that when al-Nāṭiq stated that al-Qāsim left Egypt for "the Ḥijāz and Tihāma," he likely was in in the southern part of that region, which would overlap geographically with Yemen, by the time ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir comes after him. Thus, the army searching for him in Yemen would make sense of the confusing geographical indicators.

[234] Ibid., 77.

[235] Ibid.

[236] Bughā al-Kabīr was a slave-soldier acquired by al-Muʿtaṣim in 819f who rose from the ranks of the Sāmarrāʾ-based Turkish-Central Asian slave corps. See Matthew Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (A.H. 200-275/815-889 C.E.)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 76-77. Matthew Gordon, s.v. "Bugha al-Kabīr," in *EI3*. Ashinās also began his service as a slave soldier who was purchased by al-Muʿtaṣim, and was eventually appointed as governor of Egypt in 840. See, al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 9:103 ff.

[237] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 77.

hagiography than biography as they sought to emphasize certain characteristics of the ideal imam.

After separating from his companions, al-Qāsim relocated to Kūfa sometime between 833 and 835[238] and stayed at the house of Muḥammad b. Manṣūr al-Murādī (d. after 866).[239] Al-Nāṭiq[240] and al-Muḥalli[241] list the Zaydī notables who met with him there: Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā b. Zayd (d. 861),[242] ʿAbd Allāh b. Mūsā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan (d. 861),[243] and al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Zayd (d. 884).[244] Regarding them, al-Nāṭiq notes that, "The excellence of all the aforementioned leaders of the tribes was on account of their renouncing of the tyrants and refusal to pledge

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[238] al-Muḥallī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya,* British Library MS Or. 3786, 5v. It must have been after al-Muʿtaṣim's rise to power in 833 because his directive leads to al-Qāsim leaving Yemen, but before 220/835, when al-Qāsim received the allegiance of the Kūfan Zaydīs. See Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 77.

[239] Muḥammad b. Manṣūr al-Murādī is described as the "foremost contemporary Kufan Zaydi scholar," of the ninth century and Daftary considers al-Qāsim to have influenced him in legal matters. See Farhad Daftary, *A History of Shiʿi Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2013), 151; Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen."

[240] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 77.

[241] al-Muḥallī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya,* British Library MS Or. 3786, 5v.

[242] Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā b. Zayd is referred to as the *faqīh* of the Prophet's family. His father was at one time supported as a candidate for imam and had participated in the failed rebellion of Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd Allāh in 762f. Aḥmad himself led a revolt with al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar in ʿAbbādan in 801, which also failed. Daftary, *A History of Shiʿi Islam*, 147-151. See also Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā," in *EI²*.

[243] ʿAbd Allāh b. Mūsā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan is referred to by al-Nāṭiq as "the virtuous ascetic" (*al-fāḍil al-zāhid*). Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 77.

[244] A Caspian Zaydī who was influenced by al-Qāsim in legal matters. The people of western Ṭabaristān who had revolted against their Ṭāhirid governors invited him from Rayy in 864 to lead them. He was able to seize all of Ṭabaristān and then established Zaydī ʿAlid rule in the Caspian provinces. See Daftary, *A History of Shiʿi Islam*, 151, 153; Farhad Daftary, "Sectarian and National Movements in Iran, Khurasan and Transoxania during Umayyad and Early ʿAbbasid Times," in *The Age of Achievement: A.D. 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. M.S. Asimov and C.E. Bosworth, History of Civilizations of Central Asia (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 53.

allegiance to them and abstaining from following or obeying them."[245] All of those who

met with al-Qāsim in Kūfa had already been or would eventually be involved in *khurūj*.

Many of them contributed to the development of Zaydī thought and doctrine and quote

al-Qāsim in their works, further demonstrating his influence in the Zaydī community.

While al-Qāsim's own proclivities may not have inclined toward armed rebellion, his

intellectual and theological influence on other Zaydī leaders who were inclined toward

khurūj helped cement his status and importance within the Zaydī tradition.

While al-Qāsim was in Kūfa, the Zaydīs there reportedly chose him as imam in

the year 220/835 because of his extensive knowledge and pledged their allegiance to

him.[246] It is important to note here that while the classic narrative considers *khurūj* a

necessary activity for an imam, it is al-Qāsim's knowledge rather than his force of arms

or attempt at leading a rebellion that leads to him being considered an imam in the Zaydī

biographical sources.[247] This importance the Zaydī community places on learning is

noted by Daftary, who writes that the Zaydīs "have always emphasised the significance

of religious education, especially as one of the main qualifications of their imams and

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[245] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 77. Madleung notes that Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā b. Zayd, al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Zayd, and Muḥammad b. Manṣūr al-Murādī came to be considered as the Zaydīs' *Lehrautoritäten.* Madelung, *Der Imam*, 80 ff.

[246] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 77. Al-Nāṭiq's version is different than that in *Kitāb al-maṣābīh*, which has the gathered Zaydī notables decide on an imam before they all separate, lest they die as heathens without an imam. Al-Qāsim initially proposed Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā, but he deferred and al-Qāsim was advanced instead. See Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī, *al-Masābīḥ,* MS Milan, Ambrosiana – B83. Madelung considers this a spurious tradition that is turned into something more believable by al-Nāṭiq, who, according to Madelung, recognized in al-Ḥasanī's recounting of the events "the clumsiness of the Isnād forgery" (die Plumpheit der Fälschung in Isnād) and that the circumstances seemed "to have been too conspicuous" (zu auffällig gewesen zu sein). See Madelung, *Der Imam*, 94-95.

[247] Haider has drawn attention to the differences among Zaydīs regarding the necessary qualifications for a legitimate imam. See Najam Haider, *The Origins of the Shīʿa: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). This disagreement within the Zaydī community over the qualifications for an imam is further evidence for what I consider to be the possibility of al-Qāsim being considered an imam during his own lifetime.

jurists."[248] The consideration of al-Qāsim as an imam despite his lack of *khurūj* testifies

to the importance the Zaydī community placed on knowledge as one of the requisite

characteristics of an imam. It is also further evidence that the demand for political

activism that would later be incumbent as one of the predominate characteristics of the

ideal imam may not have been as stringent during al-Qāsim's lifetime. Al-Qāsim is held

in high regard by his contemporaries and successors, and is explicitly recognized as an

imam by Zaydīs who came after him.[249] It is possible that although he did not fulfill what

would later be considered necessary for an ideal imam, he had become regarded as an

imam during his lifetime, a status that was cemented in his biographies through his

contributions to the development of Zaydism.

        After remaining in Kūfa for some time, al-Qāsim is forced to leave when the

situation again becomes precarious due to the continued pursuit by al-Muʿtaṣim. Al-

Ḥasanī and al-Muḥallī recount the following tradition from Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā,[250] one of the

Zaydī "*Lehrautoritäten*" al-Qāsim had met with in Kūfa:

> He said to me, 'When [Ibn] Hārūn[251] [al-Muʿtaṣim] searched for us,' I [Aḥmad b.
> ʿĪsā], al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, and ʿAbd Allāh b. Mūsā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b.
> al-Ḥasan departed and separated in the country: I went near al-Rayy, ʿAbd Allāh
> b. Mūsā went to al-Shām, and al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm departed to Yemen.[252]

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[248] Daftary, *A History of Shiʿi Islam*, 145.

[249] One example of al-Qāsim's recognition as imam by the Zaydī community is that he appears in biographical compendiums of the Zaydī imams, such as al-Nāṭiq's *al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda* and al-Muḥallī's *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya*.

[250] Wilferd Madelung, "Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā," *EI²*.

[251] Al-Muḥallī adds "with the *laqab* al-Rashīd" in his version of this tradition. See al-Muḥallī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya,* British Library MS Or. 3786, 5v. Hārūn al-Rashīd searching for al-Qāsim after 833 would be an obvious anachronism, as he had died in 809. His son, Ibn Harūn, i.e., al-Muʿtaṣim, however, is likely the figure referred to here.

[252] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī, *al-Masābīḥ,* MS Milan, Ambrosiana – B83, 112r.

After Hārūn al-Rashīd's death, those mentioned above met together again and recount what had happened in the intervening period. Al-Qāsim was forced to reckon with the death of his wife and son in childbirth in the desert between Mecca and Yemen after he left Kūfa. It appears to have affected him deeply; his recounting of the event is particularly moving:[253]

> Al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him) said: 'The worst thing happened to me when I left from Makkah to Yaman. In the desert, there was no water, and with me on my journey was my paternal uncle's daughter who was my wife and she was pregnant. Labor pains came upon her at that time, so I dug a pit in order for her to take care of the matter herself and I left into the country in search of water. When I returned she had already given birth to a son. Her thirst exhausted her, so I continued in search of water. When I returned to her, she had died and the young boy was living. The boy became worse after the death of his mother so I prayed two *rakʿas* and called upon God to take him. I did not cease from my request until he died.'[254]

The difficulty of al-Qāsim's life seems to have affected his temperament. In fact, Muḥammad b. Manṣūr, who was mentioned previously as the host of al-Qāsim in Kūfa, responds to the challenge that he does not have many traditions to relate from al-Qāsim, saying, "As if you think we spoke [with him] whenever we wanted? Who among us would dare to speak with him, since he was so occupied internally?"[255] Further, he replies that he did not have many stories to relate from al-Qāsim because he did not speak frequently with him– despite supposedly being al-Qāsim's companion for 25 years.[256]

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[253] This tradition appears in both Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Ḥasanī's and al-Muḥallī's respective works. There are minor differences in wording between the two narratives in *al-Maṣābīḥ* and *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya* that do not significantly impact the nature of the story. Both were consulted in order to help clarify illegible handwriting, though it is based primarily on al-Muḥallī's *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya*.

[254] al-Muḥallī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya,* British Library MS Or. 3786, 5v-6r; Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī, *al-Maṣābīḥ,* MS Milan, Ambrosiana – B83, 112r-112v.

[255] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 78.

[256] Ibid.

Indeed, Muḥammad b. Manṣūr noted, "whenever I met with him [al-Qāsim] it was as though he were clothed in sorrow."[257]

At some point thereafter,[258] al-Qāsim moved to al-Rass[259] near Medina and bought an estate in Jabal Aswad near Dhū al-Ḥulayfa[260] and had four sons: Muḥammad, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, and Sulaymān.[261] He continued to preach and write prolifically,[262] authoring over twenty works during the course of his life.[263] He is said to have provided hospitality to Zaydī visitors at his estate there in al-Rass, many of whom were from Kūfa

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[257] Ibid., 77.

[258] Al-Nāṭiq says it is at the end of his life. Ibid., 78. Madelung argues that he returned to Medina in 826 after leaving Egypt and the various other locations to which he was supposed to have gone are added to his biography later in order to bolster his credentials. See Madelung, *Der Imam*, 92-93. I am inclined to agree with al-Nāṭiq's account of events, as it makes greater sense of al-Qāsim's status in the Zaydī community and his influence on various other Zaydī notables.

[259] Al-Qāsim's *nisbah*, al-Rassī, is derived from this land he purchased and where he spent the later years of his life.

[260] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 78. Jabal Aswad is about fifteen miles southwest of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina and Dhū-l-Ḥulayfa is about five miles southwest of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

[261] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 98.

[262] al-Muḥallī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya,* British Library MS Or. 3786, 6v.

[263] For a list of works attributed to al-Qāsim, see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 1:562-563. There is also a list of al-Qāsim's works in Binyamin Abrahamov, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qurʾān in the Theology of al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm: Kitāb al-Mustarshid*, ed. and trans. Binyamin Abrahamov (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), XIV-XV. Abrahamov notes which of the works ascribed to al-Qāsim that Madelung doubts he actually authored. The dispute between Madelung and Abrahamov over al-Qāsim's authorship of certain texts is primarily in regard to their respective opinions of the extent of al-Qāsim's tendencies toward Muʿtazilism, the determination of which lies outside the purview of this dissertation. Importantly, there does not seem to be any dispute that *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* was written by al-Qāsim. In the *Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadīm lists al-Qāsim as al-ʿAlawī al-Rassī, and states: "He is al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm b. [   ] master of Ṣaʿdah, one of the Zaydīs, from whom the Qāsimiyyah Zaydīs derive their origin. Among his books: *The Book of Drinks*; Th*e Book of the Imamate*; *The Book of Oaths and Vows*; *The Book of Self-Discipline*; *The Book of the Refutation of the Rāfiḍah*." Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fuad Sayyid, 2 vols. (London: Muassasat al-Furqan lil-Turath al-Islami, 2009), Vol. I.II 783. It is worth noting that al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* (*The Refutation of the Naṣārā*) does not appear among the titles. Whether it had already been lost by this time only to be rediscovered later, or simply did not receive wide enough circulation to make Ibn al-Nadīm's list is unclear. Furthermore, it was not al-Qāsim that established the Zaydī imamate in Ṣaʿdah as Ibn al-Nadim writes, but al-Qāsim's grandson al-Ḥadī ilā al-Ḥaqq (d. 911).

and Ṭabaristān.[264] His scholarly work during this period contributed to the establishment of Zaydism in parts of Iran and remote regions around the Caspian Sea.[265] Madelung further notes that al-Qāsim's followers were effective in their missionary efforts and gathered followers to his particular brand of Zaydism in the regions of western Ṭabaristān as well as Rūyān,[266] Kalār,[267] and Shalūs.[268] After a long and productive – if not peaceful – life, al-Qāsim died in al-Rass in the year 246/860 at the age of 77/75.[269] The tenth-century biographical sources note that his burial site was well-known, and those who want to visit it depart from Medina to do so.[270] Al-Qāsim's importance to the Zaydī community as a scholar and leader is without question, and while later biographers may have embellished his characteristics to fit the profile of what they considered requisite for an ideal imam, one should not disregard his importance to the community during his life and thereafter through his scholarship. Further, his grandson, al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 911), established a Zaydī imamate in Ṣaʿda, Yemen that Zaydīs claim lasted continuously into the twentieth century.[271]

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[264] Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "Zaydiyya," in *EI²*.

[265] See Martin, Woodward, and Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason*, 40.

[266] Rūyān is a district of the Caspian coastlands region of Persia. See, V. Minorsky, s.v. "Rūyān," in *EI²*.

[267] Al-Qāsim's influence in Kalār must have been significant as a group from this region were counted among his grandson's most loyal supporters. See Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "al-Hādī Ila 'l-Ḥaqq," in *EI²*.

[268] Madelung, s.v. *"Zaydiyya,"* in *EI²*

[269] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 78. Al-Qāsim died at 77 years old according to the *hijrī* calendar; he would have been 75 years old at the time of his death according to the Common Era calendar.

[270] al-Muḥallī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-wardiyya,* British Library MS Or. 3786, 6v; Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 78.

[271] C.E. Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Handbook* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), 71.

Armed rising against illegitimate rule is considered to be one of the necessary

requirements for a legitimate imam within the Zaydī tradition. The Zaydīs "did not

recognize a hereditary line of imams, but were prepared to support any member of the *ahl*

al-bayt who claimed the imāmate by rising (*khurūj*) against the illegitimate rulers."[272]

This was in addition to other criteria–that the imam must be pious and learned, but with

the addition that he be descended from one of Fatima's sons, al-Ḥasan or al-Ḥusayn, not

simply of Qurashī lineage.[273] Cook notes as well that "Zaydism laid claim to, and

continued, an old ʿAlid pattern: rebellion against unjust rule with the aim of establishing

a legitimate imamate."[274] In al-Nāṭiq's (d. 1033) chapter on the characteristics of the

imam in his *Kitāb al-siyar*, he lists various criteria regarding lineage and knowledge as

well as "knowledge of the management of wars" (*al-ʿilm bi-tadbīr al-ḥurūb*) and that he

be "commander of the troops and their leader in wars" (*mudabbir al-juyūsh wa-*

zaʿīmuhum fī al-ḥurūb).[275]

Despite the importance of *khurūj*, al-Qāsim is generally not credited with such

actions in the main biographical sources.[276] He is, however, considered an imam within

the Zaydī tradition and more specifically within those same biographical sources that do

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[272] Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "Imāma," in *EI²*.

[273] A section from al-Nāṭiq's *Kitāb al-siyyar* related to the requirements of the imam is edited and included in Rudolf Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen* (Straßburg: Trübner, 1912), 104.

[274] Cook, *Commanding Right*, 231.

[275] Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen*, 104-106.

[276] One Zaydi biography that refers to al-Qāsim joining a rebellion will be discussed below.

not note any *khurūj* with which he was involved.[277] This disjunction between what is supposed to be required for an imam and what we know of al-Qāsim necessitates a reconsideration of the information. This seeming contradiction can be reconciled in three possible ways: (1) al-Qāsim was actually involved in a rebellion; (2) al-Qāsim was not an imam during his lifetime but was awarded that status posthumously; or (3) the actions and characteristics necessary for being considered a Zaydī imam were not as stringent in the ninth century and *khurūj* was not considered incumbent for a Zaydī imam. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

The possibility that al-Qāsim led or joined a rebellion is unlikely. It is generally considered that in addition to ʿAlid lineage and religious knowledge, Zaydīs hold that the imam must have "the political initiative and acumen to carry out armed rebellion against the authorities."[278] Further, Cook has noted that Zaydīs did not consider one who is only learned, pious, and trustworthy without rebelling against unjust rule an imam. Rather, they consider him

> merely an authority on legal matters (*imam ḥalāl wa-ḥarām*), not one to whom obedience is due (*muftaraḍ al-ṭāʿa*), 'since he is sitting at home (*jālis fī baytihi*), neither commanding nor forbidding; for God does not enjoin obedience to one who sits [quietly at home] as He does to one who arises (*al-qāʾim*), commanding right and forbidding wrong.[279]

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[277] For example, al-Nāṭiq includes al-Qāsim in his biography of the imams despite including requirements of martial leadership for the imam. See al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq, *al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda*; Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen*, 104-105.

[278] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:372.

[279] Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān, quoted in Cook, *Commanding Right*, 233.

Despite this insistence on martial leadership by later Zaydī scholars, Abrahamov notes that al-Qāsim's own works are "devoid of any such propaganda; he appears in them simply as a teacher and a preacher of the true religion."[280]

There is only one source, a text by Aḥmad b. Mūsā Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Ṭabarī (written c. 934), which mentions al-Qāsim joined a rebellion in western Egypt.[281] Madelung dismisses the report as unreliable[282] and I am inclined to agree with his assessment due to the lack of supporting evidence in the other biographical sources as well as al-Qāsim's own insistence that *khurūj* is not a requisite action for an imam.[283] Apart from this source, there is no evidence to suggest al-Qāsim did join a rebellion and in general, he seemed more interested in preaching and teaching. Indeed, as Cook notes, he was "rather eirenic."[284] There is no compelling evidence to conclude that al-Qāsim ever legitimately attempted to join or lead a rebellion. If he had, it would be unlikely that none of the other Zaydī biographers – who consider him to have been an imam and would likely have emphasized any example of his *khurūj* – refer to this event. In fact, Abrahamov notes that al-Qāsim, "does not consider taking to the sword a sign of the imam."[285] This stated objection by al-Qāsim to the necessity of *khurūj* for an imam no

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[280] Abrahamov, "The Ṭabarastānī's Question," 17.

[281] Aḥmad b. Mūsā Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Ṭabarī*, MS München, Glaser – L24. I was unable to access this text, but it is quoted and discussed in Madelung, *Der Imam*, 91.

[282] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 91, 170-171.

[283] Binyamin Abrahamov, *Al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God's Existence: Kitāb al-dalīl al-kabīr*, Islamic philosophy and theology, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 58.

[284] Cook, *Commanding Right*, 229. Madelung also draws attention to the fact that it was significant that he did not address the supporters of the Prophet's family with a call for holy war (*heiligen Krieg*) against tyrants, but instead a sermon of withdrawal from the world. See Madelung, *Der Imam*, 94.

[285] Abrahamov, *On the Proof of God's Existence*, 58.

doubt resulted in the majority of biographers' unwillingness to ascribe active rebellion to him.

The second option, i.e, that al-Qāsim was not actually an imam during his lifetime and was only later considered an imam, is more plausible than the first. Madelung and Abrahamov consider al-Qāsim's recognition as an imam to have been a later development on account of his scholarship. Madelung notes that, "although there is no evidence that he seriously attempted to lead a revolt, he was later generally recognized as a Zaydī Imam on account of his scholarship."[286] Abrahamov agrees with Madelung in this regard, "Al-Qāsim was not likely to have been a Zaydite Imam, although later Zaydite dogma stated that he was an Imam after his brother Muḥammad."[287] Concerning that in particular, Madelung argues, "it is likely a construction of later Zaydī dogma that al-Qāsim was imam after his brother."[288] In support of such an interpretation, it is worth noting that al-Qāsim never openly declared himself to be the imam and even stated, "the imam must not declare 'I am the imam'."[289] Furthermore, the biographical literature on al-Qāsim is written at some chronological distance from the events of al-Qāsim's life and perceives him through the lens of his connections to and influence on other Zaydī notables, and particularly in regard to the imamate established in Yemen by his grandson. Further, he is the "first to systematize Zaydī theology and jurisprudence"[290] and thus

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[286] Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm," in *CMR1*, 540.

[287] Abrahamov, *On the Proof of God's Existence*, 7.

[288] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 91. "*Das ist wohl eine Konstruktion aus dem späteren zaiditischen Dogma, daß al-Qāsim der Imam nach seinem Bruder war.*"

[289] Abrahamov, *On the Proof of God's Existence*, 58.

plays an important role in the theological and juridical development of the Zaydī

community. Perhaps, then, al-Qāsim being recognized as an imam was only a response to

his continued influence on the community through his scholarship even after his death.

This position, in which al-Qāsim is considered an imam only later, has the benefit

of reconciling the source material, so that instances of political activism by al-Qāsim can

be seen as retroactively attributed to him while not denying his importance within the

community as a foundational scholar. It allows his place as an imam to be established and

confirmed by later Zaydī biographers through retroactively placing him in situations

where Zaydīs known for their political activism either: (1) desire him to be the imam (as

his brother, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā is said to do in al-Nāṭiq's *al-ifāda*);[291] (2) declare him to be the

imam (as Zaydī notables are said to do in al-Nāṭiq's *al-ifāda*[292] and al-Ḥasanī's *al-*

Maṣābīh);[293] or (3) attribute armed rebellion to him (as in *Kitāb Abū al-Ḥusayn al-*

Ṭabarī).[294]

The third option, which I consider to be equally as plausible as the second

position, is that al-Qāsim was recognized as an imam during his lifetime without having

undertaken armed rebellion. This position necessitates that the standard conception of the

stringent Zaydī requirements for what would constitute the ideal imam were more

flexible than is commonly stated. It is almost uncontested in the scholarship that Zaydīs

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[290] Ella Landau-Tasseron, "Zaydī Imams as Restorers of Religion: Iḥyāʾ and Tajdīd in Zaydī Literature," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49, no. 3 (1990): 251; Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 49-60; Madelung, *Der Imam*.

[291] al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq, *al-Ifāda fī tārīkh al-aʾimma al-sāda,* MS Berlin, Glaser – 37, 25r-25v.

[292] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 77.

[293] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī, *al-Masābīḥ,* MS Milan, Ambrosiana – B83, 112r.

[294] Aḥmad b. Mūsā Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Ṭabarī,* MS München, Glaser – L24, 267r.

require armed rebellion of their imams. It is possible, however, to reconcile al-Qāsim's political inactivism with his status as an imam by reconsidering the manner in which Zaydī requirements for their imams reified only after al-Qāsim, and interestingly, in contrast to his own views on the nature of the imamate.

According to the classical narrative, Zaydism developed through the merging of two Shī'ī groups, the Batrīs and the Jārūdīs around the revolt of Zayd b. ʿAlī in 740.[295] Batrīs were distinguished by the following characteristics: (1) the belief that ʿAlī's succession to Muḥammad was implicit and the Companions who opposed him were not guilty of apostasy; (2) the belief that legal authority is dispersed throughout the Muslim community rather than restricted to ʿAlī's descendants or to a specific line of descendants; and (3) the belief that they were part of the Kūfan traditionist movement and were willing to cite traditions from non-ʿAlid figures such as ʿĀʾisha and ʿUmar.[296] Conversely, the Jārūdī were distinguished by the following characteristics: (1) Muḥammad had chosen ʿAlī as his successor unambiguously and the Companions who rejected his claims were apostates; (2) legal authority is restricted to the descendants of ʿAlī and Fāṭima; (3) they were critical of Batrīs who honored non-ʿAlid scholars;[297] and (4) they demanded armed insurrection of their imams.[298]

Haider, however, has recently challenged this narrative for the origins of Zaydism as a merging of these two groups and instead sees a progression from what was

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[295] Haider, *The Origins of the Shīʿa*, 17.

[296] Najam Haider, s.v. "Batriyya," in *EI³*.

[297] Ibid.

[298] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 144.

considered Batrī thought toward Jārūdī positions and that they are not distinct strains that

came together at any discrete historical moment. He argues that

> the views of Zaydīs in the early and mid-second/eighth century are best
> characterised as Batrī, while those of the late second/eighth and early third/ninth
> century are strongly Jārūdī. According to this theory, the heresiographers
> explained the marked shift in core Zaydī beliefs by projecting the existence of the
> 'Batrīs' and the 'Jārūdīs' back to the early second/eighth century. Such an
> explanation was necessary, given the static notion of sects implicit in
> heresiographical literature. It did not reflect historical reality.[299]

Haider considers Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 805) to have

been the pivotal figure in the shift from Batrī to Jārūdī thought within Zaydism, and that

by the end of his life Zaydism had effectively shifted from Batrī to Jārūdī doctrines.

Interestingly, this is right at the cusp of al-Qāsim's entrance into the scene, as his move to

Egypt at the beginning of the ninth century precipitated his eventual rise to importance

within the Zaydī community.

Despite this shift Haider observes in the nature of Zaydī doctrine around the turn

of the ninth century, al-Qāsim's conditions for the imam did not fully align with those of

the Jārūdī. While he did agree that it was only someone from the line of ʿAlī that could

properly be the imam of the community, he stressed the importance of knowledge rather

than armed rebellion.[300] The emphasis on knowledge and wisdom would be included

among the requirements for later Zaydī imams, but it was merged with the doctrine of

taking to the sword as a required action for an imam.[301] Placed on the threshold of a shift

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[299] Haider, s.v. "Batriyya," in *EI³*.

[300] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 144.

[301] Ibid. See also, Abrahamov, *On the Proof of God's Existence*, 58. This insistence on armed rebellion is present in the description of Zaydism in the heresiographical work, *Firaq al-Shīʿa*, by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. between 912 and 923). He writes, "They [i.e., the sons of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn] all are equally eligible for imamate, so long as the one who claims it seeks it by the use of force.

within Zaydī doctrine, it seems more plausible to me that *khurūj* was not a necessary characteristic of an imam during the period in which al-Qāsim was writing. In fact, even Haider's assessment that Zaydism was "strongly Jārūdī" by the early ninth century still allows for disagreement within the community and space for al-Qāsim's views on the imamate. Further, it must also be kept in mind that al-Qāsim is fundamental to the development of Zaydī theology and jurisprudence[302] and did not consider armed rebellion requisite for an imam.

Furthermore, there is the possibility that it was not armed rebellion that was the requirement, so much as it was the disavowal of the illegitimate ruler. If that is the case, al-Qāsim not only was involved in *khurūj* in his fleeing from the ʿAbbāsid caliph and thus not recognizing his rightful claim as an authority figure, but he also established himself in al-Rass in the latter half of his life and engaged in the propagation of Zaydī ideas. Crone sums up al-Nāṭiq's (d. 1033) requirements as follows: "any Ḥasanid or Ḥusaynid endowed with legal learning, piety, courage, and political ability who called for allegiance to himself with a view to taking over the government" was thereby considered an imam.[303] Interestingly, this "view to taking over the government" does not specify that it is armed rebellion, and al-Qāsim clearly displayed his qualifications in regard to the other points.

Then, he would be the rightful imām and would acquire the status of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib." Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, *K. Firaq al-Shīʿa* [Shīʿa Sects], trans. Abbas K. Khadim (London: ICAS Press, 2007), 108.

[302] Landau-Tasseron, "Zaydī Imams as Restorers of Religion," 251; Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 49-60; Madelung, *Der Imam*.

[303] Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 102; Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen*, 104 ff.

If Haider is correct that Jārūdī doctrine eventually prevailed within the Zaydī

community, Madelung's contention that the Jārūdīs required armed insurrection of their

imams would have necessitated some measure of reconciliation by the Zaydī biographers

who clearly considered al-Qāsim an imam. Despite this later requirement, it is worth

noting that none of the main biographies of al-Qāsim consider him to have taken up arms.

This seems to point to two things: (1) it provides a greater degree of reliability for their

retelling of events regarding al-Qāsim's life, as they would have been well-served to have

manufactured a rebellion al-Qāsim was supposed to have been involved in considering

the more stringent requirements for an imam at the time in which they were writing; and

(2) the possibility that the necessary requirements for the ideal imam within the Zaydī

tradition were initially not as stringent as they would eventually become.

While the requisite characteristics of the ideal Zaydī imam would eventually

include both armed rebellion and significant knowledge, this does not seem to have been

the case at the outset of Zaydism as they were establishing a system of doctrine. In

addition, Zaydīs "learned to make concessions to reality" when it came to their imams,

many of whom could not meet the requirements of both scholar and military leader.[304]

Indeed, al-Qāsim, who was perhaps the most foundational Zaydī scholar of the mid-ninth

century, advocated learning over *khurūj* when it came to the requirements of an imam.[305]

Perhaps, though, the requirements that developed later influenced the manner in which al-

Qāsim's political activism was emphasized or perhaps embellished in the later Zaydī

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[304] Landau-Tasseron, "Zaydī Imams as Restorers of Religion," 251. For further discussion on the distinction between the types of imams, see the aforementioned article, pp. 250-51 and Madelung, *Der Imam*, 141 ff; Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen*, 71, 90, 98.

[305] Madelung, *Der Imam*, 144.

biographical literature, considering that they were all written at some distance from his life and with a more robust and stringent doctrine of the requirements for the imamate in place. Despite this, even al-Nāṭiq's biography, which often highlights al-Qāsim's status as an imam, notes that it was al-Qāsim's knowledge that leads the Kūfan Zaydīs to declare their allegiance to him as imam. He writes, "They chose al-Qāsim (Peace be upon him) to be imam and they placed him over them, saying to him: 'You are worthiest among us on account of the excess of your knowledge,' and they pledged allegiance to him."[306] Hodgson even makes a point to note in a table of prominent Zaydīs that although al-Qāsim was the "Chief Zaydī theorist," he brought about "no effective revolt."[307] Despite his lack of political activism, Abrahamov argues that, "as a result of the Zaydite contention [that he was an imam], al-Qāsim's doctrines preserved authority which other Zaydite scholars could not oppose."[308]

I am not inclined to discount the Zaydī biographies accounts of events in which al-Qāsim is portrayed doing and saying things that have very strong characteristics of an imam after the death of his brother for the following reasons. First, al-Ṭabarī's account portrays al-Qāsim with a significant following that has attracted the attention of the caliph al-Maʾmūn and then the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim, both of whom consider him dangerous enough to send men after him. This aligns well with considering al-Qāsim as having been politically active to at least some degree. Second, the Zaydī biographies

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[306] Strothmann, "Die Literatur der Zaiditen," 77.

[307] Hodgson, *Venture*, 375.

[308] Abrahamov, *On the Proof of God's Existence*, 58-59. It is perhaps this authority of al-Qāsim that resulted in the Zaydī community developing a theology that allowed for imams that were either imams of war or imams of learning. See Landau-Tasseron, "Zaydī Imams as Restorers of Religion."

explicitly refer to al-Qāsim as an imam. His importance to the community cannot be denied, although it was within the realm of scholarship rather than military leadership. There does not seem to be a good reason to retroactively award him the status of an imam and then alter his biography to fit the new narrative. Third, a lawbook written by a follower of al-Qāsim's grandson al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq contains a "polemic against the (typically Imāmī) view that the imam does not have to rebel; he need only be learned, pious, and trustworthy."[309]

With these criteria in mind, the evidence seems to allow for a developing Zaydī theology of the imamate during al-Qāsim's lifetime that did not require armed rebellion of the imam. That many of those who were considered imams were involved in *khurūj* is true, but the later Zaydī insistence on leading armed rebellion for the imam does not need to be retroactively applied to the Zaydī community in the early ninth century. Al-Qāsim was a leading and influential scholar within the Zaydī community who had the necessary pedigree and given the evidence, I think it likely that he was considered an imam during his lifetime and this perception within the community, which was confirmed by the Zaydī community's perception of him after his death, contributed to the reception and preservation of his works, including his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*.

3.4 RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN FUSṬĀṬ

Returning to the middle period of al-Qāsim's life, roughly 815-826, it is worth considering the particular milieu in which he wrote his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. Al-Qāsim's move to Egypt proved influential in his scholarly output, as the milieu was much

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[309] Cook, *Commanding Right*, 233.

more religiously diverse than Medina. Fusṭāṭ, the city in which al-Qāsim likely lived,[310] had the distinction of being the first city in Egypt to be founded after the Muslim conquest and also served as the first residence of the Arab governors.[311] It was built in close proximity to the older Greco-Coptic town of Babylon that had ten or more churches or monasteries in its immediate vicinity at the time of Fusṭāṭ's founding, a substantial civilian Coptic population of at least several thousand people,[312] and a distinct urban character;[313] all factors that demonstrate the presence of a significant Christian population around Fusṭāṭ.[314] Further, close proximity to the religious elite of the Christian city of Babylon, and Alexandria not overly distant, helped the new Arab Muslim rulers manage relations with the Coptic population.[315] Anawati notes that this proximity to Christian centers "made it possible to employ Coptic officials and to control them at the same time."[316]

Jews and Christians from Syria with political affiliations to the Muslims had accompanied them during the conquest of Egypt and were settled in three different

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[310] The sources do not give a precise location for al-Qāsim when he was in Egypt, but simply state that he was in Miṣr.

[311] J. Jomier, s.v. "al-Fusṭāṭ," in *EI²*. For a study on the selection of the location for Fusṭāṭ and its founding, see Wladyslaw Kubiak, *Al-Fustat: Its Foundation and Early Urban Development* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1987), 60.

[312] Ibid., 55.

[313] Ibid., 52.

[314] Kubiak notes that it was primarily the Coptic subjects who were the craftsmen and held professions in Fusṭāṭ shortly after the conquest. He writes, "The Arabs, regardless of what their occupation had been in their native land, came to their new homeland as conquerors and warriors and they remained so for several generations." And, "This freed the Arab settlers from the necessity of exercising any profession." See ibid., 74.

[315] Jomier, s.v. "al-Fusṭāṭ," in *EI²*.

[316] Georges Anawati, "The Christian Communities in Egypt in the Middle Ages," in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 241.

quarters in Fusṭāṭ along with other *dhimmīs*.[317] In addition, Sijpesteijn notes that

according to Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* and Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's *Futūḥ*, "The conquering army is

further said to have employed Persians and Byzantines, Christians and Jews."[318] Kubiak

notes that "the Coptic population in the beginning settled mostly outside the Arab

districts, on the edge of town and in the suburbs,"[319] although the need for "servants,

tradesmen, craftsmen, builders, water-carriers, haulers and drivers, as well as an army of

clerks to deal with financial administration, taxation, the collection of grain, and similar

matters,"[320] resulted in the settlement restrictions ceasing to be observed already during

the rule of the governor Maslama ibn Mukhallad (d. 682).[321] The Muslim and non-

Muslim population of Fusṭāṭ increased considerably so that by the time of al-Qāsim's

arrival, Fusṭāṭ was no small town. Kubiak estimates that by the fall of the Umayyad

dynasty, Fusṭāṭ likely had over 100,000 inhabitants.[322] This seems to be the peak of its

expansion up until the Fatimid era and likely would have been roughly the size of the city

at the time of al-Qāsim's residence.

While Fusṭāṭ was initially constructed with distinct quarters based along religious

and Arab tribal lines, the construction of Christian buildings through the first two

centuries after its founding demonstrates that the Christian population was not only

growing, but that it was also no longer confined solely to the Christian quarters of the

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[317] Jomier, s.v. ″al-Fusṭāṭ,″ in *EI*[2].

[318] Petra Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 55.

[319] Kubiak, *Al-Fustat*, 80.

[320] Ibid., 79. See also Maged S. A. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Identity and Politics after the Arab Conquest* (2014), 164-165.

[321] Kubiak, *Al-Fustat*, 79.

[322] Ibid., 83.

city.[323] The Christian population had expanded so significantly after the founding of

Fusṭāṭ that in 737, the governor at the time, Walīd ibn Rifāʿa, permitted the Church of

Saint Menas to be rebuilt[324] – which in part demonstrates the growth of the Christian

population during this time that required adequate facilities for worship, but also the

political capital the Christians possessed to be able to assert their need for repair of

churches. The rebuilding of churches in disrepair as well as the building of new churches

may have been officially prohibited, but the actual adherence to such strictures in Fusṭāṭ

and other places throughout the Muslim empire was not uniformly applied.[325]

Perhaps in response to the leniency, the Coptic community in Egypt did not

appear to be bothered to any great extent by their new Muslim rulers until the middle of

the ninth century. Agreeing with this general sentiment, Hugh Kennedy writes,

> It seems clear that the local Monophysite Copts, whether or not they had actually
> aided the Muslim invasion, saw Muslim rule as no worse or more oppressive than
> the rule of the Chalcedonian Byzantines. More important, perhaps, was the fact
> that Muslim rule intruded little into the everyday lives of most native
> Egyptians.[326]

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[323] Ibid., 80.

[324] For a more extensive summary of the building of Churches that occurred in Fusṭāṭ during this period, see ibid., 79-81.

[325] The *History of the Coptic Patriarchs of Egypt* demonstrates the manner in which the religious freedoms and restrictions of the Christians in Egypt vacillated dependent on its particular governor at the time. The decades leading up to al-Qāsim's arrival in Egypt provided considerable freedoms for the Christian population and the manner of al-Qāsim's repeated contact, dialogue, and dispute with at least one Christian he invited to his own house is evidence of a general sense of openness in religious matters on the part of Christians and Muslims in Fusṭāṭ at this time.

[326] Hugh Kennedy, "Egypt as a Province in the Islamic Caliphate, 641-868," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1:67. Taxes, however, were always a constant source for complaint, although this only becomes a significant issue later on that eventually leads to greater conversion in order to avoid higher taxation as non-Muslims on the one hand, and revolts against those taxes by the Copts who did not convert on the other.

While Muslim rule may have intruded little into the religious sphere of the Christians in Egypt, there were still tensions between the communities and revolts by the Copts over taxes occurred with some regularity.[327] While these revolts are generally referred to as "Coptic Revolts," this is somewhat misleading, as the "histories and chronicles that document the revolts consistently employ *qibṭ* as a designation for 'Egyptian' – an antonym to 'Arab' – and describe them as reactions to economic exploitation rather than religious or political movements."[328] Thus, what might initially be considered inter-religious tension between Muslims and Christians might more properly be framed in this case as the result of economic policy and further highlights the specific nature of inter-religious relations in Egypt.[329] Al-Qāsim considers Christians with a fair degree of charity, and in contrast to other near-contemporary polemicists (cf. al-Jāḥiẓ's *al-Radd*

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[327] Concerning this, Trombley refers to the Bashmūr, an armed Christian insurgent group who revolted five times between 739 and 773, and then again in 821. The insurgency appeared to be financially motivated though as Sevīrus Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ notes that they refused to pay taxes to ʿAbd al-Malik, the chief of the *dīwān*. See Frank Trombley, "The Documentary Background to the *History of the Patriarchs* of PS.-Sawīrus Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ *ca*. 750-969 C.E.," in *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, ed. Petra Sijpestein et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 133. Further, a Syriac Chronicler specifically refers to an edict of ʿAbd al-Malik as "the origin of the tribute of capitation and of all the evils that spread over the Christians. Until then the kings took tribute from land but not from men." Translation of *Incerti Auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum Vulgo Dictum*, in Daniel C. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 45-46.

[328] Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 118.

[329] Further support for viewing these revolts as motivated by economics rather than religion is the way in which the "Coptic Revolts" eventually became revolts in which both Christians and Muslims took part. Muslims found common cause with Egyptian Christians due to administrative changes made in the late eighth century by the ʿAbbāsids that led to Muslims being directly liable for *kharāj* when they previously had only been subject to *ʿushr* under the Umayyads due to their status as descendants of those who had taken part in the conquest. See Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 177; Gladys Frantz-Murphy, "The Economics of State Formation in Early Islamic Egypt," in *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, ed. Petra Sijpestein et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 106-110. Regarding *ʿUshr,* see T Sato, s.v. "*ʿUshr*," in *EI²,* and Abū Yūsuf's *Kitāb al-kharāj*, quoted in Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 187 n. 388. For an overview of the eighth- and ninth-century agrarian revolts in Egypt and the manner in which tax policy contributed to their development, see Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 118-127.

ʿalā al-naṣārā) who would offer more personal attacks on Christians character, al-Qāsim is more focused on the theological differences between Christians and Muslims.

Furthermore, Frantz-Murphy notes that, "The earliest Arabic documents do not indicate, nor do any later administrative tax manuals, any tax differential based on confessional status."[330] While there were obvious theological disagreements between Muslims and their Christian subjects, the Christians with which al-Qāsim would have had the most direct contact do not appear to have considered their Muslim rulers particularly onerous concerning religious matters. From an administrative standpoint, Muslims viewed the Copts no differently from other Christian communities and had requirements that were no more stringent for them than for others. For some of the Copts, the advent of Muslim rule in Egypt may have been even viewed positively due to the equalization of the status of the Christian ecclesiastical communities in relation to the new rulers.

Although it was a gradual process (the particulars of which have generated considerable disagreement among scholars), Copts eventually began to convert to Islam as well as adopt the language of their Muslim conquerors.[331] Frantz-Murphy notes that Arabic legal documents from the fifth century A.H. still contained a high percentage of

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[330] Frantz-Murphy, "Economics of State Formation," 107. For further detail regarding the complex and changing tax rules in Egypt during this period, see Petra Sijpesteijn, "The Archival Mind in Early Islamic Egypt: Two Arabic Papyri," in *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, ed. Petra Sijpestein et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 167-172; Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 166-167.

[331] For a brief overview of the varying positions concerning the timeline of conversion to Islam within the Muslim empire, see Michael Morony, "The Age of Conversions: A Reassessment," in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 135-150. Petra Sijpesteijn draws attention to the documentary evidence that testifies to the complex nature and protracted duration of the shift to Arabic in Egypt after the Muslim conquest. See Petra Sijpesteijn, "Multilingual Archives and Documents in Post-Conquest Egypt," in *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the ʿAbbāsids*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 105-124.

Coptic names and genealogies.[332] Bulliet uses quantitative analysis of naming practices to determine the rate of conversion throughout the Islamic empire, but is left with insufficient evidence concerning Egypt using this data alone.[333] As a result, he turns to the independent analysis of Lapidus and Brett, both of whom use different data sets to arrive at the conclusion that it was not until the late ninth or early tenth century that Muslims became the majority in Egypt.[334] Regarding the adoption of Arabic, Anawati notes: "By the ninth century the clergy had apparently learned Arabic: for a Muslim who wished to convert was sent to a priest who explained to him in Arabic the Coptic text of the Scripture."[335] Further, by the tenth century, Anawati (and others) have referred to the passage in the work of Ps.-Severus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ that shows a more thorough Arabicization of Egypt:

> I have begged the assistance of Christians who have translated for me the facts, which they have read in Coptic and Greek, into Arabic, which is now spread to such an extent throughout Egypt that the greater part of the inhabitants do not know Greek and Coptic.[336]

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[332] Gladys Frantz-Murphy, "Conversion in Early Islamic Egypt," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. Robert G. Hoyland (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 327-8.

[333] Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period : an Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 95-111.

[334] Ibid.; Michael Brett, "The Spread of Islam in Egypt and North Africa," in *Northern Africa: Islam and Modernization*, ed. Michael Brett (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1973), 1-12; Michael Brett, "Population and Conversion to Islam in Egypt in the Medieval Period," in *9th and 10th International Colloquium at the Katholieke Universiteit of Leuven: Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras IV*, ed. U. Vermeulen and J. van Steenbergen, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2005), 1-32; Ira Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 248-262.

[335] Anawati, "The Christian Communities in Egypt in the Middle Ages," 244. See also Etienne Quatremère, *Recherches critiques et historiques sur la langue et la littérature de l'Egypte* (Paris: De l'Imprimerie impériale, 1808), 34-35.

[336] Quoted in Anawati, "The Christian Communities in Egypt in the Middle Ages," 244.

The *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria,*[337] written by

Ps.-Severus ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 987) provides insight into the nature of the relationship

between the the Muslims and Christians in Egypt, particularly as it relates to the Muslim

authorities' interactions with the leadership of the Coptic Church.[338] The nature of

relations between Muslim rulers and their Christian subjects in Egypt was dependent on

who was governor at the time, although relations were often congenial up through the

time al-Qāsim was in Egypt. Kubiak notes that

> even Christian sources, normally very sensitive to any sign of oppression and
> quick to hurl invectives at unfriendly Arab officials, rarely give evidence of true
> discrimination. Harsh measures were almost exclusively related to fiscal matters
> and although they sometimes resulted in loudly lamented cases of apostasy, they
> can hardly be regarded as discriminatory.[339]

Mark III was appointed as the forty-ninth Patriarch of the Coptic Church and led the

Coptic community from 799-819, which leads up to the time of al-Qāsim's arrival and

provides the setting for relations between Muslims and the Copts as they would have

been during the time he was resident in Egypt. While Mark III's appointment had to be

approved by the Muslim governor in order to replace the previous Patriarch, there was a

considerable degree of leniency from the Muslim rulers and general good will between

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[337] Although there are a number of volumes, the three most pertinent to this study are Ps.-Severus Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *"HP,"* 2:119-254, in *Patrologia Orientalis 1*, ed. and trans. B. Evetts, (1904) 381-519; Ps.-Severus Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *"HP,"* 3:255-469, in *Patrologia Orientalis 5*, ed. and trans. B. Evetts, (1910) 1-215; Ps.-Severus Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, "*HP,*" 4:470-661, in *Patrologia Orientalis 10* (1915) 357-551.

[338] It is worth noting the hagiographical nature of the text that must be considered when using *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* as an historical source. In regard to those concerns, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, "Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic Church of the Martyrs in Early Islamic Egypt," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006): 69 ff. Conversely, it is worth noting the documentary evidence for the amalgamation of sources contained in *HP*, of which Frank Trombley has attempted to trace the "references to particular fiscal and administrative measures affecting the relations between the Coptic patriarchate and the Muslim governors of Egypt." Trombley, "Documentary Background to HP," 131-152.

[339] Kubiak, *Al-Fustat*, 81.

the two parties. After the Patriarch interceded to the Governor to let the Christians rebuild their churches, the Governor conceded and gave "orders for the restoration of the churches; and accordingly all the churches of Fusṭāṭ Misr were rebuilt."[340] While there was necessary obeisance on the part of the Patriarch to the Muslim Governor, episodes like this demonstrate an often-positive inter-religious environment in Fusṭāṭ up through the first ʿAbbāsid century.

The tolerant coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Egypt demonstrates the tenor of the interreligious milieu into which al-Qāsim entered. Christians and Muslims had interacted in Fusṭāṭ for over a century by the time al-Qāsim arrived, and while there were clear structures and hierarchies of power, Muslim rulers acted with a degree of tolerance toward the Christian community. Conversely, Christians in Egypt accepted their new Muslim rulers and lived within the strictures laid out for them. Further, the continued majority of Christians in Egypt (and many other places throughout the Muslim Empire to this point) no doubt contributed to the leniency with which they were treated. In general, the heterogeneous religious milieu of Fusṭāṭ was a common characteristic of the urban areas of the Muslim empire up until the eleventh century,[341] and the constraints upon the activities of non-Muslim citizens were allowed to live, while dependent upon the particular ruler in charge, were often less cumbersome than outlined in official policy.[342] It is perhaps because of the general inter-religious tolerance in Fusṭāṭ

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[340] Ps.-Severus Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, "HP," 4:522, in *Patrologia Orientalis 10* (1915) 48.

[341] David Thomas, "Dialogue with Other Faiths as an Aspect of Islamic Theology," in *Religious Polemics in Context*, ed. Theo L. Hettema and A. van der Kooij (Leiden: Van Gorcum, 2000), 93.

[342] There is significant debate over the *Pact of ʿUmar* and the particular environment in which it developed. See Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 99-112. It likely was not a product of the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634-644),

in the period leading up to al-Qāsim's residence that his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* focuses

on theological disagreements rather than personal attacks on Christians' character.[343]

The religiously diverse milieu of Fusṭāṭ allowed al-Qāsim much greater

interaction with those of other religious communities than he would have had while in

Medina. While Baghdād might be better known than Fusṭāṭ for inter-religious debate and

dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the ninth century due to *munāẓarāt* in the

caliphal court, Madelung notes that Fusṭāṭ was itself a "centre of debate between Muslims

and representatives of other religious communities."[344] Al-Qāsim himself states that he

met regularly with a Coptic Christian named Salmūn while in Fusṭāṭ, as well as various

other specialists in *kalām*,[345] and also engaged in debates directly with Muslim and non-

Muslim scholars.[346] Madelung notes that, "the intellectual atmosphere of Egypt was

entirely different from the purely Muslim Medina, and suited to stimulate refutations of

foreign religions and his preoccupation with philosophy."[347] It is this environment and its

opportunity for access to diverse religious texts and interactions that likely led al-Qāsim

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after whom it is supposed to have been named. There is a useful and brief overview of the state of scholarship on this in ibid., 2-4. Luke Yarbrough disagrees with Levy-Rubin's conclusions on the origins of the promulgation of the *ghiyār* (differentiation of non-Muslims through required visible signs) that it goes back to ʿUmar II (r. 717-720) and argues that the evidence is simply inconclusive. See Luke Yarbrough, "Origins of the *ghiyār*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134, no. 1 (2014): 113-121. Ultimately, this disagreement and inconclusive evidence concerning the origins and implementation of restrictions imposed on the *dhimmī* testifies to the lack of a universally applied system.

[343] Social issues and attacks on Christians' character are a focus of al-Jāḥiẓ's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, which was written in Baghdad under the reign of al-Mutawakkil, shortly after the more stringent anti-*dhimmī* measures of 850.

[344] Wilferd Madelung, "al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm and Christian Theology," *ARAM* 3 (1991): 36.

[345] Abrahamov, "The Ṭabarastānī's Question," 51.

[346] Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "Al-Rassī," in *EI*[2].

[347] "Die geistige Atmosphäre von Ägypten war ganz anders als die des rein muslimischen Medina geeignet, zu Widerlegung von fremden Religionen und Beschäftigung mit Philosophie anzuregen." Madelung, *Der Imam*, 90.

to pen his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. It is impossible to say with certainty when the text was written, but the specific milieu of Egypt/Fusṭāṭ would have been conducive for authoring such a text and clues from its writing style point to it being one of his earliest works. Regarding the latter point, Madelung notes about al-Qāsim's al-*Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* and *al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq al-laʿin Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ* (*Refutation of the Accursed Heretic Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*):

> The style in which the two documents are written suggests that they are among the oldest works of al-Qāsim. They are written in strict, often quite clumsy, rhymed prose. In later writings, al-Qāsim better mastered the means of expression in the Arabic language. He still prefers to use rhymed prose, but not as rigorously or as forced. He handles them with greater freedom, and often dispenses entirely with didactic exposition on them. Also, his use of words is more appropriate.[348]

In addition to personal interactions with Jews and Christians in Fusṭāṭ, al-Qāsim had the opportunity to study the Jewish and Christian scriptures as well as theological and philosophical works.[349] He even notes in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* that he is constructing his summary of Christianity on the work of scholars from each of the Christian sects:

> May anyone who reads our book understand their teachings that we will deal with in a fair manner and describe, if God wills, using what scholars from each sect among them teach. We will examine all of what they examine themselves in regard to doctrine.[350]

Further, he is reported to have said the following: "I have read the Qur'ān, the Torah, the Gospel, and the Psalms and my knowledge of their interpretation is no less than my

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[348] "Unter der Stil, in dem die beiden Schriften abgefaßt sind, deutet darauf hin, daß sie zu den ältesten Werken al-Qāsims gehören. Sie sind in strenger, oft recht unbeholfener Reimprosa geschrieben. In späterer Schriften beherrscht al-Qāsim die Ausdrucksmittel der arabischen Sprache besser. Er benutzt weiterhin mit Vorliebe Reimprosa, aber nicht mehr so rigoros und gezwungen. Er behandelt sie mit größerer Freiheit, verzichtet bei lehrhafter Darlegung oft ganz auf sie. Auch sein Wortgebrauch ist treffender." Ibid.

[349] Madelung, s.v. "Al-Rassī," in *EI²*.

[350] *al-Radd*, 314.14-15.

knowledge of their revelation" (*Qad qaraʾtu al-qurʾān wa-l-tawrāh wa-l-inǰīl wa-l-zabūr mā ʿilmī taʾwīlahā dūn ʿilmī tanzīlahā*).[351]

Madelung has attempted to determine specific influences from the Christian community on the theology of al-Qāsim and proposes the probable influence of the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurra, noting that in aspects where al-Qāsim differs from the theology of his own community, he most closely resembles the thought of Abū Qurrah.[352] If this is the case, Madelung's linking of al-Qāsim with the thought of Abū Qurra provides evidence of al-Qāsim's broader engagement with Christians (or at least their literature) from beyond the immediate surroundings of Fusṭāṭ. Further, al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq al-laʿīn Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ* (*Refutation of the Accursed Heretic Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*), which was also likely written while he was in Fusṭāṭ, "contained many arguments employed by Christian apologists before him."[353]

Al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* demonstrates his proficiency in the theology of the three major Christian ecclesiastical communities and he summarizes their respective theological positions with a high degree of accuracy. Such accuracy by al-Qāsim necessitates at least one of the following: (1) engagement with knowledgeable Christians from each of those sects; (2) access to texts summarizing the beliefs of the individual sects; and/or (3) interaction with a Christian who was well-versed in the theological subtleties of the various Christian sects and was able to explain them without prejudice. Further, al-Qāsim's quotations from the New Testament do not follow the

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[351] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī, *al-Maṣābīḥ,* MS Milan, Ambrosiana – B83, 115r.

[352] Madelung, "al-Qāsim and Christian Theology," 36.

[353] Wilferd Madelung, s.v. "al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm," in *CMR1*, 540-541.

proof-text format common to Muslim apologists and polemicists writing before him such as Ibn al-Layth (c. 795-6) and after him such as al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868f), ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. c. 870), and Ibn Qutayba (d. 889). Al-Qāsim, unlike the aforementioned scholars, does not simply list verses to prove Muḥammad had been foretold in the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians. Rather, his use of Scripture in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* demonstrates considerable knowledge of the scriptures in their context and goes far beyond the use of biblical proof-texts meant to confirm Muḥammad's prophethood within the Christian and Jewish monotheistic scriptural tradition.[354]

Fusṭāṭ's diverse milieu allowed for regular interactions and debates with both Muslims and non-Muslims and probably encouraged al-Qāsim's scholarly output concerning interreligious matters. While there, he authored an epistle and three refutations that directly relate to the interreligious and intra-Muslim debates and interactions in which he is known to have engaged.[355] His writing, however, was primarily focused on interreligious polemic during this early period of his writing while in Egypt, and he is not known to have penned any works related to inter-Islamic disputes. His works related to other religions written while he was in Fusṭāṭ are: *Masʾalat al-ṭabarīyyīn*[356] (*The Ṭabarastānī's Question*), *al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq al-laʿīn ibn al-*

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[354] See David Bertaina, "The Development of Testimony Collections in Early Christian Apologetics with Islam," in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 151-173. The use of *testimonia* collections is not unique to Muslim authors, but was used previously in intra-religious apologetic by Christian authors to prove to Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah. See Martin C. Albl, *"And Scripture Cannot Be Broken": The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[355] See Madelung, "al-Qāsim and Christian Theology," 36.

[356] For an introduction, edition, and translation of this work into English, see Abrahamov, "The Ṭabarastānī's Question," 16-54.

Muqaffaʿ (*Refutation of the Cursed Heretic Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*),[357] and *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* (*Refutation of the Naṣārā*).[358] Al-Fusṭāṭ in the beginning of the ninth century was a location well-suited for someone of al-Qāsim's scholarly interest in other religions and as a result we are left with the earliest extant Muslim polemical treatise against Christians.

3.5 EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANITY OF THE EIGHTH AND NINTH CENTURIES

Early Muslim polemicists demonstrated their familiarity with the general theological positions of the three prominent Christian ecclesiastical communities of their day: *al-Malikiyyah* or *al-Rūm* (Melkites/Orthodox), *Yaʿqūbiyyūn* (Jacobites/ Monophysites), and *Nasṭūriyyūn* (Nestorians/Church of the East). While the topics addressed in the different treatises can vary to some degree, the debate has often focused on two theological tenets central to all types of Christianity: the Trinity and the Incarnation. Regardless of their own intra-religious sectarian theological and political differences, Muslim polemicists presented a united front in the face of what could be viewed as an attack by Christianity on the divine unity of God, his *tawḥīd*. Condemnations of associating other beings with God were a component of Muslim polemic as early as the Qur'ān and figure prominently in early Muslim proclamations against Christian beliefs. It was this crucial difference between Muslim and Christian understandings and articulations of who the person of God was that lie at the heart of the genre of Muslim polemical literature against Christianity. To be sure, there were other

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[357] For an introduction, edition, and translation of this work into Italian, see Michelangelo Guidi, *La lotta tra l'Islam e il Manicheismo: un libro di Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ contro il Corano confutato da al-Qasim b. Ibrahim*, ed. and trans. Michelangelo Guidi (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1927).

[358] For an introduction, edition, and translation of this work into Italian, see *al-Radd*, 301-364.

119

attacks against Christians advanced by Muslim polemicists, but a common theme

throughout their works was against what was considered to be Christians' violation of

God's divine unity, which was most clearly expressed in the doctrines of the Trinity and

Incarnation.

While it was primarily doctrinal disagreements that fueled Muslim polemics

against Christianity, it would be a mistake to assume Christianity was a monolithic entity

in regard to the articulation of these theological positions. There were debates,

disagreements, dissension, and even anathemas pronounced against fellow Christians by

Ecumenical Councils as the Church attempted to compose precise theological formulae

for doctrines central to a Christian understanding of God.[359] These divisions within the

Christian community were not small sectarian divisions; rather they were well defined,

with each sect having its own ecclesiastical hierarchy. In Egypt in particular,

Papaconstantinou notes that,

> the Monophysite Church was in an ambivalent position. Although its rivals, the
> Chalcedonians, were the state Church and benefited from imperial support, the
> Monophysite Church still managed to maintain not only a parallel church
> hierarchy in Alexandria, with two competing patriarchs holding office at the same
> time, but also a parallel network of bishoprics that covered the entire valley.[360]

Apologists and polemicists from each of the sects were active in preserving and

promoting their respective views while also attempting to refute the other Christian sects

with whom they disagreed. Thus, in order to understand properly the milieu in which

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[359] It must be kept in mind, however, that these intra-Christian theological disputes between the communities were the "possession and tools of an elite minority." Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 233. I focus on these theological distinctions that only would have been the concern of the elite minority because they are a focus of al-Qāsim in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*.

[360] Papaconstantinou, "The Coptic Church of the Martyrs in Early Islamic Egypt," 67.

Muslim polemicists wrote their refutations, one must understand the complex nature of Christianity during this period.

The geographical boundaries of the Christian ecclesiastical communities were porous and even among Egypt's Christian community there were divisions. Although a significant number of Egypt's Christians did not accept the official Christology espoused by the Byzantine Empire and instead adhered to non-Chalcedonian Christologies by affirming a single unified nature in Christ,[361] Egypt was considered to be a "hotbed of religious heterodoxy, and relations between Christian groups in Egypt were sometimes extremely fragmented and contentious."[362] Although intra-Christian tensions had arisen centuries earlier, the discord between the various ecclesiastical communities remained and there was a decade of intense, state-sanctioned persecution of the Monophysite Christians in Egypt by Heraclius beginning in 631 immediately prior to the Islamic conquests. Still, a majority of Egypt's ecclesiastical hierarchy promoted a theological position at odds with the one officially sanctioned by the Byzantine Empire, which "led to a complex situation in which most Egyptians were officially considered 'heretics,' while the minority who followed official doctrine were often accorded special privileges."[363] Interestingly, after the conquest, the mostly Melkite bureaucracy in Egypt was re-hired by the Muslims in the interest of developing an efficient administration and

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[361] Al-Qāsim and other Muslim polemicists during this time refer to the adherents of this position as *Yaʿqūbiyyūn* (Jacobites), after Jacob of Edessa (d. 578), who was influential in the history of the monophysite community. For further information on Jacob of Edessa, see Alison Salvesen, "Jacob of Edessa's Life and Work: A Biographical Sketch," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day*, ed. Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1-10.

[362] Terry Wilfong, "The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities," in *Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume One: Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 177.

[363] Ibid.

Mikhail notes that their "indifference to sectarian issues led to renewed intolerance against the Coptic population and patriarchs, as government-employed Melkites used their civic appointments to further their confessional aims."[364] These confessional aims included the confiscation of Coptic churches immediately in the wake of the Muslim conquests, although the anti-Chalcedonians gained ground in this regard under the governorship of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Marwān (r. 685-705). Under his tenure, the Coptic churches that had previously been confiscated by the Melkites were returned, and even a number of the churches held by the Melkites were turned over to the Copts.[365]

Although intra-Christian ecclesiastical relations had soured prior to the Islamic conquests, the advent of Islamic rule contributed to the development of a new dynamic within intra-Christian relations as the theological positions of none of the three sects was any longer the official position of the state in areas under Muslim rule. Ducellier notes that after the Muslim conquest, Christians

> were quick to realize that, as equally strangers to all the Christian sects, they [the new Muslim rulers] were not concerned with persecuting one more than the other. For two centuries, however, the eastern heretics, Monophysites or Nestorians, had suffered the harassment of the Orthodox Church, which for them was the personification of the Byzantine State.[366]

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[364] Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 39.

[365] Ibid., 40-41, 222-225. Mikhail also draws attention to the importance of the anti-Chalcedonian secretaries Athanasios and Isaac that were employed by the government of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and proved strong allies to the Copts. See Mēna of Nikiou, *The Life of Isaac of Alexandria; & the Martyrdom of Saint Macrobius*, ed. and trans. David Bell, Cistercian Studies Series (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1988), 49, 65, 70, 85-86.

[366] "Pour les chrétiens, quels qu'ils soient, non seulement ils ne sont plus de paiens, mais on a vite fait de savoir que, également étrangers à toutes les sectes christianisantes, ils ne se préoccupent guère de persécuter l'une plus que l'autre. Ou, les héretiques orientaux, monophysites ou nestoriens, subissaient depuis deux siècles les tracasseries de l'Église orthodoxe, personnification pour eux de l'État byzantine." Alain Ducellier, *Chrétiens d'Orient et Islam au Moyen Age VIIe - XVe Siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1996), 37. John of Nikiu even goes so far as to interpret the Muslim conquest as God's punishment on the Byzantine Empire for their persecution of the Copts. See R.H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu* (London: Text and Translation Society, 1917), Chapter CXVII. Phil Booth is currently working on an edition and translation entitled *The Chronicle of John of Nikiu: Ethiopic Text with*

Thus, the new Muslim rulers were seen by those Christian sects the Byzantine Church had deemed heretics as at least no worse than their previous rulers, and potentially better since there was no special interest in persecuting one over another.[367] Indeed, it was this "'even-handed indifference' toward the various communities and their previous privileges" after the Muslim conquests that did not allow one Christian community the opportunity to assert dominance over the other with the backing of the Bynzatine Empire.[368]

Symptomatic of the poor relations between the ecclesiastical communities, Ducellier notes that, "it is with evident jubilation that a Maronite Chronicle recounts the origin of the Jacobites' misfortune."[369] The situation he is referring to is recounted as follows:

> The bishops of the Jacobites, Theodore and Sabūkht came to Damascus and held an inquiry into the Faith with the Maronites in the presence of Muʿāwiya. When the Jacobites were defeated, Muʿāwiya ordered them to pay 20,000 denarii and commanded them to be silent. Thus there arose the custom that the Jacobite bishops should pay that sum of gold every year to Muʿāwiya, so that he would not

Translation and Commentary for the Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalum's Series Aethiopica. Others within the Christian community used this line of reasoning as evidence that their particular theological positions were divinely endorsed and that those of their theological opponents were not when it came to the loss of North Africa in the Muslim conquest. See Phil Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent and the End of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd., 2014), 289 ff.

[367] For an overview of early Christian responses to the Muslim conquests that points to the condemnation, acceptance, ambivalence and even welcoming of the new Muslim rulers on the part of the different sects of the Christian church, see Michael Philip Penn, *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 15-52; Sidney Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*, Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the ancient to the modern world (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 23-44; John Tolan, *Saracens* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 40-70.

[368] Papaconstantinou, "The Coptic Church of the Martyrs in Early Islamic Egypt," 68; Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 309.

[369] "C'est avec une évidente jubilation qu'une chronique maronite raconte les origines des infortunes jacobites." Ducellier, *Chrétiens d'Orient et Islam*, 75.

withdraw his protection and let them be persecuted by members of the (Orthodox) Church.[370]

Although this event being recounted in the Maronite Chronicle happened prior to the time in which al-Qāsim was writing, the general animosity between the Christian sects is foundational to establishing the context of Muslim polemics in the eighth and ninth centuries. Christians' disputes over theological differences played themselves out in respect to their new Muslim rulers as they sought to position their own sect in a favorable light and denigrate the other sects. When the opportunity presented itself for one Christian sect to gain advantages over another in relation to their new Muslim rulers, those opportunities were seized, Papaconstantinou noting that in Egypt, the different ecclesiastical Christian communities "tried to capture their new master's benevolence. Still in the 760s, the Chalcedonians and Monophysites would bring rival petitions before the Muslim governor."[371]

As a result of what Toenies Keating refers to as the "ongoing bitter struggle among the various Christian churches that resulted from clashes over the ecumenical councils,"[372] apologists and polemicists from the three Christian communities debated and wrote treatises promoting their sect's Christology while also denigrating and attacking what they each viewed as the incorrect formulations proposed by the others. Papaconstantinou notes that "since the Council of Chalcedon, an imposing body of polemical literature had piled up on both sides, and its production intensified toward the

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[370] *The Seventh Century in the West Syrian Chronicles*, trans., Andrew Palmer (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 29-35.

[371] Papaconstantinou, "The Coptic Church of the Martyrs in Early Islamic Egypt," 68.

[372] Sandra Toenies Keating, "Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾīṭa al-Takrītī's 'The Refutation of the Melkites Concerning the Union [of the Divinity and Humanity in Christ]," in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in ʿAbbasid Iraq*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 40.

end of the sixth century."[373] More apropos of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*,

Beaumont notes that "the three communities defined themselves in terms of their view of

the Incarnation, so it is not surprising treatises were written by Abū Qurrah and Abū

Rāʾiṭa defending their respective Christologies against what they regard as the inadequate

views of other Christian communities."[374]

In addition to theological sparring in debate situations, there was also a

significant amount of written polemical literature generated between the Christian sects

living under Muslim rule. John of Damascus (d. second half of the eighth century),[375] for

example, composed numerous polemical tracts against other Christian sects, including

Against the Jacobites, and *Against the Nestorians*, although his language of scholarship

was Greek.[376] With the gradual ascent of Arabic as the *lingua franca* in the eighth century

even among many non-Muslim subjects living under Islamic rule, the Christological

debates that had gone on for the previous few centuries in Greek and other languages of

the Church began to be written and spoken in Arabic. Indeed, by the mid-ninth century,

"the indigenous Christian communities in the Islamic world had already begun to take on

the outward trappings of the culture of the then burgeoning 'commonwealth' of Islam.

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[373] Papaconstantinou, "The Coptic Church of the Martyrs in Early Islamic Egypt," 68.

[374] Mark Beaumont, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī on the Incarnation," in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 56.

[375] While his death is often considered to have been in 754, Sean Anthony has recently contended that the biography of John Damascene is faulty and he might have been much younger than previously thought. See Sean Anthony, "Fixing John Damascene's Biography: Historical Notes on His Family Background," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 607-627.

[376] For a discussion of the role of John of Damascus' intra-Christian polemical literature, see Sidney Griffith, "Melkites', 'Jacobites' and the Christological Controversies in Arabic in Third/Ninth-Century Syria," in *Syrian Christians Under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 34 ff.

Many of them had even adopted the Arabic language for ecclesiastical use."[377] And while there were eventually texts written initially in Arabic for this purpose, it is likely that the general points of intra-Christian polemics would have circulated among Arabic-speaking Christians and even Muslims prior to that point, although there were continued debates over the precise technical vocabulary used for theological terms related to the Trinity and Incarnation.[378]

Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. 823) was one such theologian active during this period who composed his texts primarily in Arabic.[379] Griffith notes that, as a student of John of Damascus' theology, "there is no appreciable progression of ideas beyond what his master achieved," although Griffith importantly draws attention to the fact that, "Abū Qurrah's originality consists in the genius with which he expressed John's arguments in Arabic."[380] Included among Abū Qurrah's works is a defense of Melkite theology, in which "his principal adversaries were the 'Nestorians' and the 'Jacobites'."[381] To demonstrate the stakes involved, theologically speaking, Abū Qurrah begins his refutation of Nestorians by noting, "Now then, if Nestorius is right and the one who died for us was just a man, we have no salvation."[382] Time perhaps has softened the

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[377] Ibid.

[378] In regard to the difficulty of finding adequate and consistent Arabic equivalents for Christian theological terms, see Najib George Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abū Qurrah's Theology in its Islamic Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

[379] For a more in-depth study of the place of Theodore Abū Qurrah in relation to his Islamic context, see ibid., 212-234; Sidney Griffith, "Theology and the Arab Christian: The Case of the 'Melkite' Creed," in *A Faithful Presence: Essays for Kenneth Cragg*, ed. David Thomas (London: Melisende, 2003), 184-200.

[380] Sidney Griffith, "Theodore Abū Qurrah's Arabic Tract on the Christians' Practice of Venerating Images," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 1 (1985): 56.

[381] Griffith, "Christological Controversies in Arabic," 39.

[382] Theodore Abū Qurrah and John C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, ed. and trans. John C. Lamoreaux (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 112. One is reminded of Paul's declaration in

recognition of the theological importance of such debates over the humanity and divinity of Christ that were prevalent at that time, but for Abū Qurrah to declare that Nestorianism leaves one without salvation demonstrates the importance of these theological positions to the Christian community. Abū Qurrah reserves an even higher degree of personal animosity for the Jacobites, as is demonstrated in the beginning of his refutation of their beliefs.[383] He writes, "As for you, Jacobite, haughty brute that you are, I want you to know that you have surpassed the beasts in coarseness and Satan and his armies in insolence toward God."[384] Abū Qurrah's intra-Christian polemics demonstrate that there was little love lost between the members of the different communities when it came to theological disagreements over Christology.

From the Jacobite perspective, perhaps the most well known theologian during this period is Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭah (d. ca. 835)[385] who wrote theological treatises in Arabic and four of his nine extant texts consist of arguments against the Melkites,[386] and Husseini notes that in Abū Rāʾiṭah's works dealing with intra-Christian concerns he even mentions Theodore Abū Qurrah by name.[387] In these texts he argues

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1 Corinthians 15:17 (NOAB), "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

[383] This particular animosity toward the Jacobites is also present in Muslim sources. For example, al-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb (c. mid-tenth century) states about Jacobite views regarding Jesus' death on the cross, "They came up with a doctrine, which, if presented to heaven, it would have split, or if presented to the earth, it would have cracked, or if presented to the mountains, they would have crumbled." Preserved in Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, ed. ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan Ibn Nāṣir, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Ibrāhīm ʿAskar, and Ḥamdan ibn Muḥammad Ḥamdān (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿAṣimah, 1993), 91-92.

[384] Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 115.

[385] For a more detailed biography of Abū Rāʾita in English, see Sara Leila Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God: Three Christian Scholars and Their Engagement with Islamic Thought (9th Century C.E.)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 77 ff.

[386] Sandra Toenies Keating, s.v. "Abū Rāʾiṭa l-Takrītī," in *CMR1*, 567-568.

[387] Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, 79.

that the Melkites have adopted Nestorian theology, which essentially makes his works against the Melkites serve doubly as refutations of the Nestorians, and argues that the Council of Chalcedon was invalid because it was "tainted by Nestorianism."[388] Toenies Keating notes that he was

> greatly concerned about the influence that the Islamic critique of Christianity was having on the church, and his belief that Nestorian theology and its Melkite expression made Christian faith vulnerable to such criticism led him to focus much of his energy on refuting the conclusions of Chalcedon.[389]

Although the Jacobite community had historically not fared well under Byzantine rule for their anti-Chalcedonian Christological beliefs, the Muslim rulers did not make such distinctions and instead considered them as part of the *ahl al-kitāb* with the accompanying rights and responsibilities. Abū Rāʾiṭah was active during this important shift and given his proximity to the newly founded capital of Baghdad, could have been involved in *munāẓarāt* at the caliphal court. There is even one tradition that references an exchange between him, Abū Qurra, and a metropolitan of the Nestorian Church held in the presence of an unnamed Muslim official.[390] Abū Rāʾiṭah's works demonstrate his considerable knowledge of Islam and Husseini notes he responds to accusations of *taḥrīf* in his texts.[391]

ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī was a Nestorian theologian and writer active during the first half of the ninth century and like other sectarian Christian theologians, sought to bolster the claims of his own sectarian theology while denigrating that of the other sects. Of his life,

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[388] Toenies Keating, "Abū Rāʾīṭa al-Takrītī's 'The Refutation of the Melkites'," 45.

[389] Ibid., 44.

[390] Toenies Keating, s.v. "Abū Rāʾiṭa l-Takrītī," in *CMR1*, 568-569.

[391] Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate*, 80.

there is nothing known except that he was "associated with the city of Basra and with the East-Syrian Christian community."[392] Only two works by ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī survive, one of which is a short tract-like treatise entitled *Kitāb al-burhān,* and the second is a longer work entitled *Kitāb al-masāʾil wa-l-ajwibah.*[393] While the majority of the latter text concerns responses to Muslim problems with Christianity, ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī hints at intra-Christian theological disagreements over the Incarnation, but takes a more ecumenical approach than either Theodore Abū Qurrah or Abū Rāʾiṭah and reframes the intra-Christian debate on this issues as a minor point that does not negate their agreement over the Incarnation.[394]

In addition to further exacerbating the divisions within the Church, intra-Christian polemical literature provided Muslim polemicists with material for their own anti-Christian polemical works.[395] Christian sects at the time were arguing over the same doctrines that Muslim polemicists sought to refute, and these intra-Christian polemical tracts and debates provided both a better understanding of the doctrines discussed as well as the interpretations of various Bible references and arguments that could be utilized to refute each sect's respective Christological formulations. It was this particular milieu, and its complex linguistic, theological, and philosophical debates over the doctrine of the

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[392] Mark Beaumont, s.v. "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī," in *CMR1*, 604.

[393] Both texts are available in ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān wa-Kitāb al-masāʾil wa-al-ajwibah*, ed. Mīshāl al-Ḥāyik (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Sharqīyah, 1977). For an overview of their contents, see Sidney Griffith, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Burhān:* Christian *Kalām* in the First Abbasid Century," *Le Museón* 96 (1991): 145-181.

[394] See Griffith, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Burhān*," 177.

[395] Griffith, "Christological Controversies in Arabic," 50.

Incarnation, that the early Muslim polemicists entered, bolstered in their position by the arguments of a Church divided against itself.

3.6 THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO ARABIC

Because of the importance of the Bible to *taḥrīf* generally and the polemic of al-Qāsim in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* more specifically, it is worth considering the evidence for the advent of the Arabic translation of the Bible. The evidence is not without debate, however, and there are a number of positions scholars have taken after their assessment of the evidence. While the divisions rely on generalities, Hikmat Kashouh has noted after a careful cataloguing of each individual scholar's research related to the advent of the Arabic translation of the Gospel that there are three general groups who come to different conclusions: (1) textual critics who consider it to be late and do not include it in their New Testament Critical Apparatuses; (2) a few Oriental scholars and Arabists involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue who consider it likely to have been translated in pre-Islamic Arabia (and thus an implied Christian influence on Islam); and (3) other Oriental scholars and Arabists also involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue who provide a date for its translation sometime around the ninth-century.[396]

While passages of the Bible were used in Muslim polemical texts against the Christians in the eighth century, these often feature only scattered verses from the Gospels by way of *testimonia* collections. Muslim polemicists from this early period demonstrate only a limited knowledge of what the Gospels contained, quoting select

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[396] Kashouh's examination of the state of the research in this regard is impressive in its breadth and depth. See Hikmat Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels: The Manuscripts and their Families* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 9-36.

verses in their works, often with no obvious awareness of the verse's surrounding

context. This early use of the Bible during the first centuries after Islam's inception

appears to come primarily from the Qur'ān itself and the limited interactions that the

Muslim community had with various Christians during Muḥammad's lifetime and shortly

thereafter. While it is possible that there was an Arabic translation of the Bible in use

prior to the advent of Islam,[397] there is no manuscript evidence supporting that claim.

Griffith notes that, "aside from extrapolations scholars have made from much later

material, including from rather inconclusive remarks found here and there in earlier

Syriac or Arabic sources, no conclusive documentary or clear textual evidence of a pre-

Islamic, written Bible in Arabic translation has yet come to light."[398]

What then of the possibility of an Arabic translation of the Bible between the

advent of Islam and the time of al-Qāsim's writing of the *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*? The

claims made by ninth-century Muslim scholars support the idea of a translation of the

Bible, or at least portions of it, by sometime in the eighth century. Griffith collates

evidence from al-Masʿūdī, who refers to a translation of part of the Torah by Ḥunayn Ibn

Isḥāq (d. 873),[399] and Ibn al-Nadīm, who refers to a scholar named Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd

Allāh ibn Salām, who claimed to have translated the Torah, Gospels, and books of the

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[397] Irfan Shahid has argued for the likelihood of translations of the Gospel and Psalms for liturgical reasons among Arabic-speaking Christians before the 7th century. See Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984), 435-443; Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1989), 422-429, 449-450; Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 2.2:295.

[398] Sidney Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 41-42.

[399] Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, ed. M.M. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1967), vol. 8, 112.

Prophets into Arabic during the reign of Harūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809).[400] As mentioned previously in this chapter, al-Qāsim himself claimed to have read the Torah, the Gospel, and the Psalms.[401] This evidence alone is insufficient to determine the likelihood of an Arabic translation of the Bible by the eighth century, although it provides support for such a claim if further evidence can be brought to light.

The earliest known extant manuscript of the four Gospels in Arabic that is dated is held in the library of the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai, a scribal note indicating it was completed in 859.[402] There are a number of other dated Gospel manuscripts in Arabic, although they all are copied toward the end of the ninth century.[403] More relevant to the time of al-Qāsim's writing is the recent work by Kashouh that has supported the likelihood of Vatican Arabic MS 13 being the earliest surviving portion of the Arabic version of the Gospels, scholars agreeing on a date sometime around 800 for its writing.[404] Although it is undated, it is very likely the oldest surviving Arabic version of the Gospels, and Kashouh argues through paleographic and linguistic analysis of the text that there are features that point to it being copied from a much earlier and potentially pre-Islamic Arabic translation of the Bible.[405] Kashouh considers the original text from which Vatican Arabic MS 13 is copied to have been written sometime around the advent

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[400] Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), vol. 1, 42.

[401] Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasanī, *al-Masābīḥ,* MS Milan, Ambrosiana – B83, 115r.

[402] Sidney Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century," *Oriens Christianus* 69 (1985): 132.

[403] A number of them are mentioned in Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 113.

[404] Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels*, 143 ff. See also Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "An Early Fragmentary Christian Palestinian Rendition of the Gospels into Arabic from Mār Sābā (MS Vat. Ar. 13, 9th c.)," in *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World 1* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[405] Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels*, 146.

of Islam and somewhere other than Syria/Palestine.[406]

Griffith disagrees with Kashouh over the particular date and location of the source text for Vatican Arabic MS 13, however, and argues that,

> To extrapolate further back in time, and to postulate a location of outside of Syria/Palestine, is both to stretch the available evidence beyond its reach, and to run up against the counter evidence, such as the time frame for the development and deployment of written, literary Arabic.[407]

Instead, Griffith prefers to stay within the geographical confines of Syria/Palestine for the original translation from which Vatican Arabic MS 13 was likely copied. His reasoning is threefold: first, Greek and Syriac were cultivated in these areas and the work of translation would have required knowledge of both; second, the monasteries of Syria/Palestine were already involved in an extensive translation movement in the seventh/eighth centuries; and third, the surviving Arabic texts written during the seventh/eighth century in Syria/Palestine demonstrate similar linguistic archaisms to those in Bible translations.[408] Furthermore, the evidence available for the development of literary Arabic does not support the likelihood of an Arabic translation of the Bible as early as the date for which Kashouh argues.[409]

Despite the disagreement between Kashouh and Griffith regarding the provenance of the earliest translation of the Gospel in Arabic, what is important for this present study is that even Griffith, who considers the earliest translation of the Bible to be later than

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[406] Kashouh summarizes his analysis of this manuscript and proposes two possible dates and locations for the translation of Gospel text of the original: sixth-century Iraq, or late seventh-/early eighth-century Arab Christian communities somewhere like al-Ḥīra, Baṣra, or Najrān. See ibid., 168-170.

[407] Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 117.

[408] Ibid., 117-118.

[409] Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language* (New York: Columbus University Press, 1997), 53-73.

Kashouh, there is a "most likely *terminus post quem* for the appearance of a written,

Arabic translation of some portion of the Bible at a point in the middle of the seventh

century C.E."[410] The fact that there is evidence for a translation of the Bible into Arabic

prior to the writing of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* offers further evidence that he is

not working from oral sources and instead had access to some form of the text of

Matthew in Arabic. Further, it corroborates the possibility that, when he claimed he read

the four Gospels, al-Qāsim was speaking truthfully rather than just hyperbolically.

Although Lazarus-Yafeh has argued that "The evidence presented thus far seems to

indicate that Muslim authors until fairly recently did not use Arabic Bible translations on

their own, and had no easy access to such translations as existed among Jews and

Christians. They relied heavily on oral contacts,"[411] there seems to be no reason to require

mediation of the Bible through Jewish and Christian oral sources, particularly when there

is explicit mention by al-Qāsim that he read (*qaraʾa*) the Bible.

Further support for an early translation of the Bible into Arabic is the available

evidence from the *ḥadīth*. In David Cook's examination of this body of literature, he

concludes that there must have been some manner of Gospel translation–most likely the

Gospel of Matthew–from which eighth/ninth-century Muslims quoted and paraphrased

extensively.[412] Cook wonders then, "This raises the question […]: could there have been

an early Muslim translation of one or part of the Gospels?"[413] Al-Qāsim's extensive

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[410] Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic*, 117.

[411] Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, 121.

[412] David Cook, "New Testament Citations in the Ḥadīth Literature," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark Swanson, and David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 192.

[413] Ibid.

quotations from the Gospel of Matthew that are the subject of Chapter 8 in this dissertation support such a possibility, particularly since the version he provides is decidedly Islamic in its theology. Yet, the biblical quotations in the *ḥadīth* literature are limited and appear only in a scattered manner. Furthermore, there is no source named for the references, which leaves numerous questions unanswered. Many of the citations in the *ḥadīth* appear to have undergone extensive editing and alteration at some point prior to their inclusion, Cook surmising that this is the result of a Muslim translation of those parts of the Gospel of Matthew that were acceptable.[414] There are also numerous "quotations" of Jesus or Muḥammad in this literature that sound as though they could have come from the Gospels but most probably stem from apocryphal literature or stories incorporated as a result of growing Muslim-Christian interaction, the conversion of Christians to Islam, and a mutual respect for the stories and teachings of Jesus. According to Khalidi, incorporation of the sayings of Jesus from canonical and apocryphal sources also served as a means of filling out the limited ethical teachings present in the Qur'ān.[415]

Although the manuscript evidence indicates a translation of the Gospel into Arabic at the beginning of the ninth century, the accuracy with which many Muslim authors quoted the Bible in their respective works in the eighth and ninth centuries points to the possibility of a date earlier than that which basing our conclusion solely on the manuscript evidence permits. Looking specifically at al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* as an example, which was written around 815, we are presented with a version of the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew whose contents closely resemble the

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[414] Ibid., 204.

[415] Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*, Convergences (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 22.

canonical version apart from theologically motivated textual changes. It is likely then, that al-Qāsim had access to some Arabic translation of that portion of Matthew, as the extent and accuracy with which he quotes the Biblical text necessitates that he was not working from oral sources. His text also contains scattered verses from the Gospels of Luke and John that reveal knowledge of these books beyond the verses typically used by Muslim apologists to assert that Muḥammad was foretold in the Christian scriptures. In fact, the verses from the Gospels of Luke and John explicitly refer to Jesus as Son of God and al-Qāsim even mentions that he has knowledge of the four gospels (*al-anājīl al-arbaʿah*), rather than just "the Gospel" which would belie a more qurʾānic understanding of the Christian scriptures and not point to access to them.[416] Regarding the scriptural quotations in the works of Ibn Qutayba and ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī, both of whom use biblical proof-texts to demonstrate Muḥammad's prophethood, Schmidtke has demonstrated that despite their similarities, they are working from different translations of the Bible, although she does not offer a possible source.[417]

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[416] *al-Radd*, 321.15.

[417] Sabine Schmidtke, "The Muslim Reception of Biblical Materials: Ibn Qutayba and His *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa*," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, no. 3 (July 2011): 249-274. The study of Arabic Bible translations is a field still in its infancy, but is a necessary precursor to determining the provenance of biblical quotations in Muslim texts. Recent scholarship on Arabic versions of the Gospels and Pentateuch, by Hikmat Kashou and Ronny Vollandt respectively, might be put into the service of such endeavors. See Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels*; Ronny Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch: A Comparative Study of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Sources* (Berlin: Brill, 2015). While the study of sources for Muslim Bible quotations has been limited thus far, there have been a few noteworthy efforts thus far along these lines. See Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "An Arabic-Muslim Quotation of a Biblical Text: Ibn Kathīr's al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya and the Construction of the Ark of the Covenant," in *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage in Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I. at the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Rifaat Ebied and Herman Teule (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 263-279; Sabine Schmidtke, "The Muslim Reception of the Bible: al-Māwardī and his *Kitāb aʿlām an-nubuwwa*," in *Le Sacre Scritture e le loro interpretazioni*, ed. Carmela Baffioni et al. (Milan: Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, In press); Schmidtke, "The Muslim Reception of Biblical Materials: Ibn Qutayba and His *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa*."; Said Karoui, *Die Rezeption der Bibel in der frühislamischen Literatur: am Beispeil der Hauptwerke von Ibn Qutayba (gest. 276/889)* (Heidelberg: Seminar für Sprachen, 1997).

Griffith has also come to the conclusion that the late eighth century is the period

in which documentary evidence points to a Christian program of translating the Bible into

Arabic,[418] most likely as a result of Melkite endeavors for liturgical and apologetic

reasons.[419] Further evidence of the encroaching Arabic influence on Christian

communities in Palestine is evident in the Basel Roll of Charlemagne's Survey of the

Holy Land. McCormick draws attention to the use of the word "*alcuba,*" a transcription

of the Arabic word al-qubba (cf. "alcove"), to describe the dome above a tomb, and

Sebaste and Neapolis, two holy sites in Samaria, are no longer listed by their Greek

names but by their Arabic names, "Sabastia" and "Naboli," respectively.[420] Most

importantly, the survey records that in a Melkite church in honor of St. Mary on the

Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, there are a number of hermits and among them is "one

who sings the Psalms in Arabic."[421] Thus, by the late eighth/early ninth century, there is

an established presence of Arabic used in Christian contexts in Syria/Palestine, and more

importantly, the use of Arabic in the recitation of the Bible for liturgical purposes.

Based on the evidence available concerning the status of the Arabic translation of

the Bible, whether it is from the biblical manuscript tradition, *ḥadīth* literature, Muslim

biblical quotations, *testimonia* collections, or surveys of languages used in the

monasteries, I am inclined to agree with at least the minimum assertion of David Cook,

who concludes that by the middle of the second/eighth century

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[418] Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic," 151.

[419] Ibid., 128.

[420] Michael McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey of the Holy Land: Wealth, Personnel, and Buildings of a Mediterranean Church between Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2011), 140-141.

[421] Ibid., 207.

there was a Muslim translation of the Gospel of Matthew into Arabic, or at least of those parts which were not objectionable to the early Muslims. I think that the large number of citations indicating this Gospel, the redaction work done to make many of them acceptable, or even attaching them to the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad, and their eventual entrance into the much larger field of *ḥadīth* literature, point to this conclusion.[422]

Al-Qāsim's own work, which includes an islamicized version of the Gospel of Matthew, points to similar conclusions, and it is unfortunate that the extant manuscripts of his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* appear to have been damaged at some point, ending abruptly in the eighth chapter. Given the extent to which al-Qāsim quotes the Biblical scriptures, and that he does not do so in a piece-meal fashion or by way of theologically-motivated *testimonia* collections lends further credence to the likelihood of a Christian translation of the Gospels, or at least Matthew, by the middle of the eighth century at the latest that prefigures the version al-Qāsim is using. I am inclined to believe that al-Qāsim has access to more than just the Gospel of Matthew, and he claims as much himself. If we are to reject his claim and call him a liar on this point, one must wonder why he would have volunteered such information. His claim would have been immediately been recognized as false had there not been a translation of the Gospel available. Indeed, it is likely that al-Qāsim had access to a version of the Bible that had been previously translated into Arabic under Christian auspices.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is the product of a diverse set of circumstances: his family, religious affiliations, political relationships, location, inter-religious interactions, and access to Christian and Jewish religious, philosophical, and

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[422] Cook, "New Testament Citations in the Ḥadīth Literature," 204.

scriptural texts all in some manner contribute to the content and preservation of his work. While a closer analysis of the text's contents will be undertaken in the following chapter, it is evident that al-Qāsim and other Muslim polemicists of the eighth and ninth centuries were working within a milieu that included a diverse and complicated Christianity. Al-Qāsim is not only aware of these divisions, but his time in Egypt afforded him considerable opportunities to engage directly in debates with Christians as well as read their theological and philosophical works. Most importantly, his own testimony to having read the Gospel and Torah is given further credence by evidence that there was likely a translation of the Bible into Arabic by the middle of the eighth century. Finally, al-Qāsim's importance to the Zaydī community as its first systematizer of theology and jurisprudence led to his works being preserved and copied to an extent than might otherwise be the case. Regardless of whether he was an imam during his lifetime, later Zaydīs considered him to have been an imam and it is noteworthy that the putative leader of the Muslim community wrote a sustained polemical treatise against Christians.

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Chapter 4
AL-QĀSIM B. IBRĀHĪM'S *AL-RADD ʿALĀ AL-NAṢĀRĀ*:
MANUSCRIPTS, EDITIONS, AND OUTLINE

This chapter introduces al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* (*The Refutation of the Christians*). It is the earliest sustained Muslim polemical treatise against Christians extant and addresses issues that dominate the pages of even contemporary disputational literature between Muslims and Christians. Although there are no section breaks original to the treatise, I have divided it into the following four general sections[423] for the purposes of their analysis: (1) the discussion of God's transcendence and Jesus' humanity; (2) a summary of the Christian doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and atonement;[424] (3) the refutation of Christian doctrines; and (4) a heavily edited version of the Gospel of Matthew (chs.1-8) that conforms to the framework established in the first section. These four sections will each be examined separately (chapters five through eight respectively), but prior to their examination, it is necessary here to introduce the text. To that end, in this chapter I provide an overview of the available manuscripts and editions of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* followed by an outline of the argument in the text.

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[423] David Thomas divides the treatise into two sections, the first of which (304.1 – 314.8) consists of four subsections and the latter (314.8 – 331) consists of five. See David Thomas, "Christian Theologians and New Questions," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou, Mark Swanson, and David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 259-267.

[424] Al-Qāsim refers to the atonement as the "reason for the descent of the divine son."

4.1 EXTANT MANUSCRIPTS

There are five known, extant manuscripts of al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, all of which are of Yemenī provenance. As mentioned previously, the Zaydī imamate founded by the grandson of al-Qāsim persisted in Yemen until the twentieth century, thus ensuring the survival of a number of Zaydī works. Four of the manuscripts of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* are now housed in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan: MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C186 (c. 651/1253); MS Milan, Ambrosiana – D468 (c. 800/1400); MS Milan, Ambrosiana – F61 (c. 1080/1670); and MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C131 (c. 1092/1681).[425] These manuscripts were acquired by the Biblioteca Ambrosiana as part of a collection from Giuseppe Caprotti (d. 1919), an Italian merchant who lived in Yemen.[426] There is a fifth, earlier manuscript held at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin: MS Berlin, (c. 544/1149).[427] It was included in a series of manuscript purchases in 1884 and 1886 made by the Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin (now the Staatsbibliothek) after they had been brought back from Yemen by the explorer of South Arabia, Eduard Glaser (d. 1908).[428]

The differences between the manuscripts are minor. There are variations between them all, but these are limited primarily to specific words of a non-critical nature or the

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[425] See Oscar Löfgren and Renato Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, 3 vols. (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1981).

[426] See Eugenio Griffini, *Lista Manoscritti Arabi della Biblioteca Ambrosiana* (Roma: Roma Casa Editrice Italiana, 1911), vii-ix; David Hollenberg, Christoph Rauch, and Sabine Schmidtke, "Introduction," in *The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition*, ed. David Hollenberg, Christoph Rauch, and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 3; David Stam, *International Dictionary of Library Histories* (London: Routledge, 2016), 187.

[427] Glaser 101–Ahlwardt 4876 is also accessible online at <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/asset-viewer/glaser-101/fwH3xDHrUszzwg?hl=en&l.expanded-id=XAHXjhLpjNzuGA>.

[428] Hollenberg, Rauch, and Schmidtke, "Introduction," 3.

result of scribal errors; none of the manuscripts includes additional passages, excludes passages, or orders the text differently from the others. The original text of the *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* was likely longer than what remains, as it ends abruptly. The ending is assumed to be lost, barring any discoveries of additional manuscripts. The fact that al-Qāsim quotes from Matthew chapter 16 elsewhere in his text leads one to infer that he had at least an entire copy of Matthew to consult. Furthermore, there does not seem to be a plausible reason for him to have concluded his version of Matthew where it currently ends.[429] It is likely that sometime prior to the date of the earliest available manuscript (c. 1149), the end of the work was lost, and the textual ancestor of all the current manuscripts thus ended at the same point.[430] Following is a description of the available manuscripts.

[1] MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C186 is 222 folios, measuring 250mm by 175mm with somewhat worn red Moroccan leather binding and embossed in a gold frieze.[431] The text is in non-vocalized old *naskhī* script and mostly devoid of diacritical points. It bears

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[429] Regarding this, David Thomas notes that it is unclear whether al-Qāsim intended to "translate further Gospel passages, introduce more arguments, or sum up his attack. The condition of the series of translated passages left uncommented upon indicates that the work was left incomplete." Thomas, "Christian Theologians and New Questions," 266.

[430] One can remain hopeful that the remainder might be found at some later point though, as Daftary has noted the following: "[Zaydīs] have produced an impressive volume of religious literature over the centuries, which remains largely unpublished. Indeed it is estimated that currently there is in existence, in numerous private collections in Yaman, some 100,000 Zaydi manuscripts, many of which remain unknown to the scholarly world." Daftary, *A History of Shiʿi Islam*, 145. There always remains the possibility that more of the text will be discovered, particularly given the importance of al-Qāsim to the Zaydī community. There is a forthcoming catalogue entitled *Handbook of Muʿtazilite Works and Manuscripts* by G. Schwarb, S. Schmidtke, and D. Sklare that includes lists a considerable number of manuscripts held in both public and private libraries in Yemen that might shed light on additional manuscripts of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*.

[431] Di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i Cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm," 303. I was able to consult four of al-Qāsim's manuscripts in microfilm thanks to the generosity of the Medieval Institute at Notre Dame University, but any comments on the physical copies themselves come from descriptions in manuscript catalogues.

142

the date 12 Muharram 651 AH (14 March 1253 CE).[432] The copyist's name, Ibrāhīm b. Fulayḥ b. Asʿad al-Sharāʾī, appear on two different works in this compilation and, apart from folios 115-130, the handwriting is consistent throughout the codex and was thus likely done by the same copyist.[433] Di Matteo states that, "the entire codex contains works by the same author,"[434] but it actually contains a collection of writings from multiple authors including: al-Qāsim (d. 860), his grandson, al-Hādī (d. 911), ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidin (d. 713), and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765). It contains 21 texts purported to be by al-Qāsim spanning 129 folios, of which his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* comprises folios 78r to 86v. There does not seem to be a particular theme associated with the works in the compilation apart from the importance of the authors to the Zaydī community. In total, al-Qāsim's works comprise more than half of the compilation and are placed first.

[2] MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C131 is 167 folios, measuring 294mm by 207mm.[435] The front binding is Moroccan brown leather on the edges impressed with white friezes in the middle, while the back is of somewhat newer red Moroccan leather.[436] The text is in non-vocalized *naskhī* script with limited diacritical marks. Folio 2r mentions that the MS was purchased in Jumādā I 1318 (August – September 1900 CE) by Muḥammad Ḥasan and sold to Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ Ḥāmid al-Unsi in Jumādā I 1321 AH (July – August, 1903 CE). A note on folio 167r notes that it was copied by Ṣāliḥ b. Muḥammadī b. Rizq [?] b. Nāṣir b. Lāʿī al-Zaidī on 12 Shaʿbān 1092 AH (27 August

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[432] Griffini, *Lista Manoscritti*, 297.

[433] Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, II: 219.

[434] *"L'intero codice contiene opere dello stesso autore."* al-Radd, 303.

[435] Ibid.; Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, II:185.

[436] Di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i Cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm," 303.

1681 CE).[437] The codex is a compilation of works from al-Qāsim and his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is on folios 86v – 97v.

[3] MS Milan, Ambrosiana – F61 is 339 folios, although only folios 1r through 296r are numbered. It measures 208mm by 154mm and is written in *naskhī* script that is almost fully vowelled. The binding is Moroccan red leather embossed in the center with adornments.[438] The text is a compilation of works by al-Qāsim under the name *Kitāb fīhi majmūʿat al-imām al-fāḍil turjumān al-dīn al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm […],* and Di Matteo notes that on the title page there are biographical details of al-Qāsim from a work entitled *Kanz al-akhbār*, including miracles he was supposed to have performed, as well as his nickname, "The Interpreter of Eloquence," on account of his vast knowledge.[439] There is a colophon on 331v that provides the copyist, Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Jashim and the year it was copied, 1081/1670.[440] The last folio includes the name of the owner of the codex, ʿĀṭif b. Mʿawm b. ʿĀṭif al-Faḍlī al-Unsi, and the date, 2 Rabīʿa II 1083 AH (28 July 1672 CE), which might be the date of sale. The entire codex, save one work, is by al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. His *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is on folios 100r – 125v.[441]

[4] MS Milan, Ambrosiana – D468 is 342 folios, although only the first 210 folios are numbered. It measures 175mm by 134mm and is written in mostly unvowelled *naskhī* script that only partially has diacritical marks. It is an old manuscript; Löfgren and Traini

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[437] See ibid., 304.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Ibid.

[440] Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, IV:25-26.

[441] Madelung*,* s.v. ʺal-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm,ʺ in *CMR1*, 542.

date it to the 8th/14th century.[442] The binding is Moroccan red leather backed by
cardboard.[443] The codex was at some point disassembled, reassembled, and renumbered
by someone unfamiliar with the text, as al-Qāsim's *al-Radd* was at one point scattered
throughout the manuscript. Di Matteo pieced together the proper order, noting that "folios
3r – 4v would be the beginning, after which follows folios 138r – 150v, then folio 1 recto
and verso, and finally folios 151r – 163v."[444] It has since been reordered and re-
numbered, with the *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* now found on folios 136-164.[445]

[5] The earliest known manuscript of the *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is MS
Berlin, Glaser 101– Ahldwardt 4876, which was copied in 544/1149 and is housed in the
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.[446] It is contained in a compilation entitled *Kitāb majmūʿ min
kutub al-imām al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan
ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib yashtamilu ʿalā tisʿat ʿashar kitāb min kutubihi wa-yajmaʿu ayḍan
fuṣūl min kalāmihi.*[447] There are a total of 19 works contained in the compilation as well
as some short paragraphs ascribed to al-Qāsim.[448] The *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is on folios
27v-38r. The manuscript has been well preserved, written in dense *naskhī* script with
most diacritical marks as well as a significant number of short vowels and case endings.

[442] Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, II:364.

[443] Di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i Cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm," 304.

[444] Ibid. "I ff. 3r – 4v sarebbero l'inizio, a cui dovrebbero seguire I ff. 138r – 150v, poi il f. 1 r. e v. ed infine I ff. 151r – 163v."

[445] Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, II: 365. The manuscript I consulted on microfilm had not been re-numbered and reordered and any references to the page numbering of this particular manuscript in this dissertation refers to the numbering and ordering of folios noted by Di Matteo.

[446] al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, MS Berlin, Glaser 101 – Ahldwardt 4876.

[447] Ibid., 1r.

[448] Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis der arabischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin: A. Asher & Co., 1892), 290-291.

While the manuscript tradition for al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is evidence for the importance of al-Qāsim to the Zaydī community and their interest in preserving his scholarly works, there is no evidence that I have been able to find that this particular work was used or quoted by later Zaydī scholars in their own texts. And, likely because of al-Qāsim's sectarianism, there is no remaining evidence that this text ever made an impact outside the Zaydī community. There is also no mention of it by other Muslim polemicists or obvious usage of al-Qāsim's work in their own, despite the similar themes and arguments they all employ. Finally, there are no known responses to it by Christian authors. It appears to have been a text copied for the purposes of the Zaydī community that did not have outside circulation and it is only due to his status within the Zaydī community as an imam that resulted in the treatise being copied and preserved. Presumably, when he wrote it, it was intended for a wider Muslim audience that, as it turned out, did not accept al-Qāsim as the Imam like his supporters did. Thus, a wider audience for the text never materialized, though al-Qāsim's status within the Zaydī community ensured the text's survival.

4.2 TEXTUAL DIVISION

There is a feature in three of the manuscripts of al-Qāsim's *Radd ʿalā al-naṣ* that has led to confusion over the composition of the text. In MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C131 and D468, and MS Berlin, Glaser 101 – Ahlwardt 4876, there is evidence of a division between what I consider to be the first and second sections of the text. That is, as the treatise transitions from al-Qāsim's argument regarding God's dissimilarity to creation

and Jesus' humanity to his summary of Christian doctrines, there is a noticeable division mark in three of the MSS.

In MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C131, folio 90v has a line written larger and bolder than the rest of the text that reads, *hādhā kitāb mā ḥaddadat al-naṣārā min qawlihā* (This is the book of what the Christians defined of their teaching).[449] Based upon this, Griffini, Löfgren/Traini and Sezgin list a work with this name as a separate text of al-Qāsim in this manuscript compilation in their respective catalogues.[450] However, it seems unlikely that it was considered a separate text by the copyists as it is not set off by any other markings as can be observed at the beginnings of the rest of the separate texts in this particular codex (e.g., author's name, stylistic script, *basmallāh*). The nature of the script is, however, clearly meant to draw attention and appears to have been considered as a natural division within the text and summary statement of section that immediately follows.

MS Milan, Ambrosiana – D468 also draws attention to the statement, "*hādhā kitāb mā ḥaddadat al-naṣārā min qawlihā*" on folio 147r,[451] although the manner in which the copyist embellished this phrase is different than in C131. Instead of larger or bolder handwriting, the copyist extended the "b" in *kitāb* under the entirety of the phrase. Again, there are no other indications that this phrase should be considered the beginning of a separate text (e.g., author's name, stylistic script, *basmallāh*) but likely was

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[449] al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C131, 90v.

[450] Griffini, *Lista Manoscritti*, 605; Löfgren and Traini, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, II:186; Sezgin, *GAS*, I:562.

[451] al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, MS Milan, Ambrosiana – D468, 147r.

considered the beginning of a new section and functions in this MS as a chapter title/division.

MS Berlin, Glaser 101 – Ahlwardt 4876 also divides the text at this point, although the nature of the divide is more drastic than in the Ambrosiana MSS. While both MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C131 and D468 adjusted the handwriting in different ways to draw attention to the line, the Berlin MS has a break of two empty lines, then centers the following on two lines: "*hadhā kitāb mā ḥaddadat al-naṣārā min qawlihā / qad istaqṣaynā fīhi jāmiʿ uṣūlihā.*[452] There is a *hāʾ* denoting *intahā* (conclusion) that is placed at the end of the line before this break as well. It is likely these factors that led Sezgin to list it as a separate text,[453] while Ahlwardt notes the division in his catalogue but does not consider it a separate work entirely.[454] While this break is obviously more drastic than in either of the Ambrosiana MSS, it still does not seem that it should be considered a separate text. Again, there are no other stylistic markings that denote the beginning of a text, no standard *basmallāh,* nor does the name of the author appear (as it does at the beginnings of all the other texts). Further, the *hāʾ* for *intahā* simply denotes the end of a sentence/rhyme and is used throughout this MS for that purpose.

Ultimately, the attention drawn to this line by three of the copyists is useful, although I do not consider that the conclusion drawn by Griffini, Sezgin, and Löfgren/Traini that the division begins a new text to be likely. Taking into consideration the manner in which separate texts are introduced throughout the respective MSS (as well

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[452] al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā,* MS Berlin, Glaser 101 – Ahldwardt 4876, 31v.

[453] Sezgin transliterates the work as"*K. mā haddadat an-Naṣārā min qaulihā qad istaḥsaina fīhi ǧamīʿ uṣūlihā.*" Sezgin, *GAS,* I:562. Presumably, "*istaḥsaina*" should instead be *"istaqṣayna."*

[454] Ahlwardt, *arabischen Handschriften,* 290.

as concluded) the likelihood that they would have been so inconspicuous with the beginning of this particular text as well as the conclusions of the texts immediately preceding them is highly unlikely. Dividing the text in this manner also does not take into account the argument al-Qāsim makes throughout the text and the natural way in which the second section logically follows from the first. Furthermore, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* in its entirety (i.e., all four sections) is included in codices that consist of works by or attributed to al-Qāsim. Furthermore, the treatises in these codices do not appear in the same order.[455] Only one of the codices containing the treatise (MS Ambrosiana, Milan – C186) includes works by other Zaydī authors, and al-Qāsim's works are grouped together at the beginning of the treatise. It is most plausible that the division should not be considered as a division between separate texts, and furthermore, both sections are likely original to al-Qāsim due to the logical consistency between the sections of the work as well as the continued use of rhymed prose throughout the entire treatise.

4.3 EDITIONS

An edition of al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* was first produced in 1922 by the Italian scholar, Ignazio di Matteo in the journal *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*.[456] He included a brief summary of the contents and description of the four manuscripts from which he produced his edition:[457] MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C186 (c. 651/1253); MS Milan, Ambrosiana – C131 (c. 1092/1681); MS Milan, Ambrosiana – F61

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[455] See Appendix A.

[456] Di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i Cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm," 301-364.

[457] He was unable to obtain the fifth and earliest manuscript, MS Berlin, Glaser 101– Ahldwardt 4876, that was in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin for the preparation of his edition.

(c. 1083/1672); and MS Milan, Ambrosiana – D468 (c. 800/1400). He prepared his

edition shortly after the First World War, noting that he accessed them in the Vatican

Library because Pope Benedict XV (d. 1922) had given the Arabic and Greek

manuscripts of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana "polite and kind asylum [in the Vatican

Library], in order to secure them against possible damages during the war."[458] Di

Matteo's edition was prepared using all four Ambrosiana manuscripts, without preference

for any one of them in particular. He notes that there are numerous variations throughout

the text and takes notes of where the manuscripts differ from each other throughout his

edition in the footnotes. He notes that he does keep account of variations in the

manuscripts that are due to the inexperience or carelessness of the scribes who prepared

the respective manuscripts.[459] His Arabic edition of the text is on pages 304-331,

followed by an Italian translation on pages 332-364. He seems to follow a policy of

limited intervention when it comes to his edition; he does not divide the text into

paragraphs or sections and the only punctuation he adds are periods at the end of each

rhyme.[460] I have used his edition in the preparation of this study and any page and line

numbers that reference al-Qāsim's text will reference the Di Matteo edition unless

otherwise noted.

There are two recent editions of the text, neither of which appears with the

regularity of Di Matteo's edition as a source for al-Qāsim's text in recent scholarly

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[458] Di Matteo, "Confutazione contro i Cristiani dello Zaydita al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm," 303. "Cortese e benigno asilo, per ternerli al sicuro da possibili danni nel periodo della guerra."

[459] Ibid., 304.

[460] His divisions seem to loosely coincide with those marked with "*intahā*" in MS Berlin, Glaser 101– Ahldwardt 4876, despite Di Matteo not having had access to that manuscript. Di Matteo will occasionally divide the rhyme at different points from the Berlin manuscript, but the two are generally consistent.

works. The first, edited by Imām Ḥanafī ʿAbd Allāh,[461] is more intrusive in his updating

of the text than is evident in Di Matteo's edition. His footnotes point to instances of

modernization of words, but he does not provide information on where the different

manuscripts differ from each other. Furthermore, he adds paragraph breaks, divides the

text into a number of sections that are not original to the treatise, and modernizes the

punctuation. While in some ways it makes the text more readable, the divisions tend to

distract from the nature of al-Qāsim's rhymed-prose and his punctuation forces a

particular reading. There is another edition produced in 2001 by ʿAbd al-Karīm Aḥmad

Jadabān included as part of a two-volume edition of the works of al-Qāsim.[462] He used a

number of manuscripts in the preparation of his edition, although it is similar to Imām

Ḥanafī's edition in the modernized punctuation and the addition of section and chapter

headings. A useful feature, however, are his extended footnotes, particularly in regard to

his comparison of al-Qāsim's version of biblical quotations to the Christian version.

<center>4.4 OUTLINE OF THE TREATISE</center>

While I will analyze each section in detail in the following chapters, it is easier to

get an overview of al-Qāsim's argument in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* as well as a better

sense of the flow of the text in outline form. The sections into which I have divided the

text are not original, although, as noted above, the division between sections one and two

appears in three of the manuscripts. Still, there appear to be natural divisions within the

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[461] al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, ed. Imām Ḥanafī ʿAbd Allāh (Cairo: Dār al-Afāq al-ʿArabiyyah, 2000).

[462] ʿAbd al-Karīm Aḥmad Jadabān, *Majmūʿ kutub wa-rasāʾil li-l-imām al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Rassī*, 2 vols. (Ṣanʿāʾ: 2001), 1:387-442.

<center>151</center>

text that I have attempted to delineate in the outline below in order to better understand

the text as a complete work. Page and line numbers correspond to the Di Matteo edition.

Section I: God's transcendence and Jesus' humanity (304.1 – 314.8)
    a. A generated being is similar to its progenitor, and vice versa.
        i. God cannot be a source of anything because his offspring would be equal to him.
        ii. Divinity is possible only for one being.
        iii. Jesus' humanity precludes his divinity.
            1. He is human and has limitations.
            2. If Jesus' ancestors had not existed, he would not exist.
            3. Christians differentiate between Jesus and his human ancestors in essence, despite his being equal with them in essence (*dhāt*).
            4. Jesus denies claiming divinity. (Q. 5:116)
            5. Jesus claims he is a servant of God, just like the rest of humanity. (Q. 5:117).
            6. Muḥammad claims that if Jesus were God's son, he would worship him. (Q 43:81)
        iv. If Jesus was a lord and god, then his mother would have what he has in essence.
            1. If she lacks what he has, then she cannot be his mother.
            2. But, she is his mother. Therefore:
                a. His mother is divine if he is.
              Or,
                b. He is not divine since she is not divine.
    b. There are no differences between Jesus and humanity.
        i. He ate and drank.
        ii. He suffered.
        iii. He is mentioned in a genealogy with Mary.
        iv. Christians do not deny that he was born to Mary
        v. "The Messiah son of Mary is nothing but a Messenger." (Q. 5:75)
        vi. Jesus is "a man like yourselves." (Q. 23:34)
    c. Polytheistic beliefs are compared to Christianity.
        i. Polytheists' teachings
            1. The seven planets are angels of God.
            2. There are gods with God.
            3. God created everything through mediators.
        ii. Christians' teachings
            1. God created things by his son.
            2. God preserves and manages things by his spirit.
            3. The power to create is different than the power to sustain and manage.
            4. God did not create everything by himself.

      iii. Thus, Christians' and Polytheists' doctrines about God are similar

d. Divinity cannot be shared
      i. There cannot be two Gods, because they each would not possess the power to destroy the other.
      ii. If they did possess that power, they would be weak since they would be able to destroy each other.
      iii. If either of them has limitations, he would not be a creator or sustainer to anything.

e. God has no equal.
      i. He does not take a companion.
      ii. He does not have a son.
      iii. He is the first, the eternal, with no origin and no sending forth.
      iv. Nothing in creation is his equal.

f. Everything other than God is a creation.
      i. It exists because of God.
      ii. It is a creation that began after non-existence.
      iii. It is not an associate with God's power or eternality.
      iv. It is deficient, embodied, limited, and countable.
      v. It is made of diverse parts, attributes (*nuʿūt*), and properties (*ṣifāt*).

g. God is unique.
      i. He is one God. (Q. 112:1)
      ii. He has no begetter and does not beget. (112:3)
      iii. He is everlasting. (Q. 112:2)
      iv. He is Lord of heavens and earth and no one has a name like God. (Q. 19:65)
      v. There is nothing like him. (Q. 42:11)
      vi. Sight does not perceive him, but he perceives the sight. (Q. 6:103)
      vii. He does not beget and he is not begotten, there is no equal to him. (Qur'ān 112:3-4)
      viii. One who is eternal cannot beget or be begotten.

h. Proofs against what the Christians and others teach about God
      i. They say God took a son. (Qur'ān 2:116)
         1. Response: All of creation is obedient to God. (Qur'ān 2:116-117)
      ii. They ascribe sons and daughters to God. (Qur'ān 6:103)
         1. Response: 'Ascribe' means that they fabricate lies about God.
         2. Response: 'May he be praised' means that he is exalted above what they say about him taking a son.
      iii. The most inaccessible and distant being cannot be a father or born.
      iv. When they say God 'took' a son, that one he 'took' is 'created.'
      v. A father is necessarily like his offspring.
         1. In essence (*dhāt*)
         2. In nature (*ṭabīʿa*)
         3. In characteristics/properties (*khāṣṣiyya*)
         4. In limitations/definitions (*ḥudūd*)

      vi. God is the creator.
          1. Jesus' existence is because of God.
          2. God created Jesus without effort when he desired to.
          3. Everything is in obedience to God. (Qur'ān 30:26)
  i. Christians' teaching about God is repulsive and impossible.
      i. One who is adopted cannot be eternal.
      ii. Christians make a created being like God.
      iii. They will encounter the day they were promised- i.e., Judgment Day. (Qur'ān 43:83)
      iv. They were serving Jinn. (Qur'ān 34:40-41)
      v. Saying God has a son is hideous. (Qur'ān 19:89-95)
      vi. Christians make the names "father" and "son" meaningless.
          1. If the son is not like a son, then the name "son" is meaningless.
          2. If the father is not like a father, than the name "father" is meaningless.

Section II: Defining the *Naṣārā* according to their own doctrines (314.8 – 318.13)
  a. Doctrine of the Trinity
      i. Agreed by all Christians
      ii. God is three in one.
          1. Analogy of the sun
          2. Analogy from a person
  b. Doctrine of the Incarnation
      i. According to the Rūm
      ii. According to the Jacobites
      iii. According to the Nestorians
  c. Doctrine of the Atonement

Section III: Reconsidering the terms "Father" and "Son" (318.13 – 324.10)
  a. What kind of names are "Father" and "Son"? Are they--
      i. Natural/Essential/Substantial (*ṭabīʿiyyah/dhātiyyah/jawhariyyah*)
      ii. Personal/Hypostatic (*shakhṣiyyah/uqnūmiyyah*)
      iii. Accidental/Temporal (*ʿaraḍiyyah/ḥādithah*)
      iv. "Father" and "son" cannot be natural or essential names because they are given as a result of an event, i.e., the birth of a son.
  b. Christians claim that Jesus is God and the son of God, based on the books they possess
      i. These books were transmitted by Jews.
      ii. Christians do not consider the Jews to be trustworthy.
      iii. Therefore: The transmission of the Bible is suspect.
  c. Testimony of five witnesses from the Gospels about Jesus
      i. Witness 1: God
      ii. Witness 2: Angels of God
      iii. Witness 3: Jesus
      iv. Witness 4: Jesus' mother and father

  v. Witness 5: Disciples
 d. Proof from the Gospels against God's fatherhood and Jesus' divine sonship
   i. Jesus' father is David. (Matt. 1:1)
   ii. Jesus states disciples are sons of God. (no specific reference)
   iii. Jesus states that the disciples are his brothers. (no specific reference)
   iv. Mary states Jesus is the son of Joseph (Luke 2:48)
   v. Philip states Jesus is the son of Joseph (John 1:45)
   vi. John considers fatherhood and sonship as metaphorical. (John 1:12-13, 16)
   vii. Angels tell Mary she will give birth to a son, not a son of God. (Luke 1:31)
   viii. Angels tell Joseph that Jesus is from the Spirit of God and do not call him the Son of God. (Matt. 1:19-21)
 e. Christians claim that-
   i. God says of Jesus, "This is my beloved and pure son." (Matt. 3:17 or Mark 9:7)
   ii. Peter said to Jesus, "You are truly the son of God." (Matt. 16:16)
   iii. Despite this, none of the messengers or angels worshipped Jesus as divine.
 f. There are other interpretations for "father" and "son."
   i. One who is adopted is called a son.
   ii. One who is beloved is called a son.
   iii. Pupils are called "son" by their teacher.
   iv. Teachers are called "father" by their pupils.
   v. Jesus' references to God as father do not mean he was his actual father.
   vi. Jesus considers "father" and "son" to be metaphorical and related to obedience. (John 8)
    1. God is a father to those who obey him.
    2. Satan is a father to those who obey him.

Section IV: Al-Qāsim's version of the Gospel of Matthew (324.10 – 331.22)

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Chapter 5
GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE AND JESUS' HUMANITY:
SECTION ONE OF *AL-RADD ʿALĀ AL-NAṢĀRĀ*

In this chapter, I examine the first section of al-Qāsim's treatise (304.1 – 314.8), which provides the underlying framework that supports his entire work – that God is completely dissimilar to all creation. Upon that foundation, al-Qāsim builds further, arguing that similarity of essence and being between the progenitor and the generated being is necessary. As a result, Jesus' humanity precludes his divinity because his mother was not divine. Further, al-Qāsim demonstrates that the Qur'ān is the criterion by which the respective natures of Jesus and God are to be measured. While al-Qāsim does not directly address scriptural falsification in this section, this foundation merits consideration because the version of the Gospel he brings forward in the final section of the text is better understood as the culmination of his argument throughout the text.

There are two main ideas that characterize the first section of al-Qāsim's treatise: the transcendence of God and the humanity of Jesus. Al-Qāsim weaves his argument regarding these two ideas throughout this entire section without covering them in distinct sections. He includes repeated references to the Qur'ān, which often serve as the scriptural support for both al-Qāsim's apologetic for Islam as well as his polemic against

Christianity.[463] Apologetic and polemic often work in tandem throughout this treatise as al-Qāsim argues that not only does Islam (and the Qurʾān in particular) support what he considers to be a rational understanding of the nature of God, but also that Christian teachings directly contravene those rational and scriptural principles.

Jesus' humanity is critical to al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. It features prominently in his articulation of Christian doctrinal positions, especially in his refutation of Christianity, and is the driving principle behind his presentation of the chapters from the Gospel of Matthew that appear at the end of his treatise. In the treatise itself, he uses both rationalistic argumentation and select verses from the Qurʾān to argue that the humanity of Jesus precludes his divinity. Al-Qāsim's method is consistent with *kalām*, "that peculiarly Islamic form of theology and religious apologetics that sought to defend religious dogma with rational argumentation."[464]

Although the Trinity is regularly the focus of Muslim polemical literature against Christianity, the Incarnation is similarly important. These doctrines depend on the particular nature of Jesus and how he fits within this theological scheme; thus, the question of who Jesus is becomes the primary focus of al-Qāsim's polemic against Christianity. Looking beyond the confines of al-Qāsim's treatise, Awad has noted that in much of the Muslim-Christian disputational literature during the early ʿAbbāsid period that, "Christological issues were more problematic, and far more causative of a religious

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[463] For a chart with all of the citations from the Qurʾān in al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* see Appendix B.

[464] Paul Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 25.

rift, than issues related to questions of God's oneness and triunity."[465] In al-Qāsim's treatise the question of Jesus' identity informs much of the text as he seeks to confront the Christian portrayal of him with his portrayal in the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān's challenge to the Christian portrayal of Jesus can be divided into two general categories: the first challenges any sort of tritheistic or trinitarian understanding of Jesus' association with God and includes Q. 4:171, 5:73, and 5:116; the second denies his divine sonship and includes Q. 5:72, 5:75, 19:35, 19:88-93, 6:101, 9:30, and 112:1-4. In light of these references, Khalidi mentions that, "He [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."[466] Indeed, it is obvious that these verses are purposely expressed to confront the claims of Christians about Jesus, although the manner in which these claims are reformulated in the Qur'ān does not always align with a specific Christian formulation, particularly in regard to the persons of the Trinity and the nature of Jesus' sonship. Awad has noted that

> the Qur'an does not reject the theology of Jesus Christ altogether, but develops its own, particular 'Christology,' so to speak, and sets it over against the Christian one. If, with regard to the Trinity, Muslims were looking for Christian explanations of what they (the Muslims) did not fully grasp, with regard to the theology about Jesus Christ Muslims reacted against Christians, adopting the attitude of those who *alone* understood and upheld *the* accurate and true theology about the prophet of the Christians. Far from an attempt at real rapprochement and inter-confessional meeting, the Christian and Muslim *mutakallims*' encounters on the questions of Christology demonstrate a dismal collision between the Christians' 'Jesus the Son of God' and the Muslims' 'Īsā b. Maryam.[467]

The message of the Qur'ān states most clearly against Christians' claims that Jesus is not

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[465] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 268.

[466] Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*, 12.

[467] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 269.

the Son of God, he is not God, and he is not part of any Trinity or tritheistic formulation.[468]

While I abstain from wading into the debate between Madelung and Abrahamov over the extent of al-Qāsim's affiliation with the Muʿtazilah, it is worth noting that his approach to this topic follows a method similar to that of the Muʿtazilah. Ultimately, his argument begins with an appeal to reason and rationalistic argumentation, and the Qur'ān is used as scriptural confirmation of the conclusion. While the Qur'ān's portrayal of God and Jesus are indispensible to al-Qāsim's argument against Christianity, he does not lead his argument with citations from the Qur'ān to make his case. Rather, he emphasizes reasonableness of the Qur'ān's statements about God and Jesus. Often, however rational argumentation precedes scriptural proofs from the Qur'ān.

Al-Qāsim is writing at a time when rationalism permeated the disputations between Muslims and Christians and it is no surprise that he leads with a method that would be familiar before demonstrating how his conclusions are supported by the Qur'ān. While there are no formal logical syllogisms in al-Qāsim's treatise, there is a clear reliance on rationalistic argumentation, a method that would have been effective for both Muslim and Christian audiences. In using such a method, al-Qāsim establishes a foundation of rationalistic argumentation upon which both Christians and Muslims would agree. In particular, al-Qāsim's acquaintance with proponents of *kalām* and Christians who were engaged in debate would have meant such methods of argumentation were familiar to him. After arguing along those lines, al-Qāsim demonstrates that the Qur'ān

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[468] For an overview of the doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in the Qur'ān, see David Thomas, s.v. "Trinity," in *EQ*; David Thomas, s.v. "Tathlīth," in *EI²*.

supports such conclusions he has reached using rational argumentation. Rather than argue

against Christians using strictly the Qur'ān, the authority of which they would not have

granted, al-Qāsim attempts to show them the veracity of the Qur'ān only after he has

presented his position with rational argumentation.

5.1 SIMILARITY BETWEEN A ROOT AND ITS BRANCHES

In the opening lines of his treatise, al-Qāsim provides a summary statement that

lays the foundations for his entire polemic against the Christians. After the standard

basmalah that introduces nearly every work by a Muslim author in this period, al-Qāsim

begins:

> Praise be to God who has not ceased, and does not cease. He has had majesty and
> exaltation since the beginning. [He is] free from every change, cessation,
> alteration, movement and transition, or extinction or transformation, exalted
> above being a fundamental source to anything or one of the elements of
> everything, in which case he would be like one of them.[469]

This initial statement by al-Qāsim is in line with the concerns of other ninth-century

Muslim polemicists to refute the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation because it was

those doctrines that most directly impinged on God's *tawḥīd*.[470] God cannot change; he

can neither be related to anything nor can he be a source to something, and in al-Qāsim's

opening statement, he presents the focal point of his argument and an opening shot aimed

squarely at the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation.

Al-Qāsim is focused intently on preserving God's divine unicity, and he

demonstrates this fundamental principle of his beliefs in a brief "Zaydī creed" attributed

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[469] *al-Radd*, 304.2 – 305.1.

[470] See Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 18.

to him, which is referred to as his *Khamsat al-uṣūl*.[471] This treatise outlines five

principles of the faith, the first of which begins, "God is one God. There is nothing like

him. He is the Creator of all things."[472] This statement is fundamental to understanding

the approach of al-Qāsim. Even further, Madelung has noted that, "Central to al-Qāsim's

theology is the concept that God is absolutely different from everything created. He even

describes this dissimilarity as the basic attribute of God in regard to existence and

essence."[473] While Madelung is describing the work of al-Qāsim in general, God's

dissimilarity is central to his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* and is the foundation for his

argument against the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. Indeed, one might

consider the underlying theme of God's dissimilarity to creation throughout al-Qāsim's

œuvre to be the driving principle for his polemic against Christians.

Al-Qāsim begins his arguments for God's dissimilarity to all created things by

examining the repercussions of God being united with humanity. He explains what

generation entails and why God being a part of the process humanity undergoes would be

a theological absurdity and make God equal to man. He notes this process includes a

lineage and growth from something smaller into something more developed and larger,

and the theological problems inherent in God growing from something deficient since

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[471] An Arabic edition was published in Eugenio Griffini, "Lista dei Manoscritti Arabi Nuovo Fondo della Biblioteca Ambrosiana di Milano," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 7, no. 3 (1917): 605. There is a German translation in Madelung, *Der Imam*, 104. There is a French translation in Daniel Gimaret, "Les *Uṣūl al-Khamsa* du Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār," *Annales Islamologiques* XV (1979): 67.

[472] Griffini, "Lista dei Manoscritti Arabi Nuovo Fondo della Biblioteca Ambrosiana di Milano," 605.

[473] Madelung, "al-Qāsim and Christian Theology," 38.

"others would be to him as an equal" (ʿāda ghayruhu lahu niddan).[474] Al-Qāsim also

addresses this issue elsewhere in his works; Abrahamov notes that

> Al-Qāsim proves God's unlikeness to any thing by saying that God is eternal
> whereas things are temporary. According to him, God cannot be a body or like a
> body because any body is formed (muṣawwar), limited (maḥdūd) and composed
> (murakkab), and there is no form without a former and no composed thing
> without one who composes and since God forms and composes, He cannot be
> formed and composed.[475]

Also, Abrahamov notes that, in al-Qāsim's *Kitāb al-dalīl al-ṣaghīr* he

> faces a question of supposedly a Shīʿite Mutakallim to the effect that 'if you claim
> that God is a thing unlike other things, you cannot deny that He is a body unlike
> other bodies.' Al-Qāsim answers this argument by stating that each body has
> dimensions and parts. Whatever has dimensions is created, and whatever is
> created is unable, while inability cannot be attributed to the Creator. If God were a
> body, He would have qualities, while the word 'thing' does not denote qualities
> but only existence; it applies to everything existent.[476]

The idea of composition, and a multiplicity of parts is problematic within al-Qāsim's

conception of God's nature because it not only calls into question God's unique oneness,

but also because he considers a body (which is necessarily a multiplicity of parts) to be

incompatible with divinity.

Others take up a similar argument, notably ʿAbd al- Jabbār (d. 1025) in his

chapter on Divine Unicity in his *Kitāb al-uṣūl al-khamsa*.[477] He writes,

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[474] *al-Radd*, 305.3.

[475] Abrahamov, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, 8-9; Abrahamov, *On the Proof of God's Existence*, 26.

[476] Abrahamov, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, 13.

[477] There is a link between al-Qāsim's *Khamsat al-uṣūl* and ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *Uṣūl al-khamsa* that deserves mention. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's text is potentially based on al-Qāsim's text or is a completed version of Ibn Khallād's (flourished second half of the 10th century) unfinished *Kitāb al-uṣūl*. Ibn Khallād's text generated three commentaries, one of which was by the Zaydī Imām Abū Ṭālib Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq (d. 1033). See Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, "The Zaydī Reception of Ibn Khallād's *Kitāb al-uṣūl:* The *Taʿlīq* of Abū Ṭāhir b. ʿAlī al-Ṣaffār," *Journal Asiatique* 298, no. 2 (2010): 275-302, esp. 281 ff; Camilla Adang, Wilferd Madelung, and Sabine Schmidtke, *Baṣran Muʿtazilite Theology: Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. Khallād's Kitāb al-Uṣūl and its Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). Al-

Then if it is asked: 'What is the proof that He is self-sufficient (*ghanī*) and that it is impossible for Him to be in need?' Say to him: 'Because one for whom pleasure, benefit and desire are possible must be [in] a physical body for which increase and decrease are possible. God is not a body. Therefore He must be self-sufficient.'[478]

Al-Qāsim and others argued that God cannot change, and union of any kind with humanity necessitates change because humans are limited and go through a process of development and change (increase and decrease), and, "whatever may be increased will never be perfect, for it may be decreased. Whatever may be decreased may also perish, and it is always incomplete with regard to the attribute of perfection."[479] Thus, Christian doctrines of Jesus' divine sonship contravene logical arguments for God's self-sufficiency. He writes, "If he was a source (*aṣl*) and an origin (*maḥtid*) to something, this would abolish divinity (*ilāhiyyah*) and lordship (*rubūbiyyah*) and be the cessation of

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Nāṭiq wrote a biography on the Zaydī Imams, including al-Qāsim, and was familiar with his work (see above, Chapter 3.1). Ibn Khallād's *Kitāb al-uṣūl* in some ways resembles al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* in that it contains "proofs of the contingent nature of the world and the existence and character of the Originator, leading on to refutations of groups that held opposing views," and "juxtaposes these refutations with arguments for the being of God." Thomas considers the purpose of the refutations was, "at least in part, to demonstrate the strength and correctness of Islamic, and Muʿtazilī, doctrines by exposing the flaws and weaknesses in rival versions. The refutation of the Christians […] presumably comprised arguments against the Trinity and Incarnation], which "attests to the way in which, among Muʿtazīī theologians, the two key Christian doctrines were increasingly regarded as illustrations of the unsustainability of alternatives to their own radical form of monotheism. This shows how Christian doctrines were increasingly employed by Muslims in order to demonstrate the superiority of their own doctrines as much as to prove the incoherence of Christian teachings." David Thomas, s.v. "Ibn Khallād," *CMR2*, 277-279. Gimaret has previously argued that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *Uṣūl al-khamsa* has nothing to do with either the *Uṣūl* of al-Qāsim (against Madelung's contention in Madelung, *Der Imam*, 104-152.) nor that of Ibn Khallād (as Thomas has more recently considered), although the case Gimaret builds appears to be based on the difference between the content of al-Qāsim's text, which does not overlap directly with that of ʿAbd al-Jabbār in regard to the final two principles of the standard Muʿtazilī "Five Principles". See Gimaret, "Les *Uṣūl al-Khamsa* du Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār," 47-98. While Gimaret builds a convincing case that the source for ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *Uṣūl al-khamsa* is not al-Qāsim's *Khamsat al-uṣūl*, the similarities between the two texts, as well as the known connections between some of the parties involved, leaves open the possibility that ʿAbd al-Jabbār might have been familiar with al-Qāsim's text, while still producing a unique treatise.

[478] Quoted in translation in Martin, Woodward, and Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason*, 95.

[479] Abrahamov, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qurʾān*, 97.

eternity and unicity (*waḥdāniyyah*)."[480] Furthermore, "if the son was similar in essence to

him, both of them would be distant and far away from divinity because neither of them

would be unique or unequalled because divinity is never possible except for one

[being]."[481] This statement drives to the heart of al-Qāsim's purpose: he considers the

Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation to be impossible based on rational

grounds. While he will use the Qur'ān in support of his arguments, his treatise is

ultimately a polemic against Christianity based on rational grounds and an apologetic for

Islam on those same grounds. The Qur'ān, while present, does not dictate the nature of

the argument, but serves to demonstrate scriptural agreement with the conclusions al-

Qāsim has reached after rationalistic argumentation.

A common theme through this section of the text is al-Qāsim's argument that

there is a logical and necessary similarity between the essence (*dhāt*) of the generated

being and the progenitor. He writes, that whatever "is necessary to the father in regard to

essence (*dhāt*) is necessary to the offspring (*awlād*)."[482] As a result, he notes that God

reproves those who "distinguished him [Jesus] apart from his mother in regard to

veneration (ʿ*ubūdiyyah*) and divinity (*ilāhiyyah*)."[483] If Mary is considered to have been

Jesus' real mother, al-Qāsim argues that they both ought to then be of the same essence.

Furthermore, al-Qāsim argues that if Jesus' existence was dependent on the existence of

his ancestors, and thus, "if their existence (*wujūd*) had not happened, he would not have

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[480] *al-Radd*, 305.15-16.

[481] Ibid., 305.18-20.

[482] Ibid., 305.28.

[483] Ibid., 305.28-29.

164

existed, and if their bearing of him had not happened, he would not have been born."[484]

He then asks rhetorically how they could "worship him apart from them [his ancestors]"

even though "he is in essence (*dhāt*) like them."[485] Despite this similarity of essence

between Jesus and his human ancestors, they "differentiate between him and them in

status," even though "that is not their teaching or what they explain about him in regard

to their origin."[486]

Al-Qāsim immediately provides qur'ānic support for what he considers to be the

logical inconsistency of the Christians. He urges the reader to "listen to the words of God

and his statement about that and what he made clear concerning it,"[487] quoting Qur'ān

5:116-17,

> 'Jesus son of Mary! Did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as two
> gods, instead of God (alone)"?' He said, 'Glory to you! It is not for me to say
> what I have no right (to say). If I had said it, You would have known it. You
> know what is within me, but I do not know what is within You. Surely You – You
> are the Knower of the unseen. I only said to them what you commanded me:
> 'Serve God, my Lord and your Lord.''[488]

Al-Qāsim fundamentally denies Jesus' divinity while simultaneously highlighting his

humanity and uses Jesus' words as provided in the Qur'ān to establish that point. Al-

Qāsim's regular qur'ānic quotations in this opening section of his *Radd* determine the

manner in which he is approaching Christians, their beliefs, and their Scripture; he

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[484] Ibid., 306.2.

[485] Ibid., 306.3.

[486] Ibid., 306.3-6.

[487] Ibid., 306.6.

[488] Ibid., 306.8-11.

165

considers the Qur'ān to be the criterion for establishing the truth about God, and Christian doctrines that are at odds with the Qur'ān are necessarily incorrect.

Building on his earlier argument in regard to the generated having the same characteristics as the generator, al-Qāsim notes that, "the branch of something has what its root has" (*al-farʿ min al-shayʾ lahu mā li-aṣlihi*).[489] He then quotes the qur'ānic conversation between God and Muḥammad in Q. 43:81 as support: "Say, if the Merciful had a son, I (would be) the first of the ones who served (him),"[490] on which al-Qāsim extrapolates, "He (Great is his splendor!) relates that what is necessary to the son is what is necessary to the parents, regarding everything necessary in nature (*ṭabīʿah*) and essence (*dhāt*), not concerning what is necessary in terms of contingent accidents (*ʿaraḍ al-muḥdathāt*)."[491] Al-Qāsim repeatedly calls attention back to the necessary similarity between generator and the generated in regard to essence and after quoting the Qur'ān in support of that idea, attempts to demonstrate how the argument is ultimately qur'ānic in nature. Thus, because Christians recognize Mary as the mother of Jesus, they must necessarily conclude that he was similar to her in essence. If based on the rationalistic arguments al-Qāsim outlined, Jesus cannot be like God in regard to his essence on account of divinity being necessarily limited to one being (as he argued earlier), then Jesus must be like his mother, whom Christians do not consider divine. While al-Qāsim is building a rational argument against Christian beliefs about God, he repeatedly uses the Qur'ān as support in order to demonstrate that not only are Christian beliefs illogical, but

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[489] Ibid., 306.22.

[490] Ibid., 306.23-24.

[491] Ibid., 306.25-307.1.

that the Qur'ān, and thus Islam, are supported by rationalism.

Conversely, al-Qāsim argues that if Jesus had the nature (*ṭabīʿah*) and essence (*dhāt*) of God, then his mother must have necessarily been similar, or in fact even higher in status since she bore him.[492] Yet, al-Qāsim notes that "Not one of the Christians ascribe to Mary the divinity they ascribe to her son. Rather, all of them say that she is one of the bondmaidens of God. She is contingent (*muḥdathah*), not ancient or eternal."[493] Because Christians consider Mary to be Jesus' mother, and al-Qāsim has already argued for the similarity between the progenitor and the generated, he argues that, "She is, in all of that, like her son. Because his spirit is from her spirit and his body is from her body."[494] If, however, Jesus is not like Mary, al-Qāsim argues that she could not be his mother and he could not be her son. Similarity of essence between the progenitor and the generated is necessary and al-Qāsim argues that the Christians' position, in which Jesus is considered both the Son of God and the son of Mary, is impossible because he cannot be like both of them in essence (which is necessary if they are both his progenitors).

Having argued that Jesus cannot have the essence and nature of God and Mary due to the necessarily similarity between progenitor and generated, al-Qāsim next turns to establishing the humanity of Jesus. In doing so, he is arguing that Jesus' essence and nature is more like Mary than God. Based on his earlier arguments that the generated being is similar in essence to the one who generates him, by arguing that Jesus is similar to Mary, he is arguing that Jesus' essence and nature are from Mary rather than God. Al-

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[492] Ibid., 307.1-4.

[493] Ibid., 307.4-5.

[494] Ibid., 307.7-8.

Qāsim attempts this by demonstrating that Jesus' humanity is clearly displayed in his

actions– particularly in the limitations and constraints he shared with humanity. He

repeatedly stresses the human actions of Jesus while he was on earth, often using

Christians' own beliefs rather than how he is portrayed in the Qur'ān. He writes:

> For that reason he (blessings of God be upon him) ate just as they eat, and he
> suffered their sufferings, just as they did. His existence was like theirs; he ate and
> he drank. Sadness, afflictions and anxiety were all known to him. All of the
> Christians acknowledge his eating and his grief and his pains and they praise him
> for what he endured and the sufferings which came to him, according to them,
> during the beating and the crucifixion, as well as what he had suffered in his mind
> and authority during his journey as a result of devotion and exertion. What God
> made for him to eat, he ate. [That] is among the clear and plain signs which
> nullify the statements and wicked lies the Christians tell about him.[495]

In al-Qāsim's argument, Jesus' humanity was clearly demonstrated in the actions he

performed and precludes any possibility of his divinity; he lived a normal human life and

endured all the trivialities and difficulties of humanity that simply could not be true of

God.

Al-Qāsim mixes both Christian and qur'ānic evidence in this example: he

includes mention of the crucifixion, which he notes "all of the Christians acknowledge,"

as well as the more qur'ānic insistence that Jesus' eating of food is "among the clear and

plain signs" that nullify Christian beliefs. This link between eating and humanity, which

is qur'ānic in its provenance, is further developed by al-Qāsim by highlighting Jesus'

connection with Mary, who the Qur'ān also notes ate food. In support, al-Qāsim quotes

Qur'ān 5:75, "The Messiah son of Mary was only a messenger. Messengers have passed

away before him. His mother was a truthful woman. They both ate food. See how we

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[495] Ibid., 307.15-21.

make clear the signs to them, then see how deluded they are."[496] Al-Qāsim has already

presented his argument that the branch (Jesus) has what the root (Mary) has. She may

have been righteous, but her consumption of food demonstrates that she was not divine.

Similarly, Jesus' consumption of food negates his divinity because God does not require

food to sustain himself.

Al-Qāsim repeats this focus on Jesus eating a number of times, stressing the

fundamentally human nature of eating, and he asks rhetorically, "Which sign could be

clearer to them [Christians] that he [Jesus] was like them than his eating of food?"[497] Al-

Qāsim presses this point by quoting Qur'ān 23:33-34, "This is nothing but a human being

like you. He eats what you eat from, and drinks what you drink. If indeed you obey a

human being like you, surely then you will be the losers indeed."[498] Eating and drinking

are brought up repeatedly as examples in the Qur'ān of why Jesus cannot be God, and to

worship someone who eats and drinks, as humans do, is absurd in the framework al-

Qāsim has established in his argument against Christianity.

This approach, in which Jesus' humanity is confirmed through his eating of food,

was not an argument unique to al-Qāsim. Due to its provenance in the Qur'ān, it was also

in use in some of the earliest *tafsīr*, such as that of Yaḥyā ibn Sallām (d. 815) of

Kairouan. His work enjoyed widespread popularity in the Maghreb and Andalusia and in

his commentary on Qur'ān 19:37,[499] he transmits a story from Qatādā, a Companion of

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[496] Ibid., 308.4-5.

[497] Ibid., 308.6.

[498] Qur'ān 23:34; ibid., 308.7-9.

[499] The context is worth including: "But she referred (them) to him. They said, 'How shall we speak to one who is in the cradle, a (mere) child?' He said, 'Surely I am a servant of God. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet. He has made me blessed wherever I am, and He has charged me with the prayer

169

Muḥammad. The story concerns a disputation between Muslims and Christians and he

discusses in limited detail the different doctrinal positions of the Christian communities

(Jacobite, Nestorian, and Melkite) in regard to the Incarnation. The Christians proceed to

argue over which expression of the Incarnation is correct, when the Muslim interlocutor

interrupts,

> 'I implore you, by God, do you realize that Jesus ate food, whereas God does not
> eat food?' They said, 'O God, yes.' He said, 'Do you realize that Jesus slept,
> whereas God does not sleep?' They said, 'O God, yes.' So the Muslim refuted
> them, and the people began to fight among themselves.[500]

Thus, while al-Qāsim's refutation is more philosophically and logically oriented in its

approach, he is utilizing ideas that stem from qur'ānic principles and would have been

widely available, at least in some form. Further, his approach in many ways reflects this

story, in that he presents the differing doctrinal positions of the Christian communities in

regard to the Incarnation, but does not bother to refute them individually. Rather, like the

story above, he attempts to refute the general principles of the Incarnation apart from the

particulars of the respective communities.

Interestingly, al-Qāsim does not concern himself here with the other aspects of

Jesus' humanity he previously mentioned – suffering, sadness, afflictions, anxiety, grief,

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and the alms as long as I live, and (to be) respectful to my mother. He has not made me a tyrant (or) miserable. Peace (be) upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive.' That was Jesus, son of Mary – a statement of the truth about which they are in doubt. It is not for God to take any son. Glory to Him! When He decrees something, He simply says to it, 'Be!' and it is. 'Surely God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him!' This is a straight path.' But the factions differed among themselves. So woe to those who disbelieve on account of (their) witnessing a great Day! How well they will hear on it! How well they will see on the Day when they come to Us! But the evildoers are clearly astray." Qur'ān 19:29-38

[500] R. Marston Speight, "The Place of the Christians in Ninth-Century North Africa, according to Muslim Sources," *Islamochristiana* 4 (1978): 50-52.

pain, beating, and crucifixion[501] – but focuses solely on the fact that Jesus ate. While

there may be other reasons, it is plausible that he focuses on this because there is a clear

qur'ānic reference in that regard, and it points to specific limitations. While grief or

sadness might be considered unbecoming of God, eating demonstrates a specifically

human limitation. Eating is a regular and repeated action that fulfills an essentially human

lack, and in al-Qāsim's argument, this is further proof that the essence and nature of Jesus

is like that of his mother rather than God.

5.2 CHRISTIAN AND POLYTHEISTIC BELIEFS COMPARED

Al-Qāsim then turns to a comparison of Christian beliefs and polytheistic beliefs.

He notes that the polytheists (*mushrikūn*) "claim that the angels of God were close

companions, sons and daughters of God, Lord of the Worlds."[502] Further, they claim that

the "seven planets are angels of God, endowed with reason, and that they are gods with

God,"[503] and that "by and from those mortal beings he created everything that is

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[501] Al-Qāsim returns briefly to some of these limitations of humanity to which Jesus was subject in his summary of the Incarnation. See Chapter 6.3.

[502] *al-Radd*, 308.10.

[503] Ibid., 308.13-14. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) also refutes such ideas in a *fatwā* against astrology. He writes, "The belief that one of the seven stars is in charge of one's good fortune or misfortune is a corrupt belief. And if somebody believes that this [planet] is what administers [*muddabir*] him he is an unbeliever. Similarly if, in addition to that, he invokes it and seeks its aid, it is pure unbelief and associationism." Yahya Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology: Annotated Translation of Three Fatwas," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2000): 167. The seven planets referred to by al-Qāsim would be the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, whose association with different gods is common across ancient societies. For a list of works related to this concept in Medieval Islam, see ibid., 167 fn. 64; George Saliba, *A History of Arabic Astronomy: Planetary Theories during the Golden Age of Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1994). Al-Qāsim does not provide any specific names or texts to which he is referring; it is plausible that he has a no-longer-extant work of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in mind though as he wrote a refutation of this very work. See Guidi, *La lotta tra l'Islam e il Manicheismo: un libro di Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ contro il Corano confutato da al-Qasim b. Ibrahim*. There is debate over the authorship (see Michael Cooperson, s.v. "Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, 209), although given that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was well-known as a heretic, it is plausible that he would write a treatise dealing with the heretical ideas ascribed to him in al-Qāsim's refutation. For an in-depth study of the life and work of Ibn al-

created."[504] Although God is supposed to be the "beginning creator" (*mubtadiʾ ṣāniʿ*),[505]

it is "with them and from them" that "he made everything that was made."[506] In

comparison, he notes that, "Likewise, the Christians say that God created things by his

Son[507] and sustained (*ḥafiẓa*) them and regulated (*dabbara*) them by his Holy Spirit."[508]

In addition, he notes that they also say "the Son created creation,"[509] and that the "Holy

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Muqaffaʿ, including the fragments of his work that are extant in other works, see István T. Kristó-Nagy, *La penseé d'Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ: Un 'agent double' dans le monde persan et arabe*, Studia Arabica (Versailles: Éditions De Paris, 2013).

[504] *al-Radd*, 308.17-18.

[505] Ibid., 308.21.

[506] Ibid., 308.18-19.

[507] This particular wording in regard to the role of the Son in creation is consonant with both biblical and creedal formulations. Cf. Colossians 1:16 and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (ca. 381).

[508] *al-Radd*, 308.23-24. Although al-Qāsim does not provide the source for his articulation of the respective roles of the persons of the Trinity in creation, the role of the Spirit in al-Qāsim's formulation has similarities to the second tone resurrectional *anabathemoi's* first antiphony in the Byzantine Liturgy (originated in 4th cent.): "Verily, sovereignty over creation, its sanctification, and its motion are of the Holy Spirit; for He is God consubstantial with the Father and with the Word." The Spirit is also worshiped as the designer/ruler of creation in the Byzantine Liturgy as "the One who rules all things, who is Lord of all, and who preserves creation from falling apart." In the Second Antiphony in the *Apodeipnon*, canon, ode 5: "The Holy Spirit is the element of Life and honor; for as God He doth establish all creatures and preserve them in the Father and the Son." The *Apodeipnon* is first mentioned by Basil in his *Longer Rules* (ca. 356), see *PG* 31:1016a; Archimandrite Job Getcha, *The Typikon Decoded: An Explanation of Byzantine Liturgical Practice*, trans. Paul Meyendorff (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 92-97. There are also similarities to Basil's (d. 379) *De Spiritu Sancto*: "For the first principle of existing things is One, creating through the Son and perfecting through the Spirit. The operation of the Father who works all in all is not imperfect, neither is the creating work of the Son incomplete if not perfected by the Spirit. The Father, who creates by His sole will, could not stand in any need of the Son, but nevertheless He will through the Son; nor could the Son, who works according to the likeness of the Father, need co-operation, but the Son too wills to make perfect through the Spirit." Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* [On the Holy Spirit], trans. Jackson Blomfeld, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, 1895), 16:38, also *PG* 32:136b. It is worth noting that the Coptic Church has historically used St. Basil's liturgy. Thus, explanations of Christian teachings in al-Qāsim's treatise that resonate with St. Basil are potentially the result of his interaction with the Coptic Christian who would have been familiar with his works and definitely with his liturgy. Meyendorff notes in a broader sense that "patristic tradition interprets the passage [Genesis 1:2] in the sense of a primeval maintenance of all things by the Spirit, which made possible the subsequent appearance of a created logical order through the Word of God." John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 169.

[509] *al-Radd*, 308.24.

172

Spirit sustained (*ḥafiẓa*) creation and managed/regulated (*dabbara*) it."[510] Returning to

the *mushrikūn*, al-Qāsim highlights that they believed that God "regulated it [creation]

with the seven planets."[511] Al-Qāsim's use of *tadbīr*[512] to articulate the manner in which

both polytheists and Christians consider other beings to have been involved in creation is

clearly used to highlight their similarity[513] – both Christian and Polytheists introduce

mediators between God and creation that in some way share his divinity and act as

creators (at least in the sense that they design and order creation, even if they are not the

Prime Cause). This division of labor within creation is further stressed through al-

Qāsim's statement that Christians claim that "the power to create is different than the

power to sustain and order, and that the Father was not alone in all of that."[514] While the

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[510] Ibid.

[511] Ibid., 309.1. In a similar vein, Saliba notes that, "In one of his treatises on the planets, the philosopher Kindi, considered the spokesman for the foreign sciences and an astrologer by conviction, gives us a flavor of the doctrines that must have been accepted by the astrologers of his time: '…the planets are rational (*naṭiqat*) spiritual beings capable of intelligence and speech and [themselves] cause (*faʿilat*) and administer [*mudabbirat*] everything in this world by the order of the Prime Creator who controls all." Quoted in Saliba, *A History of Arabic Astronomy*, 55. See also L.V. Vaglieri and G. Celentano, "Trois Epitres d'Al-Kindi," *Annali, Instituto Orientale di Napoli* 34 (1974): 537.

[512] The sense implied by *dabbara* in al-Qāsim's work here has connotations of regulating. Lane's lexicon notes, "*dabbara amran*, in. n. as above, signifies [also] He did, performed, or executed, a thing, or an affair, with thought, or consideration." Also, "*dabbara al-bilād*," He managed, conducted, ordered, or regulated, the affairs of the provinces, or country." Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863), 1:844.

[513] This correlation between polytheists' and Christians' beliefs regarding the Holy Spirit, particularly in regard to *tadbīr,* is also noted by Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) in his commentary on the section of Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia* related to dreams. He states: "In the world there is no group of people (*firqat min al-nās*) endowed with intellect, discernment, reflection and (the capacity of) summing up research does not consider that this force exists in this world. They known and are cognizant (of the fact) that the order of this world (which is subject) to generation and corruption (subsists) through it and its providence (*ʿināya*) (which watches), in the measure in which this is possible, over the whole of the world and over everything that concerns its general and perfect welfare… Every group and sect designates this force by a different name. The ancient Sabians called it the Nearest Ruler (*al-mudabbir al-aqrab*) […]; it is this (force) which is called in Arabic the indwelling (*sakīna*) and the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*). […] All these different names indicate this one force." Shlomo Pines, "The Arabic Recension of *Parva Naturalia* and the Philosophical Doctrine concerning Veridical Dreams according to *al-Risālah al-Manāmiyya* and Other Sources," *Israel Oriental Studies* 4 (1974): 116-117.

[514] *al-Radd*, 308.24-25.

particulars between the mediators in a polytheistic and Christian understanding of

creation may be different, al-Qāsim considers them both equally problematic. They both

violate the exclusivity and transcendence of God as creator by introducing other creators

into the process, thereby violating his divine unity and transcendence above all creation.

The crux of the matter is that al-Qāsim considers Christian beliefs about God to

be as blasphemous as the beliefs of the *mushrikūn* who considered celestial beings to be

gods alongside God, and that from them God created everything.[515] Again, al-Qāsim

stresses God's complete and utter dissimilarity to all of creation and what he considers

the incompatibility of Christian doctrine with a qur'ānic understanding of divinity. Both

Christianity and the particular Polytheistic beliefs mentioned by al-Qāsim include a role

for some figure or figures to act as a mediator of the creation process and contravenes

clear Qur'ānic statements in that regard.[516] Such association of other creators with God in

the process of creation is simply unacceptable within the strict monotheism of the Qur'ān,

wherein God is the sole creator of all things.[517] Further, it is unbelievers who associate

equals and co-creators of the world to him.[518] This leads al-Qāsim to conclude that the

similarities between the Christians and the polytheists are not unique, but rather, "all of

their teachings in regard to God as a son are not distinct, but are one, and their lie about

God is mutual, and a liar is not credible since they liken something other than God to

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[515] Ibid., 308.19.

[516] Qur'ān 23:91, "God has not taken a son, nor is there any god with Him. Then each god would indeed have gone off with what he had created, and some of them would indeed have exalted (themselves) over others. Glory to God above what they allege!"

[517] Qu'rān 35:3, "People! Remember the blessing of God on you. (Is there) any creator other than God, (who) provides for you from the sky and the earth? (There is) no God but Him. How are you (so) deluded?"

[518] There are a number of qur'ānic references that resonate with this theme, but Qur'ān 6:1 serves well as an example: "Praise (be) to God, who created the heavens and the earth, and made the darkness and the light! Then (despite that) those who disbelieve equate (others) with their Lord."

him. They made him his son and his equal."[519] Thus in al-Qāsim's estimation, Christianity and polytheism share blasphemous ideas about created things sharing God's attributes that necessarily negate his divinity.

5.3 DIVINITY CANNOT BE SHARED

After establishing that Christians ascribe equals to God in their teachings about creation (and then comparing those beliefs to those of the *mushrikūn*),[520] al-Qāsim directs his attentions to arguing that divinity cannot be shared. As is typical, he begins with arguments meant to highlight the logical impossibility of Christian teachings, noting that if, as Christians claim, both God the Father and Jesus the Son were God, "One of the two would not be God because he would not possess the ability of the one who was similar to him."[521] The ability to which al-Qāsim is referring is power over the other's destruction, of which he argues, "if he did not possess power over the other's destruction, then he would be weak and without power."[522] He notes a possible objection to this argument stemming from a saying: "Each of them is capable of the destruction of his equal."[523] Al-Qāsim, however, does not consider this an adequate response to his argument and instead he considers it a further indication of the "shortcomings of each of them and their deficiency."[524] Because of the necessarily unique nature of divinity within the Islamic

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[519] *al-Radd*, 309.2-4.

[520] The Muʿtazilah drew similar connections between polytheism and the co-eternity of the Son and Holy Spirit with the Father. See Albert Nader, *Le Système philosophique des Muʿtazila* (Beirut: Éditions Les Lettres Orientales, 1956), 49 ff.

[521] *al-Radd*, 309.5.

[522] Ibid., 309.6.

[523] Ibid., 309.8.

[524] Ibid., 309.9.

175

tradition, God and Jesus cannot both be divine since they each do not have power over the other. And even if they were to have that ability, that is further evidence that they are limited, and thus cannot be divine. Al-Qāsim then sums up, "If either one of the two were deficient as a result of limitations, then he would not be a creator and sustainer to anything at all."[525]

Because God is the creator and sustainer to all things, the beliefs of the Christians as framed by al-Qāsim necessarily result in an inconsistency and must be abandoned. To al-Qāsim, if God the Father and Jesus have power over each other's destruction, they would each be deficient in some respect.[526] Further, he dismisses the possibility of shared divinity, instead emphasizing that nothing in creation resembles or is like God: "He has no equal, like, or similarity among anything produced or sustained in the heavens or on the earth or in what is between them."[527] Al-Qāsim's arguments for God's dissimilarity to creation stress the uniqueness of his divinity and that it cannot be shared.

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[525] Ibid., 309.9-10.

[526] ʿAbd al-Jabbār similarly argues against God sharing divinity, although he expounds upon al-Qāsim's contention that they would not have power over each other with an example. He writes, "If there were two beings who were omnipotent in themselves it would be possible for one of them to cause a body to move and the other to cause it to remain at rest. If that were the case it would have to be so in one of three ways: Either [a] the two things they willed must both exist, which is impossible because they contradict each other. [b] Or neither of them exists, which is impossible because it implies the impotence of both, and it is impossible for the omnipotent divine being to be impotent. So [c] it must be that one of the two willed things exists, and that necessitates that one be powerful and the other be impotent, and the impotent one cannot be eternal or divine. And it establishes that He is One." ʿAbd al-Jabbār immediately supports this with scripture and specifically notes the inter-religious importance of this argument at the end of this section, stating, "And that by which we have proved that bodies are contingent and have a creator also refutes their doctrine. And on this basis the doctrine of Christians that in God are three hypostases (aqānīm): the father, the son and holy spirit, is refuted, for we have explained that He is One, and because it is absurd for that which is one in reality [also] to be three in reality." Martin, Woodward, and Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason*, 96.

[527] *al-Radd*, 309.10-12.

In contrast to the dissimilarity of God to creation, al-Qāsim emphasizes the

humanity of Jesus and the characteristics he shares with other humans. He notes that "he

exists by God as a new creation (*khalqan*) after his non-existence (*ʿadam*)," and is not an

associate with God in regard to his power (*qudrah*) or pre-eternity (*qidam*).[528] Rather than

being a creator like God, Jesus is a creation; he is a composition (*mūʾallaf*), deficient

(*ḍaʿīf*), embodied (*mujassam*), limited (*maḥdūd*), and countable (*maʿdūd*).[529] He had

"many different characteristics and attributes" (*nuʿūt wa-ṣifāt kathīrah mutafawwitāt*),

which he shares with animate (*al-ḥayawān*) and inanimate things (*mawāt*).[530] This leads

al-Qāsim to conclude that an eternal one without a like (*mithl*), peer (*naẓīr*), or equal

(*kufūʾ*) would never exist unless he was a god (*ilāh*).[531]

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[528] Ibid., 309.15-20.

[529] Ibid., 309.20-22. This resonates with Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as commented upon by al-Kindī in his *Fī-l-falsafah al-ūlā* (On First Philosophy): "Transformation is change, so the eternal does not transform, because it does not change. Nor does it make a transition from deficiency to perfection, for transition is a kind of transformation. Thus the eternal does not make a transition to perfection, because it does not transform. […] The eternal cannot be deficient, because it cannot make a transition to a state in which it would be excellent–for it cannot transform at all to be more excellent than it is, nor to be more deficient than it is. Therefore, the eternal is necessarily perfect. "Peter Adamson and Peter Pormann, *The Philosophical Works of al-Kindī* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19-20. See also Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī, *Al-Kindī's Metaphysics: A Translation of Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī's 'On First Philosophy' (fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā)*, ed. and trans. Alfred Ivry (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 68. While al-Kindī's *Fī-l-falsafah al-ūlā* was dedicated to al-Muʿtasim (r. 833-842) and is thus too late to be the source from which al-Qāsim is deriving his Aristotelian ideas, there is a repeated resonance with Aristotelian philosophy throughout al-Qāsim's treatise that necessitates his access to Aristotle's works, whether directly in translation, mediated through Christian texts, or in his personal interactions with disputants. The possibility that al-Qāsim is accessing Aristotelian philosophy as mediated through John of Damascus and his student, Theodore Abū Qurrah, is a possibility that I discuss below (see Chapter 7.1). The work of Christophe Erismann on the appropriation of Aristotelian philosophy by Patristic and later Christian theologians lends credence to the possibility of a Christian source for al-Qāsim's use of Aristotelian ideas, particularly in light of al-Qāsim's demonstrated familiarity with Christian theology. See Christophe Erismann, "A World of Hypostases: John of Damascus' Rethinking of Aristotle's Categorical Ontology," *Studia Patristica* 50 (2011); Christophe Erismann, "Catachrestic Plural Forms: Gregory of Nyssa and Theodore Abū Qurrah on Naming and Counting Essences," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (2014); Christophe Erismann, "The Trinity, Universals, and Particular Substances: Philoponus and Roscelin," *Traditio* 53 (2008).

[530] *al-Radd*, 309.22.

[531] Ibid., 309.23.

Having established his rational argumentation for the uniqueness of God in regard

to divinity, al-Qāsim calls attention back to the Qurʾān's strict monotheism by quoting

112:1, "Say, He is God. One!,"[532] reminding the reader that God "does not have a father

or a son."[533] He follows this a blitz of references from the Qurʾān stressing God's *tawḥīd*

with only minimal commentary as he moves from *āya* to *āya*. He quotes 112:2, "God, the

Eternal."[534] 19:65, "Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them. So

serve him and be patient in his service! Do you know (another) name for Him?"[535] 42:11,

"There is nothing like him. He is the Hearing, the Seeing."[536] 6:103, "Sight does not

reach him, but He reaches sight. He is the Gentle, the Aware."[537] And 112:3-4, "He has

not begotten and was not begotten, and He has no equal. None!"[538]

Al-Qāsim follows these references with a rhetorical question, "How would the

only one who has not ceased since the beginning be begotten, or [how would] one who is

too exalted to be of mixed elements beget?"[539] Immediately, the response is offered,

"There is never any possibility that God begets or is begotten!"[540] Al-Qāsim demonstrates

the importance of the Qurʾān to his perspective on the divinity of God. While he builds a

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[532] Ibid., 310.1.

[533] Ibid., 310.1-2. While not a direct quotation, it clearly has resonance with qurʾānic ideas such as in 112:3 "He has not begotten and was not begotten." This reference in particular could have been what al-Qāsim was considering as he shortly thereafter quotes Q. 112:2.

[534] Ibid., 310.2.

[535] Ibid., 310.5-6.

[536] Ibid., 310.7-8.

[537] Ibid., 310.8.

[538] Ibid., 310.9-10.

[539] Ibid., 310.10-11.

[540] Ibid., 310.11-12.

logical argument about Jesus being like humanity and composed of different parts, which necessarily precludes his divinity, the Qur'ān serves as the support.

5.4 THE "BRILLIANT PROOFS OF GOD"

Having established that Christian beliefs are inconsistent with the rational presentation of God he has laid forth in his treatise, al-Qāsim argues that there are "brilliant proofs of God concerning that against them" (ḥujaj allāh al-munīrah fī-dhālika ʿalayhim).[541] These are a series of references from the Qur'ān and their exegesis that highlight al-Qāsim's insistence that God cannot be associated with any other being, and in particular stressing God's unique and unshared role as the creator.

Al-Qāsim begins his series of proofs with Qur'ān 2:116, "They say, 'God has taken a son.'"[542] He immediately notes, however, that God has denied such claims, quoting the rest of Qur'ān 2:116-117, Glory to Him! No! Whatever is in the heaves and the earth (belongs) to Him. All are obedient before Him – Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees something, He simply says to it, 'Be!' and it is.[543] As further support for this position that they have ascribed associates to God, he quotes Q. 6:100-103:

> They make the jinn associated with God, when He created them, and they assign to Him sons and daughters without any knowledge. Glory to Him! He is exalted above what they allege. Originator of the heavens and the earth – how can He have a son when He has no consort, (and) when He created everything and has knowledge of everything? That is God, your Lord. (There is) no god but Him,

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[541] Ibid., 310.14-15.

[542] Ibid., 310.18-19.

[543] Ibid., 310.19-21.

Creator of everything. So serve Him! He is guardian over everything. Sight does not reach Him, but He reaches sight. He is the Gentle, the Aware.[544]

He notes that the Qur'ān's mention in 6:100 that when they ascribe (*jaʿalū*) jinn as associates to God and assign (*kharraqū*)[545] sons and daughters to God, "The meaning of '*kharraqū*' is that they fabricate and exceed in lies and slander and blindness and ignorance and overstep boundaries."[546] Conversely, when one says God is praised, al-Qāsim argues that it means there is distance between the one praising and the one being praised. Further, claiming that God, who is the "most inaccessible and most distant" (*amnaʿu wa-abʿadu*) [547] is a father (*wālid*) or has been born (*yūlad*) is a "contradictory (*mutanāqiḍ*), absurd (*muḥāl*), invalid (*daḥḍ*) teaching that would never be possible in thought (*fikrah*) or imagination (*wahm*)."[548] Al-Qāsim clearly has no qualms about expressing his opinion of what he considers to be blasphemous views about God held by the Christians, but he does so primarily by highlighting that it is flawed from a logical standpoint.

Al-Qāsim continues by considering the word "took" (*ittakhadha*) from Qur'ān 2:116.[549] He argues that if God took a son, then

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[544] ibid., 310.22-311.1.

[545] Al-Qāsim quotes Qur'ān 6:100 here, but uses form II of the verb, *kharraqū*, which is not in the Egyptian standardized Qur'ān text. The Berlin MS also has this form in both instances it appears in al-Qāsim's text. See MS Berlin, Glaser 101 – Ahlwardt 4876 30.9r and 30.12r. Form II of this verb is similar to form I, but has an intensive signification. Further, Lane notes that this is a variant reading espoused by Abū Jaʿfar and Nāfī. See Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon,* 1:728.

[546] *al-Radd*, 311.1.

[547] Ibid., 311.5.

[548] Ibid., 311.6-7.

[549] This particular usage of "*ittakhada,*" and its associated theological significance is qur'ānic rather than biblical. In his later summaries of Christian doctrine when he uses Christian sources, al-Qāsim does not refer to the relationship between God as Father and Jesus as Son with the word "*ittakhadha.*"

that which he took and produced is clearly a new creation (*al-muḥdath al-mubtadaʿa*). The father is, as has been made clear at the beginning of this book, like the one who is born in regard to what they both have in essence (*dhāt*) and nature (*ṭabīʿah*), and in regard to characteristics (*khāṣṣiyyah*) and limitations (*ḥudūd*).[550]

As al-Qāsim notes, this relies on his earlier argument that the progenitor and the generated are necessarily similar in their nature and essence. Further, their limitations and characteristics must be similar, and thus, al-Qāsim considers the human limitations he previously delineated to be proof against the divine sonship of Jesus. Jesus is like his mother, who Christians do not consider to be divine, and he has the same characteristics, limitations, nature, and essence.

Despite this, al-Qāsim argues that the Christians "made God the Creator (*badīʿ*) like the created being (*mabdūʿ*), and [they made] the Lord who produces things (*al-ṣāniʿ*) like one produced (*maṣnūʿ*)."[551] He continues, noting the unique nature of God as creator and that all of creation is in obedience to him, quoting Q. 30:26, "To him is what is in the heavens and the earth. Everything is in obedience to him." Thus, he considers that "the heavens and earth and what is in them are never [created] except from one," of which he concludes, "that [creation] can never be from one born or from a father."[552] This is a statement obviously at odds with Christian doctrines, and al-Qāsim immediately addresses that, what they said of God in regard to the son (*walad*) to be "among the most wicked of sayings" (*min akhbath al-qawl*) because of what he considers to be the

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[550] *al-Radd*, 311.9-11.

[551] Ibid., 311.11-12. The use of active versus passive characteristics to compare God and Jesus is explored in al-Ṭabarī, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 125. For further discussion, see Clint Hackenburg, "Voices of the Converted: Apostate Literature in Medieval Islam" (Ph.D., The Ohio State University, 2015), 98.

[552] *al-Radd*, 311.21-23.

inconsistency of essence between the two (God and Jesus).[553] Al-Qāsim contends that

before Jesus was taken as a son, he must have been non-existent (his divinity is thereby

precluded) and Christian teaching is logically inconsistent to attribute divinity to a being

that came into existence. This argument is framed within the context of creation because

creation is considered by al-Qāsim to be a singular and unique task completed by one

being, and necessarily, any other being is not a creator but created. For Christians to

attribute divinity to Jesus, then, is seen by al-Qāsim as particularly egregious.

Further highlighting what he considered to be the logical confusion of Christian

beliefs, he frames their position thusly: "all of them together said he is God and his son

(*huwa allāh wa-waladuhu*)."[554] In doing so, he notes that they praise and worship Jesus

the Son, "in regard to divinity and eternality like the Father (*wālid*),"[555] then immediately

launches into a scathing invective, arguing that their teaching in that regard is "the utmost

contradiction, preposterousness, falsity, perversion, and lie."[556]

In response to these Christian claims regarding Jesus' divinity, al-Qāsim falls

back to a familiar position of quoting references from the Qur'ān in support of his logical

arguments. The first is from Qur'ān 43:82-83, "Glory to the Lord of the heavens and the

earth, Lord of the throne, above what they allege! So leave them! Let them banter and

jest, until they meet their Day which they are promised."[557] This verse stresses the

dissimilarity of God to creation while also reminding Christians of the impending

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[553] Ibid., 312.1.

[554] Ibid., 312.7.

[555] Ibid., 312.8.

[556] Ibid., 312.10.

[557] Ibid., 312.14-15.

182

judgment. Their doctrines are compared to idle talk and play, while God sits enthroned, free from everything they ascribe to him.

He next quotes Qur'ān 34:40-41 – "On the Day when He gathers them all together, He will say to the angels, '(Was it) you these were serving?' They will say, 'Glory to You! You are our ally, not they. No! They used to serve the jinn – most of them believed in them.'"[558] Again, the reference is judgment day, when they are gathered together and their beliefs are shown to be false. Rather than God, they are shown to be worshiping the jinn. While al-Qāsim does not continue quoting the *sūrah*, it continues to describe the fiery punishment awaiting disbelievers.

Al-Qāsim finishes this series of qur'ānic quotations that support his argument noting that, "concerning the impossibility of the teaching of people of the book and all the heretics (*mulḥid*) who allege [that he has] a son,"[559] God says,

> Certainly you have put forth something abhorrent! The heavens are nearly torn apart because of it, and the earth split open, and the mountains collapse in pieces – that they should attribute to the Merciful a son, when it is not fitting for the Merciful to take a son. (There is) no one in the heavens and the earth who comes to the Merciful except as a servant. Certainly He has counted them and numbered them exactly. Each one of them will come to Him on the Day of Resurrection alone.[560]

Again, Judgment Day is the setting, although this particular quotation explicitly demonstrates that the idea of God being considered to have a son is a grievous error that will end poorly for whomever believes such "abhorrent" things about God. These quotations from the Qur'ān that al-Qāsim emphasizes in this portion of his text highlight

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[558] Ibid., 312.15-17.

[559] Ibid., 312.17-18.

[560] Qur'ān 19:89-95, ibid., 312.19-22.

the disjunction between the strict monotheism of the Qur'ān and the Christian doctrines about God as Father and the divine sonship of Jesus. While al-Qāsim does not ignore the Trinity, his primary concern is the Incarnation and what that entails for God and Jesus.

5.5 "THERE IS NO LOGIC (*MANṬIQ*) IN IT AT ALL"

As al-Qāsim begins to transition from the first section of his treatise, he condemns association of other beings with God from both rational and scriptural perspectives. He considers such association to be "evil" (*idd*); that "the possibility of it is refused in intellects (*al-ʿuqūl*)," "no one can endure the possibility," and it is "corrupt, impossible" (*fāsid muḥāl*).[561] Al-Qāsim then unites the religious and rational, stating, "It was like what God (may he be praised) said, and what is necessary" (*wa-hwa ka-mā qāla allāh subḥānahu wa-mā yanbaghī*).[562]He continues his critique of Christian doctrines, noting that they are "not possible" (*laysa bi-mumkin*), and even more, "the furthest from possibility" (*abʿad imkānan*).

Al-Qāsim clarifies that he is specifically condemning "what they said about God concerning the son" and that it is "slander (*buhtān*)."[563] He turns specifically to rational argumentation next, asking incredulously whether it would ever be possible in the mind (*ʿaql*) or understanding (*lubb*) for God to be a son (*ibn*) or a father.[564] To this end, he considers the particular nature of what it means to be a son or father, asking rhetorically

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[561] Ibid., 312.23.

[562] Ibid.

[563] Ibid., 312.24-25.

[564] Ibid., 312.25.

"Is the son not like sons? And similarly, the father like fathers?"[565] He considers this to

be impossible, because if a father is not like a father, or a son not like a son, then they

cease to be those things. Similarly, fatherhood (*ubūwah*) and sonship (*bunūwah*) would

cease as well as all the names dependent on it, i.e., "father" and "son."[566] Further, he

argues that Christians' teachings that Jesus is a son (*ibn* and *walad*) show that he is a

created being, that "he increased" (*yukāthiru*), and that "we could count him and number

him" (*nuḥṣīhi wa-nuʿaddiduhu*), something he argues is impossible to be true of God.[567]

Al-Qāsim concludes this section with a summary of his treatise thus far. He lays

out the scope of his argument, who it is directed against, and both the logical and qur'ānic

basis for his claims. Regarding the particular claims his treatise is attempting to refute, he

states,

> Praise be to God that what we have mentioned so far is sufficient proof (*ḥujjah*)
> and refutation (*radd*) against those among the sects of the Christians (*Naṣārā*), the
> Jews and the people of falsehood, who claim that God the Blessed and Sublime
> has a son, and the repudiation of those who make an equal or an opposite for God
> (Praise be to Him), or make Him to be something born (*mawlūd*) or a son
> (*walad*).[568]

Then, in regard to the audience and the stated purpose of his work, he writes,

> Let anyone who proclaims the unity of God be informed of the arguments of God
> concerning all of that, or let him investigate the inconsistency, perversion,

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[565] Ibid., 312.26 - 313.1.

[566] Al-Qāsim will return to this argument regarding the names "father" and "son" in greater detail in the third section of his refutation where he considers what type of names they are (natural, essential, substantial, personal, hypostatic, or accidental names) and how that relates to referring to God as father or Jesus as son. See Chapter 7.1.

[567] *al-Radd*, 313.3-8.

[568] Ibid., 313.8-11.

absurdity, and divergence of their teaching concerning Him—he will find an absurd, perverse, contradictory, and divergent doctrine.[569]

After noting what he considers to be the their problems stemming from faulty reason, he provides qur'ānic support from 18:4-6[570] followed by exegesis, saying that their teaching about God is "absurd and perverse and the wickedest thing that is said."[571] Further, "they do not have knowledge, nor do their fathers, and the word coming from their mouths is a great sin; they are saying nothing but a lie."[572]

Al-Qāsim then highlights what he considers to be the inconsistency of those who ascribe a son to God with an argument. He writes, "All of them, even though the claim that God has a son (*walad*), agree on God's divinity (*rubūbiyyah*) and individualness (*waḥdāniyyah*), and testify of His eternality and perpetuity, which cannot be true unless they abandon and renounce their doctrine of the son."[573] While al-Qāsim does not formulate his argument in formal, technical language, the following logical argument is clearly present in the quotation above:

Premise 1: Christians claim that God has a son.

Premise 2: All Christians agree on God's divinity and individualness, and testify of His eternality and perpetuity.

Conclusion: Premise 2 cannot be true unless they abandon and renounce their doctrine concerning the son (Premise 1).

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[569] Ibid., 313.11-13.

[570] Ibid., 313.13-16. Qur'ān 18:4-6, "And to warn those who have said, 'God has taken a son.' They have no knowledge about it, nor (did) their fathers. Monstrous is the word (that) comes out of their mouths! They say nothing but a lie. Perhaps you are going to destroy yourself by following after them, if they do not believe in this proclamation."

[571] Ibid., 313.17.

[572] Ibid., 313.18-19.

[573] Ibid., 313.21-24.

Al-Qāsim sets up a logical contradiction here between the two premises held by those

who ascribe a son to God. Either God did not have a son, or he is not divine (and its

entailed attributes). Clearly, the latter is not considered by al-Qāsim to be the viable

option, and he notes that God does not compare to anything in any attribute. As he has

done previously, he then supports his conclusion with qur'ānic evidence,[574] before

concluding, "Our Lord is exalted above having an equal or peer in anything. Indeed, how

can a creation be like its creator? Can one who speaks this be correct? No! Even if all of

creation revealed it to him it would not be true. Praise be to God, there is no logic

(*manṭiq*) in it at all."[575]

Al-Qāsim's use of *manṭiq* to mean "logic" is an early use of the term. It literally

means "speech" and "was chosen to serve as a literal and artificial translation of the

technical meaning of Greek *logos*. The 'science of speech' (*ʿilm al-manṭiq*) thus became

the Muslim[576] term for logic."[577] While formal discussion of Aristotelian logic in an

Arabic context is often associated with later philosophers such as al-Kindī (ca. 805-873),

Hunayn Ibn Isḥāq (809-877), or even al-Farabī (ca. 873-950) and Avicenna (980-1037),

there is evidence that *manṭiq* was beginning to be used to refer to "logic" around or

before the time al-Qāsim wrote his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* (ca. 815-826).[578] Both the son

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[574] Ibid., 314.5-6. Qur'ān 42:11b, "There is nothing like Him. He is the Hearing, the Seeing."

[575] Ibid., 314.6-8.

[576] I think "Arabic" would be more appropriate than "Muslim" here, particularly due to the significant number of Christians involved in the translation of philosophical texts into Arabic.

[577] Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 203.

[578] Gutas draws attention to the tradition of Christians being available to translate logical works from Syriac into Arabic at the request of Arab patrons in the early decades of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate. He mentions Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785), who translated Aristotle's *De Sophisticis Elenchis* (*Sophistical*

of the infamous Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (fl. early

ninth century), and the bishop and scholar of the Church of the East, ʿAbdīshūʿ Ibn Bihrīz

[Bahrīz] (fl. early ninth cent.),[579] epitomized and translated excerpts of Aristotle's books

of logic into Arabic under the auspices of the caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 813-833).[580]

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's work is entitled *Kitāb al-manṭiq* (*Book of

Logic*) and epitomizes the earlier books of Aristotle's *Organon*.[581] Ibn Bihrīz epitomized

and excerpted Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation* (although these works have

not survived) and wrote a work on logic entitled *Ḥudūd al-manṭiq* (*Definitions of

Logic*).[582] Rescher notes that Ibn Bihrīz was "one of the first to *write* (as contrasted with

translate) a logical text in Arabic,"[583] although there was potentially an earlier Arabic

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Refutations)*,* and Timothy I (d. 823), who translated the *Topics;* both likely under the auspices of the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775-785). See Dimitri Gutas, "Aspects of Literary Form and Genre in Arabic Logical Works," in *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts: The Syriac, Arabic and Medieval Latin Traditions*, ed. Charles Burnett (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1993), 43-44.

[579] Mark Swanson, s.v. "ʿAbdīshūʿ ibn Bahrīz," in *CMR1*, 550-552.

[580] Nicholas Rescher, *The Development of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), 25. It should be noted, however, that van Bladel and Gutas have argued convincingly that the conception of the *Bayt al-Ḥikma* (House of Wisdom) as a "full-fledged academy and institute of translation, founded by al-Maʾmūn in 830 or 832, where all the Greek manuscripts of the caliph were kept and in which a team of translators worked under the direction of Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq" is an "imaginative interpretation" and a "myth." See Kevin van Bladel and Dimitri Gutas, s.v. "Bayt al-Ḥikma," in *EI³*. Rather, these translations of Greek philosophical texts come as part of a wider "Graeco-Arabic translation movement." See Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[581] The Aristotelian *Organon*, as understood by the Syriac expositors of Aristotelian logic and assumed by Arabic philosophers after them, includes Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categoriae, De Interpretatione, Analytica Priora, Analytica Posteriora, Topica, De Sophisticis Elenchis, Rhetorica,* and *Poetica*. See Rescher, *The Development of Arabic Logic*, 18.

[582] The logical works of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and Ibn Bihrīz have been edited and published together in M.T. Dānishpazhūh, *al-Manṭq li-Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ wa Ḥudūd al-manṭiq li-Ibn Bihrīz* (Tehran: Anjumân-i Shâhanshâhi Falsafah-i Iran, 1978).

[583] Rescher, *The Development of Arabic Logic*, 100. It must also be kept in mind that "Aristotelian logic was a central tool" in debates between Syriac-speaking Christians and that, "a focus on logic fits the ongoing Christological disputes, which were very much based on ontology and semantics." Adam Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 130. Thus, al-Qāsim's

treatise on logic by al-Naẓẓām (d. ca. 836 or 845)[584] entitled *Kitāb al-Manṭiq*,[585] which is no longer extant. Thus, while al-Qāsim's use of *manṭiq* to refer to logic is earlier than the figures who receive the most attention in studies on the history and development of Arabic logic, it falls within the period that *manṭiq* is beginning to be used to refer to "logic" and al-Qāsim demonstrates that his familiarity with then-contemporary scholarly trends and discussions.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Al-Qāsim's argument in the first section of his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* meanders at times and occasionally retraces its steps, but it ultimately comes back to a recurring theme: God is eternal, uncreated, and necessarily above all created things, while Jesus demonstrates that he is none of those things by virtue of his humanity and its requisite limitations. To argue this, al-Qāsim stresses the necessity of the similarity between the progenitor and the generated, which would reasonably lead to the multiplication of divinity if Christian doctrines about God and Jesus were true. He considers such associations to be necessarily entailed in the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation –the former, which would make God into a plurality, and the latter, which forces God into the limitations of humanity. He argues that both render divinity meaningless. Al-Qāsim argues that God, by virtue of His nature, must be completely unique and utterly unlike anything in creation and shared divinity is a logical impossibility because it would render

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knowledge of Christian theological disputes lends further plausibility to his familiarity with and use of ideas associated with Aristotelian logic.

[584] Al-Naẓẓām was a teacher of al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868f) and was purported to have "memorized the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel, together with interpretation of them." David Thomas, s.v. "al-Naẓẓām," in *CMR1*, 620.

[585] van Ess, *Theologie und Gesselschaft*, VI:3.

both of them deficient. Jesus, suffering through the same hardships a human suffers, could not be God, nor could he be his divine Son because there is an essential similarity between the progenitor and the generated being. Jesus' essence is that of his human mother, who no Christian claims to be divine, and he shares her human limitations.

To al-Qāsim, God's divine unity and dissimilarity to the whole of the created order is his preeminent characteristic; there is no possible way that essential nature of God could be breached. Al-Qāsim considers the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation to impinge on that divine unity in the same manner as the beliefs of the *mushrikūn*. Indeed, al-Qāsim argues that Jesus was a human son, with a human mother, and they both exhibited the limiting characteristics of humanity, in line with their nature. Thus, al-Qāsim argues that the Christians are in error for distinguishing Jesus apart from themselves when he is like them. Al-Qāsim stresses Jesus' humanity and challenges his divine sonship, but does so primarily by means of rationalistic argumentation. That is not to say that al-Qāsim ignores the Qur'ān, but it is used primarily in a supporting role after he has presented an argument built on rational principles.

Al-Qāsim's treatise demonstrates that he is familiar with Christian and philosophical ideas circulating at the time. Because he was writing in the early ninth century, the provenance of some of his philosophical sources is unclear, particularly as translations of Aristotle's works into Arabic prior to al-Qāsim's treatise are no longer extant. With this in mind, there is a strong possibility that it was not Aristotle's works directly to which al-Qāsim had access, but rather Aristotelian ideas as filtered through Christian sources, which is discussed in Chapter 7. It is clear even in this first section of his treatise, which only briefly touches on Christian beliefs, that al-Qāsim is familiar with

190

Christian theology beyond simple creedal statements.[586] Furthermore, Muslim polemicists and theologians after al-Qāsim would touch on many of the same ideas present in his works. That is not to say, however, that al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* was widely disseminated. Rather, it seems that al-Qāsim is conversant with then-contemporary theological and philosophical thought, both Muslim and Christian, and other polemicists picked up and discussed similar ideas from the wider milieu.

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[586] Al-Qāsim explores Christian doctrines more thoroughly in the second section of his treatise, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6
WHAT THE *NAṢĀRĀ* DEFINE OF THEIR DOCTRINES:
SECTION TWO OF *AL-RADD ʿALĀ AL-NAṢĀRĀ*

This chapter analyzes the second section of al-Qāsim's treatise (314.8 – 318.13)

in which he summarizes the Christian doctrines of the Trinity (*tathlīth*),[587] Incarnation

(*tajassud*),[588] and atonement (*sabab nuzūl al-ibn al-ilāhī,* the reason of the descent of the

divine son).[589] While the first section of his treatise sought to establish the divine unity

and transcendence of God over all creation in contrast to Jesus' humanity and resultant

limitations, the second section turns exclusively to Christian beliefs according to the

words and works of their own scholars. Unfortunately, al-Qāsim does not provide the

names of any of his sources for his summaries of Christian belief and while similarities

between al-Qāsim's summaries and the works of Christian scholars can be drawn, these

are only similarities and there are no obvious quotations from known texts. Rather than

remain within the Islamic and qur'ānic framework in which he proved to be adept in the

first section, al-Qāsim allows Christian scholars to articulate their own beliefs. In doing

so, he demonstrates his facility with Christian doctrine and recognizes points of

agreement among Christian ecclesiastical communities. Furthermore, he articulates their

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[587] *al-Radd*, 314.23 - 316.3.

[588] Ibid., 316.3 - 316.10.

[589] Ibid., 317.8 - 318.4.

points of disagreement over Christology, specifically in regard to the union of the human and divine in Jesus as articulated by the three communities[590] with which he would have had the most contact: *al-Rūm* (Chalcedonian Orthodox, frequently referred to as Melkites),[591] *al-Yaʿqūbiyyūn* (Jacobites/Monophysites),[592] and *al-Nasṭūriyyūn* (Nestorians/Church of the East).[593] While al-Qāsim's treatment of Christian doctrines may not be as detailed or as philosophically rigorous as that of his contemporary Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq (d. after 864), he demonstrates an impressive command of Christian theology and an ability to articulate it with considerable attention to detail. Further, his treatment of the doctrine of the atonement is unusual among early Muslim polemicists and demonstrates that he is not interested only in the two doctrines that impinge most on God's dissimilarity to creation, but that he is concerned with doctrines central to Christianity.

6.1 DEFINING THE *NAṢĀRĀ* ACCORDING TO THEIR DOCTRINES

Having argued that God is dissimilar to all of creation and that Jesus' humanity necessitates that he is like his mother in essence in the first section of his treatise, al-Qāsim begins his summary of Christian doctrines by laying out the parameters of a fair debate. He considers that it is necessary for one who is impartial in debate to mention

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[590] See Chapter 3.4 and 3.5 for further discussion of the ecclesiastical communities with which al-Qāsim would have been familiar. Also, see Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, 11-12. While al-Qāsim uses the terms "Jacobite" and "Nestorian," he uses "*Rūm*" instead of "Melkite," which points toward the political and theological differences between the Muslim community and the Christian community expressed in the Qur'ān's *Surat al-Rūm* (30).

[591] *al-Radd*, 316.10-20.

[592] Ibid., 316.20-317.2.

[593] Ibid., 317.2-8.

what his adversary believes, using evidence from his religious sect (*madhhab*) and his

teachings (*maqālat*).[594] Doing so clarifies any confusion he had about his opponent's

beliefs and makes their falsehood more evident.[595] Because of this careful cataloguing of

an adversary's beliefs, he argues that his reply will thus be "rhetorically superior (*ablagh*)

and comprehensive (*ajmaʿ*)."[596]

Al-Qāsim then shifts from general rules for debate to the specific circumstances

of his treatise. He identifies the *Naṣārā* as the opponents he will be debating and that an

exposition (*tabyīn*) of what they fabricate (*iftaraw*) about God is necessary.[597] Having

established the rules for debate as well as the opponent with which he is concerned, he

declares the purpose and scope of his summary:

> Let anyone who reads our book understand those of their teachings that we will
> deal with fairly and describe, if God wills, using what is known by scholars from
> each sect among them. We will examine all of what they examine themselves in
> regard to doctrine. Then we will dispute with them about the truth of their
> doctrines with a better and rhetorically superior argument. We will invite them to
> the way of our Lord and their Lord with wisdom and clarity. We will exhort
> concerning it, if God wills, with an eloquent, superior exhortation. Praise be to
> God, who says to His Messenger (Blessings be upon him and upon his family):
> 'Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute
> with them by means of what is better. Surely your Lord – He knows who goes
> astray from His way, and He knows the ones who are (rightly) guided.'[598]
> Regarding all of this, we ask God for the preservation (*ʿiṣmah*)[599] of the guides

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[594] Ibid., 314.8-9.

[595] Ibid., 314.10.

[596] Ibid., 314.11.

[597] In support, he quotes Qur'ān 42:16, "They dispute concerning God," and Qur'ān 22:19, "They are two opponents who dispute about their Lord."

[598] Qur'ān 16:125

[599] Lane notes that according to *Taj al-ʿarūs,* "'*iṣmat al-anbīyā* signifies God's preservation of the prophets; first, by the peculiar endowment of them with essential purity of constitution; then, by the conferring of large and highly-esteemed excellences; then, by aid against opponents, and rendering their feet firm; then, by sending down upon them tranquility." Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2066-2067. *'Iṣmah* can also be rendered as "infallibility," (see Hans Wehr, s.v. "*ʿ – ṣ – m,*" *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*) and al-Qāsim's use of it here might point to his self-consideration as an imam.

(*hudāh murshīdun*). This is a book [in which] the *Naṣārā* define their doctrine.[600] We have examined (*qad istaqṣaynā*) all of their principles; if God wills, let anyone from the communities (*umam*) who wants to understand them do so.[601]

Al-Qāsim's statement reveals the following: (1) his intended audience; (2) the content of this section and his sources; and (3) his purpose.

Regarding the first point, he is writing for a Muslim audience. While the disputational genre is written in the context of interfaith interaction, the texts themselves were generally written to be read by one's own faithful. Al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is not unusual in that regard, and is meant to inform the reader of the doctrines of the Christians (as well as refute them). Presumably, Christians would have been familiar with their own beliefs and thus it is likely a Muslim audience al-Qāsim has in mind. And from all indications, the treatise seems to have circulated only within the Zaydī community even if it was initially intended for a wider Muslim audience.

Regarding the second point, al-Qāsim states that he is attempting to describe Christian beliefs fairly, which was not apparently the case in the first section of his work, which in some ways relied on characterizations of Christianity from the Qur'ān. While he often described Christian beliefs in that section with a degree of accuracy, this section avoids the Qur'ān altogether after this introduction. He is setting out Christians' beliefs, as he notes, according to what is known by their own scholars from each sect. Further, he is focused on the doctrines Christians are concerned with, as judged by his claim that "we will examine *(sanastaqṣī)* all of what they examine themselves in regard to doctrine." It is perhaps his focus on Christians' own doctrinal interests that leads al-Qāsim to include a

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[600] The copyists of 3 of the 5 manuscripts of this text noted this particular line as a break between sections in the *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. For further discussion of this, see Chapter 4.2.

[601] *al-Radd*, 314.14-23.

summary of the doctrine of the atonement when Muslim polemicists contemporary to him did not.

Regarding the third point, al-Qāsim notes that the purpose for which he is describing Christian beliefs in this way is in order to challenge them by presenting a superior argument than theirs. This line of argumentation requires that he not present a false or caricatured presentation of Christian beliefs that Christians could immediately challenge as being inconsistent with their own beliefs. Al-Qāsim is concerned with this out of a qur'ānic mandate to invite people to the "way of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition." Al-Qāsim is interested in debate with Christians in this treatise; thus anyone who was similarly inclined would have the necessary material to understand the *Naṣārā* according to their own doctrines. Having established his audience, parameters, sources, and the purpose for which he is writing, al-Qāsim begins his careful articulation of Christian doctrines.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE TRINITY

Although al-Qāsim's understanding of the fundamental nature of God necessitates disagreement with central Christian doctrines, one cannot say that al-Qāsim's disagreement with Christian theology stems from ignorance. In this section, he lays aside qur'ānic formulations of the doctrine and instead articulates Christian formulations with an impressive degree of clarity and accuracy, while doing so in rhymed prose. Initially, in his summary of the doctrine of the Trinity, al-Qāsim considers all Christians to believe similarly, something which he does not do in his later summaries of the Incarnation when he divides them into the sects of the *Rūm*, the Jacobites, and the Nestorians. While al-

196

Qāsim does not make it explicit, his contemporary, Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq does, stating, "the majority of Christians already possessed a view about the Trinity and the Uniting before the split into Jacobites, Melkites and Nestorians."[602] Al-Qāsim appears to be working under the same understanding of the development of Christian Trinitarian theology and does not note any differences of doctrine between the three ecclesiastical communities in regard to the doctrine.

While the three Christian communities' respective articulations of the doctrine of the Incarnation had obvious implications for the Trinity – in that who the person of Jesus is affects how he relates to the other two persons of the Trinity – their theological division was more specifically in regard to the Incarnation. Al-Qāsim points out that all three communities believed that God is "three separate persons" (*thalāthat ashkhāṣ muftariqah*), and "one harmonious nature" (*ṭabīʿah wāḥidah muttafiqah*).[603] Thomas has called attention to al-Qāsim's use of *ashkhāṣ* for the persons of the Trinity, noting that, "its major emphasis is on the hypostases as individuals, unlike the Arabic speaking Christians who emphasise the identity between them, and it turns the Trinity into a community."[604]

While there may be problems with the use of *ashkhāṣ* to refer to the persons of the Trinity, I am hesitant to accuse al-Qāsim of being more aware of the precision of the

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[602] David Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 73.

[603] *al-Radd*, 314.23-315.1. Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, a contemporary of al-Qāsim, summarizes the Trinity in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-thalāth firaq min al-naṣārā* with more precision than al-Qāsim, noting that "the Jacobites and Nestorians claim that the Eternal One is one substance (*jawhar*) and three hypostases (*aqānīm*)." Then, regarding the Melkites, that they "claim that the Eternal One is one substance (*jawhar*) possessing three hypostases (*aqānīm*)." Thomas, *Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"*, 67.

[604] David Thomas, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Abbasid Era," in *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 84.

wording regarding the persons of the Trinity than Christians were able to articulate. In

fact, al-Qāsim later refers to the persons of the Trinity using the term "*aqānīm*," noting

that "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, whether their obtention is by reason (*ʿaql*)

or by sensory perception (*ḥass*) have become as one single person in regard to essence

(*dhāt*) and nature (*ṭabīʿah*), and three in number in regard to hypostases (*aqānīm*), which

are persons (*ashkhāṣ*)."[605] Thus, al-Qāsim glosses *aqānīm* as *ashkhāṣ,* and considers them

to refer to the same concept.

The equivocation of important theological terminology evident in al-Qāsim's

work is a result of the fact that Christians had not settled on adequate terms in Arabic for

Trinitarian theology by the time al-Qāsim was writing. Thomas takes note of this and

writes,

> It might have been easier for the Christians if they had found a suitable range of
> vocabulary. The usual term in Arabic for hypostasis was *uqnūm,* a transliteration
> of the Syriac *qnōmā.* This was often translated or glossed as 'individual' (*shakhṣ*),
> as we have noted above, a term which had the merit of safeguarding the
> distinction between the hypostases and allaying notions that they were no more
> than modes of the divine essence.[606]

Indeed, even though Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq uses more precise terminology, which is perhaps

the benefit of further work in the development of definitions for Christian theological

terms in Arabic in the years between al-Qāsim's text and his own, Thomas notes that

there is still confusion over the terms. He writes, "They vary over the interpretation of the

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

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[605] *al-Radd*, 315.23-24.

[606] Thomas, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Abbasid Era," 95.

(ṣifāt)."[607] Even Abū Qurrah uses two different terms (*wajh* pl. *wujūh,* and *uqnūm* pl.

aqānīm) for the persons of the Trinity in his treatise on the topic.[608] Thus, al-Qāsim's use

of *ashkhāṣ* for the persons of the Trinity is not particularly egregious considering the

confusion over the precise articulation of the term by Christians themselves. Even the

more rigorously philosophical examination of Christianity by Abū ʿĪsā al-Warraq notes

that *ashkhāṣ* was in use for the persons of the Trinity.

Apart from the discrepancy over the precise articulation of "persons," al-Qāsim's

summary of the doctrine of the Trinity is theologically consistent with the formulation in

the Athanasian Creed, which explicitly states that each person of the Trinity equally

possesses the attributes of infinity, eternality, omnipotence, uncreatedness, Godhood, and

Lordship, yet there are not three Gods who possess these attributes; rather, Christians

worship "one God in trinity and Trinity in unity without either confusing the persons or

dividing the substance."[609] St. John of Damascus' formulation, although originally

composed in Greek, could have been translated into Arabic by this time and been

available to al-Qāsim either directly or through the medium of his Christian contacts.

John explains, "In the Divinity we confess one nature (*physis*), while we hold three really

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[607] Thomas, *Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"*, 69. Griffith also draws attention to al-Jāḥiẓ's accusation that "the Christian doctrinal formulae, at least when expressed in Arabic, simply make no sense." Sidney Griffith, "Ḥabīb ibn Khidmah Abū Rāʾiṭah: A Christian *Mutakallim* of the First Abbasid Century," in *The Beginnings of Christian Theology in Arabic: Muslim-Christian Encounters in the Early Islamic Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2002), 165.

[608] See the discussion in Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 212 ff.

[609] Athanasius, *Athanasian Creed*, trans., J.N.D. Kelly. While the creed is probably falsely attributed to its eponym Athanasius, it was written prior to the seventh century and would thus reflect Christian ideas regarding the Trinity with which the three Christian ecclesiastical communities mentioned in al-Qāsim's treatise agreed.

existing Persons (*hypostasis*)."[610] Abū Qurrah's formulation in Arabic in his *The Orthodox Faith* (*al-Imānah al-urthūdhuksiyyah*) is similar, "Three hypostases, one nature" (*aqānīm thalāthah ṭabīʿah wāḥidah*).[611] None of these works may prove to be the direct source for al-Qāsim's understanding of Christian doctrines, and al-Qāsim's rhymed prose writing style makes it particularly difficult to determine his sources because he changes word order and chooses words as needed for the rhyme. However, the theological consistency between al-Qāsim's version and theirs serves as further evidence for the accuracy with which he has reproduced the Christian formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Trinity played an important role in the liturgy of the Church and the Arabic-speaking Christians with whom al-Qāsim interacted would have likely been able to formulate something similar to the version given above. In particular, those Christians with whom al-Qāsim was engaging in debate would have been well-versed in doctrine and it would be no surprise if he had obtained it from such a source. Regardless of the exact provenance, al-Qāsim's formulation is within the bounds of Christian articulation of the doctrine and leaves no room for accusations of misrepresentation. Al-Qāsim's summary of the Trinity is as follows:

> That is like the sun in relation to what is perceived by the senses; it is one unique sun in its perfection and its essence (*dhāt*), and it is three different things as far as its state (*ḥāl*) and its attributes (*ṣifāt*) are concerned, each one of which is different from the other in its individuality (*shakhṣ*) and its attributes (*ṣifāt*) although it is itself (*huwa huwa*) in its essence (*dhāt*) and its nature (*ṭabīʿah*). Then from that they claim that the sun, in regard to its disk is like the Father, and its light in relation to it is like the Son, and that its heat in relation to it is like the Spirit. And

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[610] Quoted in Thomas, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Abbasid Era," 81.

[611] Ignace Dick, "Deux Écrits Inédits de Théodore Abuqurra," *Le Muséon* 72, no. 1-2 (1959): 56.

then, it is still a sun about which nobody doubts that it is one thing, even if it has this multiplicity. Because the sun, if its light is separated from it, it is not called a sun. Likewise, if its heat is separated from it, it is also not called a sun. The sun is only named and called a sun when all of these things are brought together in it.[612]

This analogy for the Trinity provided by al-Qāsim is in use as early as the third-century

theologian, Sabellius,[613] although it also found proponents among Christian apologists

contemporary to al-Qāsim such as Abū Rāʾitā. He writes in his *On the Proof of the*

Christian Religion,

> It is not permissible for us to describe [the *ousia*] as a plurality, that is as 'gods',
> but rather [only] as one, as we say about the sun, for it is a being [*dhāt*] of three
> existent individuals (*ashkhāṣ dhātiyyah*) and [three] substantial attributes (*ṣifāṭ*
> *jawhariyyah*) without difference of separation from their one *ousia* (*jawhar*). [It
> is] that which is called 'one sun' because of its genuine existence and uniqueness
> in its singularity, a being one *ousia*, comprehending three known properties, that
> is, the sun disc which is described with two substantial attributes, which are the
> light and the heat, since [the sun] does not cease to be described with the two
> [attributes], in that it does not cease to generate the light, [which is] generated
> simultaneously with the existence of the sun disc from before time, without one of
> [the attributes] having existed prior to the other two.[614]

Another Christian apologist, Timothy I (d. 823), the catholicos of the Church of the East

residing in Baghdad, also used this analogy in his debate with the caliph al-Mahdi (r.

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[612] *al-Radd*, 315.7-315.14.

[613] "Epiphanius says, that the Sabellians were accustomed to explain their doctrine [of the Trinity] by a comparison with the sun, thus: In the sun there is but one substance, but there are three powers, namely, the illuminating power, the warming power, and the circular form. The warming power answers to the Holy Spirit; the illuminating power, to the Son; and the form or figure, to the Father." John Lawrence Mosheim, *Historical Commentaries on the State of Christianity During the First Three Hundred and Twenty-Five Years* (New York: S. Converse, 1854), 220.

[614] Sandra Toenies Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth" in the Early Islamic Period: The Christian Apologies of Abū Rāʾiṭah* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 113. For a discussion of the terms used by Abū Rāʾiṭah in his description of the Trinity, see Seppo Rissanen, *Theological Encounter of Oriental Christians with Islam during Early Abbasid Rule* (Finland: Åbo Akademis Förlag, 1993), 144-146. This analogy for the Trinity is also in Abū Rāʾiṭah's *Second Risālah on the Incarnation*, although with an emphasis on its relation to the Incarnation. He writes: "[Yet, a possible] example are the light and illumination of the sun, incarnated in the seeing eye, to which [also] belong its brightness and heat. [There is no] separation in location between the sun disc and its brightness and heat because of their union. That which is incarnated of [the light, heat, etc.] in the eye is the brightness alone, not the disc and heat. And no one says that he sees the disc and the heat incarnated in the seeing eye in the same way its brightness is incarnated." Toenies Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth"*, 229.

775-785) when he was challenged on the question of the Trinity,[615] and a similar analogy was also used by ʿAmmār al- Baṣrī,[616] Abū Qurrah,[617] and the anonymous writer of the eighth-century treatise, *On the Triune Nature of God*.[618] This analogy comparing the Trinity to the sun was not employed by one particular Christian community to the exclusion of the others but had popularity across the ecclesiastical communities as a means of explaining the doctrine, particularly in the eighth and ninth centuries in the context of Muslim-Christian interaction. As a result, it is impossible to trace this particular analogy in al-Qāsim's text to a single source, and it is more likely that he would have encountered it repeatedly in his interactions and debates with Christians of various communities, as well as in the Christian theological texts in Arabic to which he would have had access.

The next analogy al-Qāsim includes for the Trinity is that of the multiplicity and unity seen in a single person. Just as the sun is collectively many things but known as one thing, al-Qāsim notes that the Christians say, "The human is likewise– although he is as one in regard to humanity, we see him and you see him as a great number of things–

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[615] Rissanen, *Theological Encounter*, 146.

[616] Madelung, "al-Qāsim and Christian Theology," 43-44.

[617] Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 188.

[618] "This is like the disc of the Sun which is in the heaven, and the rays which issue from the Sun, and the heat which comes from the Sun, each from the other. We do not say that these are three suns, but one Sun, and these are three names not to be distinguished from one another." Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles from an Eighth or Ninth Century MS in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise On The Triune Nature of God with Translation, from the Same Codex*, ed. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, trans. Margaret Dunlop Gibson, Studia Sinaitica (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1899), English trans. on p. 4, Arabic text on p. 87. Beaumont has noted that *On the Triune Nature of God* "comes from the same Chalcedonian community to which John [of Damascus] belonged." Mark Beaumont, "The Holy Spirit in Early Christian Dialogue with Muslims," in *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter: Essays in Honour of David Thomas*, ed. Douglas Pratt et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 44. There are various positions on the precise date of the manuscript, although there is general agreement that it was written in the eighth century. For a brief summary of the different scholarly views and the texts in which its dating is discussed, see ibid., 45, fn. 7.

among which are his soul (*nafs*), his body (*jasad*), his life (*ḥayāh*), and his speech

(*manṭiq*)."[619] He then goes on to detail that each of these individual parts are not identical

to each other: "his body is not psychic (*nafsāniyyah*)" and "his speech is not his life."[620]

Thus, these individual parts make up a man, but are not identical to one another.

While there is not a direct correlation that can be made between al-Qāsim's

formulation and a particular Christian text, a similar analogy for the Trinity was in use

much earlier among Christian theologians[621] as well as contemporary Christian apologists

such as Theodore Abū Qurrah. In his *al-Mujādalah* (*Debate*)*,* he provides the following

analogy for the Trinity to a man: the Father is the mind (*ʿaql*), the Son is the word

(*kalimah*) begotten in the mind, and the Spirit (*rūḥ*) is the one who proceeds from the

mind and the word.[622] Additionally, in his *On the Trinity,* Abū Qurrah states, "God and

His Word and Spirit are one God, as the human and his word and spirit are one

human."[623] Abū Qurrah's analogy has a more direct correspondence between the persons

of the Trinity and what they are analogized to, although both he and al-Qāsim employ the

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[619] *al-Radd*, 315.14-15.

[620] Ibid., 315.15-16. He follows this up by explaining the logic behind differentiating speech from life, which is summed up, "if life were speech, then every living being would speak." Ibid., 315.20-21. Cf. al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 47.

[621] Again, there is a similarity between al-Qāsim's formulation and that of Sabellius: "Epiphanius says that the doctrine of the Sabellians distinguished, in the one God, three names, or three activities. He uses two similes: as in one man the body, the soul and the spirit are distinguished, so, in God, the Father is like the body, the Son is like the soul, and the Spirit is like the divine spirit." Bernard Lonergan, *The Way to Nicaea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1976), 39. Interestingly, Abū Qurrah comments in his *Confession of Faith* that the Trinity is "not one hypostasis, as Sabellius claims." Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 151. Perhaps, then, Sabellius' doctrinal formulations would have had some traction in this milieu as Abū Qurrah considered them worth countering.

[622] Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 170.

[623] English translation in Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 190. Noted in Madelung, "al-Qāsim and Christian Theology," 44; Awad, *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms*, 171.

idea that a man is considered as one thing, though he is composed of various aspects.

It is apparent that al-Qāsim's representation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was in line with common Christian formulations of the doctrine and does not reveal any sympathy to the tri-theistic qur'ānic formulation of the doctrine al-Qāsim referred to earlier in his treatise. While he names no sources in his text, it is clear he had access to the works of Christian theologians and likely consulted Christians in order to formulate their beliefs accurately in this section of his treatise. Furthermore, the analogies he provided to explain the Trinity had been in use for centuries and were common among theologians and apologists from each of the three Christian ecclesiastical communities to which he refers in his treatise. He thus demonstrates that he is well versed in the theological positions of the Christian communities he is attempting to refute.

Al-Qāsim is also careful to note the distinction Christians make between the hypostases of the Trinity as well as their unity of substance. He writes,

> The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, whether they perceived by reason or sense (ʿaql aw ḥass), are one single person in essence (dhāt) and nature (ṭabīʿah). And concerning the hypostases (aqānīm), which are the persons (ashkhāṣ), they are three in number. Thus, nature brings them together and forms them into one, whereas the hypostases divides them and makes them numerically diverse.[624]

Al-Qāsim is also careful to not confuse the distinct hypostases of the Trinity, as does another ninth-century Muslim polemicist, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī, who "equates, in the most absolute sense, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The concepts of hypostatic distinction and substantial unicity are completely absent, and the standard *Scutum Fidei* has utterly collapsed."[625] In contrast, al-Qāsim notes that Christians affirm that "the Father is not the

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[624] *al-Radd*, 315.23-25.

[625] Hackenburg, "Voices of the Converted: Apostate Literature in Medieval Islam," 101-2. The *Scutum*

Son, and the Son is not the Spirit," which is in line with the descriptions of the Trinity as expressed in Christian theological texts written prior to al-Qāsim.

After demonstrating his awareness of the hypostatic distinction between the persons of the Trinity, al-Qāsim provides the following brief synopsis: "They are all one in regard to nature (*ṭabīʿah*) and essence (*dhāt*), and they are three in regard to the hypostases (*aqānīm*): a spirit, a son, and a progenitor father (*ab wālid*)."[626] He then demonstrates that Christians consider them to be similar in regard to their essence. He notes, "one of them did not precede another in existence (*wujūd*), eternity (*azalī*), or sempiternity (*qidam*)."[627] It is obvious that al-Qāsim is familiar with Christian formulations of the Trinity and is able to express them clearly as he attempts to allow Christians to express their beliefs in their own words.

6.3 THE INCARNATION

After summarizing the doctrine of the Trinity and some of the more common analogies used to explain it, al-Qāsim moves on to summarizing a doctrine whose precise formulation had divided the Church centuries earlier – the Incarnation. First, he briefly covers the aspects of that doctrine upon which the Nestorians, the Jacobites and the *Rūm* are supposed to have agreed.[628] He notes the purpose for which the Incarnation is

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Fidei developed in order to visually represent the doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in the so-called Athanasian Creed (ca. 5th or 6th century). While the *Scutum Fidei* is clearly not being considered by al-Qāsim as its earliest attestation is in a 1208-1216 manuscript of Peter of Poitiers' *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi* [The Compendium of History in the Genealogy of Christ], the theology it articulates was well-represented in the creedal formulations of the Church prior to the writing of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*.

[626] *al-Radd*, 315.26 - 316.1.

[627] Ibid., 316.3.

[628] Ibid., 316.3-9.

supposed to have occurred: "one of them, the son, was sent down to the earth and humankind as a mercy."[629] While al-Qāsim does not discuss here the manner in which Jesus being sent down to earth was a mercy, he returns to this discussion when he summarizes the doctrine of the atonement.[630]

Al-Qāsim is also careful to note the continued relationship between the hypostases after Jesus was made incarnate, and that it was "without him being separated from the Father or the Spirit."[631] While he has previously noted the hypostatic distinction between the persons of the Trinity and their unity of substance, it is important for al-Qāsim's articulation of Christian doctrine that he recognizes that, according to Christians, the Incarnation was accomplished without Jesus being separated from the other persons of the Trinity. Despite his continued unity with the Father and Spirit, Christians consider Jesus to have been sent down "to the Virgin Mary" (ilā Maryam al-ʿadhrāʾ) from whom "he took a veil (ḥijāb) and a covering (sitr),"[632] and "he became incarnate (tajassada) from her in a complete body in regard to all its humanity (insāniyyah)."[633] Al-Qāsim recognizes that Christians consider Jesus to have been complete in his humanity, not simply assuming some aspects of that nature when he took a body. Rather, "he ate just as a man eats, and he drank, and he traveled on his two legs, and he endeavored and he

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[629] Ibid., 316.3-4.

[630] See Chapter 6.5.

[631] al-Radd, 316.4-5.

[632] Cf. Hebrews 10:20, which refers to Jesus' body (jasad) as a veil (ḥijāb). Referring to the body as a veil occurs also in al-Qāsim's discussion of the atonement, particularly in relation to the way in which the body was used to hide and deceive Satan from recognizing Jesus' divinity. See Chapter 6.5 and 6.6.

[633] al-Radd, 316.5-6.

became tired."[634]

While the aforementioned actions are aspects of Jesus' humanity that Christians agree upon, al-Qāsim has already demonstrated that he considers these particular limitations of humanity that characterize Jesus to preclude his divinity. Still, al-Qāsim refrains here from interjecting or commenting but presents Christianity as Christians themselves articulate it, noting that they also consider Jesus to have "submitted himself to crucifixion" and "to what happened to him in terms injury and hardship."[635]

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6.4 THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION
ACCORDING TO THE RŪM, JACOBITES, AND NESTORIANS

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Immediately following the aspects of the Incarnation on which the different Christian communities agree, al-Qāsim introduces his next section, noting that, "Thereafter, the *Naṣārā* differed in what they claim concerning the son (*ibn*) and generated one (*walad*), and what his incarnation (*tajassud*) consisted of in regard to what they claim concerning the body (*jasad*)."[636] All three communities professed Jesus' incarnation but disagree on the details of how the divinity and humanity were united.[637] Al-Qāsim thus divides his summary of the doctrine according to the following three

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[634] Ibid., 316.6.

[635] Ibid., 316.8-9.

[636] Ibid., 316.9-10.

[637] ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī downplays the disagreement between the three communities, stating: "If they say that the Christians differ among themselves, we say, it is about the created body. Some of them name it an hypostasis, and some deny this. In regard to the Creator they do not differ. What they say about him is 'one', 'incomprehensible'. Rather, their agreement about the Creator in His appearance in their body is greater than their agreement about the body, and so also is their statement about Him, that He is one, recognized in three hypostases, who is in every place unlimited, incomprehensible. Their disagreement about the body which they can see, to the point that some say it is an hypostasis, and others two hypostases, is over and above their agreement that that in which the Creator is made manifest is a body and a soul." Translated and quoted in Griffith, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Burhān*," 177.

communities—the *Rūm* (Byzantine Orthodox), the Jacobites (West Syrian/Monophysite), and the Nestorians (Church of the East).[638]

In regard to the *Rūm*, the language formulated about the Incarnation at the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) verifies that al-Qāsim's articulation of the doctrine according to the *Rūm* is consistent. The Council of Chalcedon declared that, in regard to Jesus, "at no point was the difference between the two natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being."[639] Al-Qāsim makes a point to note in his summary of the teachings of the *Rūm* that although Jesus took a nature from Mary, he did not take a hypostasis from her and that they say (*fa-qālat fī-hi al-rūm*), "Christ was a complete human with two natures (*ṭabīʿatayn*), although he was one hypostasis (*uqnūm*), not two. Christ was thus the eternally begotten Son of God (*ibn allāh al-azalī al-mawlūd*) and the two natures that were existent in him acted together."[640]

Al-Qāsim's formulation of the *Rūm*'s doctrinal position concerning the Incarnation is similar to that articulated by Abū Qurrah: "After he had become human, the eternal Son was one hypostasis possessed of two natures."[641] While the correlation between al-Qāsim's and Abū Qurrah's formulation is not conclusive evidence that al-Qāsim had access to sources by Abū Qurrah, there is a very clear resonance between the

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[638] While there are various names to refer to each of these communities that might more properly reflect their identity without any pejorative connotations, I refer to them in this dissertation by the names as al-Qāsim uses (i.e., *Rūm,* Jacobites, and Nestorians) in order to limit confusion.

[639] Quoted in Adolf Ritter, s.v. "Council of Chalcedon," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*.

[640] *al-Radd*, 316.15-16. Thomas notes that al-Qāsim's use of *uqnūm* shows that he is using "typically Arabic Christian coinages" in his "impartial account of Christian doctrine." Thomas, "Christian Theologians and New Questions," 263.

[641] Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 152.

two. Al-Qāsim then notes the manner in which the two natures interacted. They consider "that which is in regard to human characteristics (*ṭibāʿ al-ins*) are from the activity of the human nature" (*ʿamal al-ṭabīʿah al-insāniyyah*), while actions such as resurrecting the dead and healing the blind and leper[642] were "the activity of the divine nature" (*ʿamal al-ṭabīʿah al-ilāhiyyah*)."[643] Thus, al-Qāsim recognizes that Chalcedonian Christology considers the person of Jesus to have both human and divine natures, with the characteristics of each nature exhibited as a result, but in one hypostasis.

Next, al-Qāsim provides the Jacobite articulation of the doctrine of the Incarnation, noting that "according to the Jacobites (*li-l-Yaʿqūbiyyah*)," "he took a body from the Virgin Mary and he became incarnate in it, and he became altogether one."[644] Al-Qāsim's presentation accurately represents the Jacobite position on the Incarnation: Christ did not have two natures or two hypostases, he had one single nature that was both human and divine and that one nature was housed in one hypostasis. Al-Qāsim also provides the following Jacobite analogy for the Incarnation:

> They said: 'Do you not see that man is [composed] of spirit and body, but then is called a man by means of one name? You see both of them, although he is called a 'man'. Is it not said to both of them that they are 'two' in regard to humanity (*al-insāniyyah*), but it is said that he is one man, and he is, as you know, a spirit and a body.' They said: 'Likewise, Christ, who is the joining together of divinity

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[642] The association of these miraculous actions with Jesus' divine nature has ramifications in al-Qāsim's reformulation of Matthew. See Chapter 8.5.

[643] *al-Radd*, 316.18-20. Al-Qāsim's representation of Christian theology is consistent with the formulation of the Chalcedonian Christian, John of Damascus: "It was also the same with our Lord Jesus Christ. While the power of working miracles was an operation of His divinity, the work of His hands, His willing, and His saying: 'I will. Be thou made clean,' were operations belonging to His humanity. And as to the effect, the breaking of the loaves, the hearing the leper, and the 'I will' belong to His human nature, whereas to His divine nature belong the multiplication of the loaves and the cleansing of the leper." John of Damascus, "Orthodox Faith," in *Writings*, ed. Hermigild Dressler, trans. Frederic H. Chase, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 3:15 (p. 305).

[644] *al-Radd*, 316.22.

(*al-lāhūt*) and human nature (*al-nāsūt*), is called Christ.'[645]

This formulation is consistent with that of the Jacobite Abū Rāʾiṭah, who explains the

Incarnation as follows,

> He is united with [the body] in a hypostatic [*qnūman*], natural [*ṭabīʿiyyan*], and
> substantial [*jawhariyyan*] union, just as the spiritual soul is united with the human
> body (which is constructed from the four temperaments), without change to either
> of the two that are united, that is the Word and the body. And because of this, the
> number of the two *ousiae* comes to result in one existent *ousia* in Him, on account
> of His combining and uniting two different things, namely the Word and the body
> possessing a rational soul.[646]

As is evident, al-Qāsim demonstrates his familiarity with Jacobite distinctives concerning

the manner in which the divine and human were united in the person.

Finally, al-Qāsim presents Nestorian teachings on the Incarnation.[647] Similar to

the *Rūm*, the Nestorians understood the person of Jesus to have two natures after the

Incarnation, although the difference between the two communities' respective positions

lies in the fact that the Nestorians claim each nature had its own hypostasis in the one

person of the Son. Al-Qāsim recognizes this distinction, noting that "the Nestorians say

(*wa-qālat al-Nasṭūriyyah*)," "Christ had two complete natures (*ṭabīʿatayn*) and two

hypostases (*uqnūmayn*) after his incarnation in a body."[648] The theology of the

Incarnation as understood by the Nestorian community was encapsulated in in the sixth-

century Advent and Christmas hymn "*Brykh Hannana*" by Babai. It includes:

> Christ is one, the Son of God, more honored than all, in two natures. In his
> Divinity he was born of the Father, without beginning and above time. In his
> humanity he was born of Mary, in the latter times with a united flesh. Neither is

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[645] Ibid., 316.20-317.2.

[646] Toenies Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth"*, 127.

[647] *al-Radd*, 317.2-8.

[648] Ibid., 317.4.

his Divinity from the nature of the mother, nor his humanity from the Nature of the Father – the natures are unconfused [lit. 'protected'] in their *qnome*,[649] in one Person of one Sonship. And wherever there is divinity, there are three *Qnome* and one Existence. Thus is the Sonship of the Son: in two natures, one Person. Thus has the whole Church learned of the faith of the Son who is the Messiah. We adore you, O Lord, in your Divinity and in your humanity which are without division.[650]

Babai also wrote, "As the nature of God is made manifest in the property of the three

qnome of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so in the same one *parsopa* [person] of one

Lord, Jesus Christ, the two *qnome* of God and man are made known – the likeness of God

and the likeness of a servant, one Son in one union in one authority, worship and

Lordship."[651] Robert Kitchen has summarized Nestorian theology on the nature of the

Incarnation thus: "Therefore, Christ exists in one *parsopa*, consisting of two natures,

human and divine, in two *qnômê,* the Word and the Son."[652] Al-Qāsim's truncated

summary of Nestorian theology on the Incarnation perhaps glosses over some of its

nuances, although ultimately he does a serviceable job of explaining their position on the

union and distinction of the divine and the human in the person of Christ.

With these various articulations of Christian disagreements over the doctrine of

the Incarnation, al-Qāsim demonstrates that he was conversant in the nuances of

disagreement between the three sects. While he ultimately does not address these

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[649] *Qnôma* was "originally the Syriac translation of hypostasis, but as a result of the Chalcedonian identification of hypostasis with *prosôpon*, the Eastern Church differentiated *qnôma* from *parsopa*. Babai does not see *qnôma* as equivalent to hypostasis, but it is in the *parsopa*, the person, that one *qnôma* is distinguished from another and the sum total of all its properties is fixed." Robert Kitchen, "Babai the Great," in *The Orthodox Christian World*, ed. Augustine Casiday (New York: Routledge, 2012), 241. It is rendered in Arabic as *uqnūm,* pl. ʿ*aqānīm*'.

[650] Quoted in translation in Andrew Younan, *The Mesopotamian School & Theodore of Mopsuestia* (St. Peter Diocese for Chaldeans & Assyrians, 2009), 140.

[651] Quoted in ibid., 139.

[652] Kitchen, "Babai the Great," 241.

individual differences in the section of his treatise devoted to refuting Christian doctrines,

it is important to note that he recognizes where Christians agree and disagree when it

comes to the Incarnation and is able to successfully navigate the varying claims of the

Christian communities he is examining. Furthermore, the complexity of these doctrines is

only made more so by the way in which the different communities used the same terms to

express different ideas. The facility and accuracy with which al-Qāsim articulates

complex Christian doctrinal positions is impressive, and points to the likelihood that he

had access to Christian texts from each of the three ecclesiastical communities whose

doctrines he provides.

6.5 THE REASON FOR THE DESCENT OF THE DIVINE SON

An interesting feature of al-Qāsim's text, uncommon among early Muslim

polemical texts of the eighth and ninth centuries, is his articulation of the doctrine of the

atonement.[653] A precise technical equivalent to "atonement" nowhere appears in al-

Qāsim's treatise, but he is clearly concerned with the process of both why man needs

salvation within the Christian framework and how that process is achieved. He refers to

this as "the reason for the descent of the divine son" (*sabab nuzūl al-ibn al-ilāhī*).

While perhaps obvious, it must be noted that al-Qāsim's articulation of the

atonement and Jesus' crucifixion is not, as has been stated by Todd Lawson, evidence

that al-Qāsim "upheld the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus."[654] Or, as Tobias Mayer

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[653] Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's treatise deals with the atonement as well, although differently than al-Qāsim. It is considered below in relation to al-Qāsim's summary.

[654] Todd Lawson, *The Crucifixion and the Qur'an: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 77.

stated, that al-Qāsim "accepted the crucifixion at face value."[655] Rather, al-Qāsim's representation of the atonement is simply part of al-Qāsim's careful articulation of the doctrines of the Christians. His own views on the crucifixion are not discussed in his refutation, as he is more concerned with refuting the Trinity and Incarnation. However, if one is to consider al-Qāsim to have accepted the historical veracity and theological accuracy of the atonement simply based on its presence in his treatise, then one must also consider al-Qāsim to have agreed to the historical veracity and theological accuracy of the Trinity and Incarnation, which he also includes. Such a position is untenable.

The articulation of Christian soteriology first shows up in passing during al-Qāsim's general summary of the Incarnation. He writes, "The Son was sent down (*unzila*) from them [the Father and Holy Spirit] to the earth as a mercy (*raʾfah*)."[656] It appears again in his individual summaries of the differences between the Christian communities. Al Qāsim notes that, according to the Jacobites, "he left the heavens to earth and he descended as a mercy."[657] And then according to the Nestorians, "he descended as a mercy and in compassion."[658] Although there is general agreement on Jesus being sent to earth as a mercy, the particulars of how Jesus being sent to earth and submitting himself to the cross was a mercy to mankind are unclear at this point in his text, and al-Qāsim does not address it until he has finished explaining the differences on the Incarnation between the three sects.

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[655] Tobias Mayer, "A Muslim Speaks to Christians," *Priests and People: Pastoral Theology for the Modern World* January (2003): 11.

[656] *al-Radd*, 316.3-4.

[657] Ibid., 316.20-21. Cf. Qurʾān 21:107, "We have sent you only as a mercy to the worlds."

[658] Ibid., 317.4-5.

According to al-Qāsim, the "reason for the descent of the divine son" is something upon which, he claims, "every sect of the Christians, despite their differences and divisions of their doctrines" agrees.[659] While there was agreement on many aspects of this doctrine, it is an overstatement to claim that all Christians agreed on the doctrine of the atonement.[660] In particular, the three communities with which al-Qāsim is concerned debated fiercely over the nature of Christ as it pertained to the atonement because it had ramifications for their understanding of the manner in which Christ's death accomplished man's salvation. This debate relied on their differing understandings of the precise nature of Jesus as both God and Man and was thus intimately intertwined in the particulars of this debate.[661] Al-Qāsim avoid the question of who is considered to have died on the cross and instead focuses on the purpose behind this event, a position with which all three

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[659] Ibid., 317.8.

[660] As a few examples of the range of Christian thought regarding the nature of Christ's work in salvation, the anonymous author of a work (ca. 130), stresses the exchange: "He gave His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy One for transgressors, the blameless One for the wicked, the righteous One for the unrighteous, the incorruptible One for the corruptible, the immortal One for those who are mortal. For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified, than by the only Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! That the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors!" Anonymous, *The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 9. Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339) emphasized the vicarious nature of Christ's work, stating, "the Lamb of God not only did this, but was chastised on our behalf, and suffered a penalty He did not owe, but which we owed because of the multitude of our sins; and so He became the cause of the forgiveness of our sins, because He received death for us, and transferred to Himself the scourging, the insults, and the dishonour, which were due to us, and drew down on Himself the apportioned curse, being made a curse for us." Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstratio Evangelica* [The Proof of the Gospel], ed. and trans. W.J. Ferrar (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), 10:1.

[661] Theodore Abū Qurrah's *On the Death of Christ* deals specifically with this idea when he argues against the Nestorians and the Jacobites. See Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 112-117.

214

ecclesiastical communities would agree and he is thus able to sidestep the more thorny issue that divided these communities in regard to this doctrine.[662]

Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's (d. after 864) concern with the atonement is not in regard to the purpose behind Jesus' assumption of humanity, but rather the disagreements between the three communities over "whom in reality these things affected and who in reality the crucified was."[663] He proceeds to explain the differing positions of the Nestorians, Melkites, and Jacobites in that regard, but does not deal with the sin of Adam, the fall of man, or what Christians consider Jesus' crucifixion to have accomplished. Abū ʿĪsā's concerns are not the same as al-Qāsim's in this regard as this is only a subsection section of Abū ʿĪsā's treatise concerned with the nature of the persons of the Trinity rather than soteriology.

The debate within the Christian community over the particulars of the atonement (leaving aside the debate between the three communities over who exactly died on the cross) relates to the nature of a ransom being paid. The belief that there was a ransom or exchange involved in the atonement is prevalent in Christian theological discourse up through the ninth century although the particulars were still a matter of debate. Al-Qāsim does not, however, sidestep this debate, although this is perhaps because this theological divide was not along the lines of the ecclesiastical communities with which he is more

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[662] It is curious that al-Qāsim does not deal with this debate between the three communities. He claims to be writing a book defining Christians according to their own doctrine, and using what is known by scholars from each of the sects, and the debate over who died on the cross appears regularly in the debates between the theologians of the three Christian ecclesiastical communities with which al-Qāsim is concerned. For the Melkite refutation of the Nestorians and Jacobites on this point, see ibid. For the Jacobite distinction, see Toenies Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth"*, 293. ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī seems less confrontational on the point. See Griffith, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Burhān*," 177.

[663] Thomas, *Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"*, 75.

familiar. The debate centered on to whom the ransom was paid: some theologians claimed that it was paid to God, while others claimed it was paid to Satan. Both positions are elucidated by al-Qāsim in his summary of the doctrine, although he does not demonstrate any recognition that the positions were at odds with each other and offers them both as part of his summary of the atonement. He does not state them explicitly as separate doctrines, but the particular wording he uses throughout his summary reveals that he is familiar with both positions, although not familiar enough that he is able to distinguish them.

In regard to the ransom being due to Satan, al-Qāsim states that because of the "sin of Adam" (khaṭīʾat Ādam),[664] "God freed himself from him [Adam] and submitted (aslama) him to Satan;"[665] "he was in the domain (ḥayyiz) of Satan and the realm of his rule"[666] along with all his descendants, Satan "ruling over them as he liked;"[667] that "among those who were in the domain of Satan were many souls of the Prophets of God and His Messengers,"[668] and that they were in the "hand of Satan;" that, "Adam and all his descendants were in the power and hand of Satan."[669] This sets up his understanding that God could not justly deprive Satan of mankind since he had said to him, "All those who follow you belong to you."[670] Al-Qāsim repeatedly emphasizes that Adam and all his descendants had been given over to Satan's rule and were in his domain because of

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[664] *al-Radd*, 317.10.

[665] Ibid., 317.11.

[666] Ibid., 317.12.

[667] Ibid., 317.12-13.

[668] Ibid., 317.13-15.

[669] Ibid., 317.21.

[670] Ibid., 317.26-318.1.

Adam's sin. As a result, Satan has a rightful claim over all of mankind. This claim is such that God is unable then to simply take them back by force of will. Instead, Satan requires some payment in exchanged for mankind since they belong to him.

This formulation articulated by al-Qāsim can be found in the works of various church fathers, including Origen (d. 254), who stated, "Now it was the devil who was holding us, to whom we had been dragged off by our sins. Therefore, he demanded the blood of Christ as the price for us."[671] Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394) stated similarly, "Clothed in some part of that flesh which he already held captive through sin, Satan chose Jesus as a ransom for those he had shut up in death's prison."[672] More importantly to al-Qāsim's text from a chronological perspective, in a contrived dialogue by Abū Qurrah between a Christian and an unbeliever, he has the latter state, "I would like to learn how we become the devil's slaves."[673] Responding, the Christian interlocutor explains the nature of humankind's fall and then states,

> When they had become weak, he [the devil] overcame them and easily led them and their progeny into every form of pleasure, sin, and disobedience. Further, God, when human beings had rejected his command and had hastened to submit themselves to the enemy, allowed them to be tyrannized by the devil, and this was only just. It is as the Apostle said: 'If you obey any one, you show yourself that person's obedient slaves, for you are slaves of the one you obey.[674]

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[671] Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1-5*, ed. Thomas P. Halton, trans., Thomas P. Scheck, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 103 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), II.13 (p. 161).

[672] Gregory of Nyssa, *Catecheses* [Great Catechism], trans. William Moore, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, 1893), ch. 23.

[673] Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 250.

[674] Ibid. This particular text by Abū Qurrah is in Greek, so it is probably not al-Qāsim's direct source. The possibility that it or similar texts had been translated into Arabic by this time is likely, particularly because Abū Qurrah was writing in Arabic as well at this time and clearly interested in articulating Christian beliefs to an Arabic-speaking audience, whether Christian or Muslim. The last line of the quotation is similar to al-Qāsim's quotation above, "All those who follow you belong to you."

In another work, "*On the Death of Christ,*" Abū Qurrah writes of Satan's boast, "of his wisdom and wickedness, saying, 'I've enslaved the image of God; through it, the whole of creation is subject to me.'"[675] While he does not explicitly state that the ransom was paid to Satan, Abū Qurrah's conclusion that mankind was justly under the tyranny of Satan leads to no other logical conclusion. Satan then, would be due the ransom and the son would thus be purchasing mankind back from Satan through his death on the cross.

Al-Qāsim twice states in this section, however, that God is paid the ransom. He states; "the Son purchased mankind from his Father,"[676] and again, *"They said, for that reason the son purchased us from his Father."*[677] Christian writers articulate this interpretation of the doctrine as well; Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390)[678] and John of Damascus (d. after 750) both endorse this position, the latter of whom influenced Theodore Abū Qurra, whose works al-Qāsim had possibly read. John of Damascus states:

> And so for our sake He submits to death and dies and offers Himself to the Father as a sacrifice for us. For we had offended Him and it was necessary for Him to

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[675] Ibid., 126.

[676] *al-Radd*, 317.23-24.

[677] Ibid., 318.1.

[678] He writes, "To whom was that blood offered that was shed for us, and why was it shed? I mean the precious and famous blood of our God and High Priest and Sacrifice. We were detained in bondage by the Evil One, sold under sin, and receiving pleasure in exchange for wickedness. Now, since a ransom belongs only to him who holds in bondage, I ask to whom was this offered, and for what cause? If to the Evil One, fie upon the outrage! If the robber receives the ransom, not only from God, but a ransom which consists of God himself, and has such an illustrious payment for his tyranny, a payment for whose sake it would have been right for him to have left us alone altogether. But if to the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by Him that we were being oppressed; and next, On what principle did the blood of His Only Begotten Son delight the Father, who would not received even Isaac, when he was being offered by his father, but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because humanity must be sanctified by the humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, who also arranged this to the honour of the Father, whom it is manifest that He obeys in all things?" Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*, trans. Charles Gordon and James Edward Swallow Browne, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, 1894), 45:22.

take upon Himself our redemption that we might thus be loosed from the condemnation–for God forbid that the Lord's blood should have been offered to the tyrant![679]

In this understanding, the ransom is not being paid to Satan, but rather to God. If Christ's death is serving as a payment, and he is purchasing mankind from his Father, the ransom is not being paid then to the Devil based on al-Qāsim's statements that the Christians claim the son purchased us from the father.

There is confusion here between the two positions in al-Qāsim's text and it is plausible that al-Qāsim is using multiple sources without recognizing the distinct positions on the doctrine. He demonstrates familiarity with the nuances of Christian beliefs, yet in this instance does not seem to recognize the mutual exclusivity between the two positions he is conflating here. Regardless of the apparent confusion, it is worth keeping in mind that al-Qāsim is not presenting fabricated views of the atonement; rather, he is merely not noting disagreements or different positions contained within his presentation of it.

6.6 THE DECEPTION OF THE ATONEMENT

Al-Qāsim also makes a point to emphasize the inherent deception involved in the process of atonement, particularly as engaged in by Jesus. While there are subtleties within Christian belief on this point, it appears to have been a common position of the Church through this period, although al-Qāsim stresses this particular aspect. He notes that Christians claim Jesus "went about secretly (*talaṭṭafa*)[680] and deceived (*iḥtāla*);"[681]

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[679] John of Damascus, "Orthodox Faith," 3:27 (p. 332).

[680] While the more common definition of *talaṭṭafa* relates to being civil or polite, its secondary definition relates to doing something "by subtle means, by favors, by tricks; to go about s.th. secretly, covertly,

that he "clothed (*labisa*) himself in a human body (*jasad ādamī*)" in order to be "hidden (*khafī*) from Satan;"[682] that he "disguised himself (*tanakkara*)"[683] so that "Satan would not be on guard for him and prevent him from carrying out his deception (*makr*) of him [Satan]."[684] Al-Qāsim also notes that Jesus "deceived (*khadaʿa*) Satan with his deception" (*bi-makrihi*).[685] And, "through deception (*makr*), he wrested from Satan what was in his hand, i.e., us."[686] Al-Qāsim states repeatedly that God used deception in the process of the atonement, and that the Son used the clothing of humanity to trick Satan into accepting his death on the cross as a payment for mankind.

The idea that Jesus used a human body as a disguise from the devil is prevalent throughout early Christian theological literature and is articulated by Athanasius (d. 373),[687] Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394),[688] and John of Damascus.[689] More relevant is the continuation of this position al-Qāsim's near-contemporary, Theodore Abū Qurrah. He states in his *Letter to the Armenians* (c. 813), "All this he did in a manner that he knew to be appropriate for effecting our salvation: through a divine ruse, disguising himself from

without being noticed." Hans Wehr, s.v. "*laṭafa,*" (form V) in *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Given the context of deception and trickery, the secondary definition is more plausible.

[681] *al-Radd*, 317.15-16.

[682] Ibid., 317.17.

[683] Ibid.

[684] Ibid., 317.17-18.

[685] Ibid., 317.20.

[686] Ibid., 318.1-2. Cf. Qur'ān 3:54, "They schemed, but God schemed (too), and God is the best of schemers."

[687] "The Word disguised himself by appearing in a body." Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi Dei* [On the Incarnation], ed. and trans. Penelope Lawson (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 16:1.

[688] "The Deity was hidden under the veil of our nature, that so, as with ravenous flesh, the hook of Deity might be gulped down along with the bait of flesh." Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechism*, ch. 24, p. 494.

[689] "Wherefore then, death approaches, gulps down the bait of the body, and is pierced by the hook of the divinity." John of Damascus, "Orthodox Faith," 3:27, p. 332.

the devil."[690] And again, in another Arabic text, *On the Death of Christ*, Theodore writes, "He did this in a manner that was at the time hidden from Satan, however, disguising himself from him so as to trick him into audaciously killing him."[691] Thus, al-Qāsim is not out of bounds to take note that Christians consider Christ's taking a human body for the purpose of wresting mankind from Satan's hand entailed significant deception.

While I am hesitant to conclude that any of these theologians are al-Qāsim's direct source, they demonstrate that he is working within the general bounds of Christian thought on the topic and had educated informants and/or authoritative resources for his understanding of Christianity. His personal interaction with Christians in debate circumstances is well-established, his own statements that he is articulating Christian doctrines using the words of their own scholars, and his obvious facility with Christian theological positions testifies to his access to Christian theological texts. The possibility of Theodore Abū Qurrah's influence on al-Qāsim is perhaps the most likely,[692] although attempting to trace the direct sources for al-Qāsim's text is difficult.

While there are some peculiarities and deficiencies to al-Qāsim's presentation of the atonement, it is not for lack of space devoted to the topic; his summary of this doctrine runs to twenty-three lines in the edited text. He spends almost equal space on the atonement as he does on explaining the differences between the three Christian ecclesiastical communities in regard to the Incarnation. Other Muslim polemicists

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[690] Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 97.

[691] Ibid., 127.

[692] See Madelung, "al-Qāsim and Christian Theology," 35-44.

contemporary to al-Qāsim do not offer summaries or refutations of the atonement,[693] and

al-Qāsim himself does not even bother to directly refute it in his own text. This raises two

questions: first, why does al-Qāsim include a summary of the atonement?; and second,

what, if any, function does it serve? I argue that it fills three roles in al-Qāsim's polemic:

(1) he is concerned with carefully articulating Christian doctrines that they themselves are

concerned with; (2) he is writing to a Muslim audience who would have been less

familiar with the doctrine and it provides the underlying reasoning behind the central

Christian doctrines that are the focus of his work; and (3) it highlights the disparity

between Islamic and Christian belief about God and the supposed innovations about God

by the Christians.

Concerning the first point, al-Qāsim's purpose in this section is to define the

Naṣārā according to their own teachings. While the atonement may be a secondary or

tertiary doctrine when it comes to refuting Christianity (as is evident from the lack of

interest expressed by other Muslim polemicists on the topic), it is central to Christian

soteriology and addressed to varying degrees by the majority of Christian theologians and

Church Fathers. If al-Qāsim was engaging with Christians regularly, it is likely that he

would have been exposed directly to this topic in conversation. Further, he demonstrates

impressive facility with Christian doctrine that necessitates access to extensive Christian

theological texts. These texts would not have been solely polemical texts against Islam or

apologetic texts in response to Islam, but would have been intra-Christian polemics and

apologetics or even theological treatises that address the atonement. As a result, it is no

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[693] Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's interest in the atonement only extends to the debate between the Christians over the nature of Christ in regard to who died on the cross. As a result, he is not so much discussing the atonement as he is the nature of the union of the divine and human in the person of Christ.

surprise that al-Qāsim considers the atonement a doctrine he considers worthy of spending such a considerable amount on in his treatise.

In regard to the second point, al-Qāsim himself states that he is writing to a Muslim audience. Immediately after his summaries of Christianity, he writes, "So [in regard to] this, may whoever want knowledge of it know it, [that is,] the compendium of the teachings of the *Naṣārā*."[694] Al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, then, was not intended as a polemic to be read by Christians to convince them of their error, as they presumably would have been familiar with their own teachings. Rather, this is a polemic written so that Muslim readers would have a compendium of doctrines Christians considered essential–particularly according to the three ecclesiastical communities with which Muslims would have interacted the most. By including the "reason for the descent of the divine son," al-Qāsim is able to offer the reasoning behind the two primary doctrines of Christianity he focuses on in his refutation. Knowing that the Incarnation is required because God has submitted Adam and all his descendants – including the Messengers and Prophets – to Satan as a result of Adam's sin, highlights the fact that not only are the central doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation problematic in light of God's *tawḥīd*, but the secondary or supporting beliefs of the Christians are also incompatible with the Qur'ān and Islamic doctrines,[695] although there is considerably less antagonism directed toward the atonement in the Qur'ān than toward the Trinity and Incarnation.

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[694] *al-Radd*, 318.8.

[695] The idea of vicarious atonement is addressed indirectly in the Qur'ān in *Surat al-Anʿām*, which also addresses many of the themes al-Qāsim discusses: ascribing equals to God (Q. 6:1), forging lies against God (Q. 6:21), and associating other gods with God (Q. 6:21-24). Regarding the idea of atonement, Q. 6:70 states, "Leave alone those who take their religion for a sport and a diversion, and whom the present life has deluded. Remind hereby, lest a soul should be given up to destruction for what it has earned; apart from God, it has no protector and no intercessor; though it offer any equivalent, it shall not be taken from it."

Al-Qāsim's presentation of the atonement highlights the Christians' perceived innovations about God in a few different ways. First, he notes that all of mankind has been submitted to the devil because of Adam's sin. The idea that in Adam's sin all of mankind fell under Satan's bondage would have been problematic. In the Qur'ān, Adam's sin in the Garden "does not have the consequence of separation from God and need for a redeemer set out in the Christian doctrine of original sin."[696] The Qur'ān's rendering of the fall of man includes many of the same outcomes as the Genesis account: Adam and Eve realize they are naked (Gen. 3:7 / Q. 20:12); God confronts them (Gen. 3:9-11 / Q. 7:22); they are expelled from the garden (Gen. 3:23-24 / Q. 20:122-3); their relationship was fractured (Gen. 3:16 / Q. 2:36, 7:24, 20:123). The Qur'ān, however, does not consider there to be a pre-lapsarian state of grace and perfection to which humankind must be atoned as is evident in Christianity.[697] Thus, the idea that Adam's sin would result in his bondage to Satan and bring all his descendants under the same condemnation would not have been compatible with qur'ānic ideals. To go further and stress that even the Messengers and Prophets of God – which would have immediately brought Muḥammad to the minds of al-Qāsim's Muslim audience – were in Satan's dominion, was incompatible with qur'ānic and Islamic principles.

Second, God's power and authority is curtailed by Satan's claim on mankind. While al-Qāsim couches the inability of God to take back humanity by force in terms of

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Thus, Jesus as an intercessor or equivalent ransom for man's sin is impermissible. The idea of Christ's mediation is at odds with the Qur'ān as there is "no protector or intercessor" apart from God. Given that Jesus is clearly not divine within the qur'ānic framework, he is unable to fulfill the role of mediator.

[696] Anthony Hearle Johns, s.v. "Fall of Man," in *EQ.*

[697] Cf. Romans 5:12.

justice, the idea that God would be in a position where he would be limited by Satan's authority would have been clearly at odds with Muslim teaching and would not have required careful, logical disputation like his arguments against the Trinity and Incarnation.

In al-Qāsim's summary of the atonement, however, God is ultimately able to achieve his aim and wrest mankind from Satan's hand. To do so, however, God resorts to having his Son use disguise and deception – something that, given the context of the Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, would have called to mind Satan's deception.[698] Jesus clothing himself in a human body is depicted by al-Qāsim as a cunning strategy, meant to deceive Satan in order to mitigate his claim over humankind. In essence, al-Qāsim portrays the atonement as a doctrine that makes God and Jesus out to be liars, forced to deceive an inferior being on account of their impotence to perform what God desired, all of which stems from what al-Qāsim portrays as an overreaction to one man's sin by giving him and all of his descendants over to Satan. Al-Qāsim does not provide a direct refutation against the atonement, but he has presented it in such a way that it would be obvious to any Muslim that this doctrine is grossly incompatible with a qur'ānic portrayal of God and man and a sustained logical argument against the doctrine is simply unnecessary. His purposeful emphasis on particular features of the atonement, while faithful to a Christian understanding of the doctrine, would lead his Muslim readership to the conclusion that this particular doctrine and what it entails is so utterly at odds with

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[698] Al-Qāsim also notes Satan's deception in man's fall in this section. He writes, "They claim it became evident to Adam what Satan had done to him and his trickery and deception of him." *al-Radd*, 317.19-20.

their understanding of God's character as seen in the Qur'ān that it needs no direct or

sustained refutation and should be summarily dismissed.

6.7 CONCLUSION

To conclude his summary of Christianity, al-Qāsim provides the following

creedal-like formulation immediately after his summary of the atonement:

> They said: 'He sat at the right hand of his father, complete in his entire being and body, and all of that which was in him in regard to divinity and humanity (*al-lāhūt wa-l-nāsūt*), and all the attributes (*nuʿūt*) that were in both of them and belonged to both of them.' They said: 'He will descend again another time to judge the living and the dead at the annihilation of the world.' They said: 'On account of that, we believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.' They said: 'The Father is he who created things by his Son and preserves them by his Holy Spirit.'[699]

While there are clear similarities between Christian creedal formulations and al-Qāsim's

rendering above, there are no direct comparisons in their entirety reproduced in al-

Qāsim's treatise.[700] Even the version above is more like a summary of Christian beliefs

without being a direct quotation. Regardless, al-Qāsim again displays his familiarity with

Christian doctrines and his facility with the Arabic language by rewording them to fit his

stylistic idiosyncrasies, but in such a way that they retain their theological and doctrinal

significance and accuracy. There are some discrepancies with the precision of his

wording in regard to the persons of the Trinity, but this imprecision was not so much the

result of a misunderstanding on his part as it was a reflection of Christians having not

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[699] Ibid., 318.4-8. The final statement is similar to his earlier representation of the creedal formula, "The Christians say that God created things by his Son and preserves and orders them by his Holy Spirit." Ibid., 308.22-23. See discussion above, Chapter 5.2.

[700] Beaumont suggests that al-Qāsim quotes the Nicene Creed, and while there are similarities, there are significant enough differences that lead me to think otherwise. At most, al-Qāsim is using some similar language, but he presents a more robust theology of the Holy Spirit than is provided by the Nicene Creed. Cf. Beaumont, "Muslim Readings of John's Gospel in the ʿAbbasid Period," 182.

clearly rendered complex theological ideas into precise Arabic terms by the beginning of the ninth century.

Al-Qāsim's ability to accurately synthesize and distinguish points of difference demonstrates a familiarity with fundamental Christian doctrines and an ability to express them competently. He does not provide qur'ānic explanations of Christianity as he does in the first section of his treatise; rather he demonstrates an obvious acquaintance with both shared and sectarian Christian beliefs that necessitates extensive familiarity and access to Christian sources, likely oral and written. These summaries of Christianity provide a necessary backdrop for his reinterpreting and reworking the Bible and, in al-Qāsim's words, enable

> one who wants to know, [to] know all of the teachings of the *Naṣārā* and the confusion with which they clothed themselves concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the hypostases (*aqānīm*) and nature (*ṭabīʿah*); and an innovative doctrine (*maqālah badīʿah*) they had concerning those things which were not said before them.[701]

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[701] *al-Radd*, 318.8-9. When al-Qāsim summarizes Christian doctrine in the second section of his treatise, he uses Christian terminology, stating that Christ clothed himself in humanity, rather than the qur'ānic wording that God "took a son" (*attakhadha walad*) that he used in the first part of his treatise. He uses this wording to his advantage, however, as he concludes this section, providing the purpose for which he has spent a considerable amount of time articulating the doctrinal positions of the Christians. While it is not apparent in translation, the Arabic root *l-b-s* is used twice in the quotation and carries two different connotations. It can refer to confusion or to putting something on to wear. Thus, when al-Qāsim refers to "the confusion (*al-labs*) with which they clothed themselves (*labisū*)," he is not only cleverly playing with the root *l-b-s* to draw attention to what he considers an absurd belief held by the Christians, but he is also calling the reader's attention back to the precise wording of Jesus clothing himself (*labisa*) in humanity from his summary of the Incarnation. He is thus able to accurately portray Christian articulations of the manner in which Jesus was believed to have become man, while simultaneously displaying his literary talent to cleverly subvert the doctrines he has just summarized.

227

Chapter 7
RECONSIDERING "FATHERHOOD" AND "SONSHIP":
SECTION THREE OF *AL-RADD ʿALĀ AL-NAṢĀRĀ*

Al-Qāsim's summaries of central Christian doctrines have proved to be concise,

accurate representations of the similarities and differences between the three Christian

communities with whom he would have been in somewhat regular contact. He likely had

access to their theological writings, too. As he begins the refutation of those doctrines in

the third section of his treatise (318.13 – 324.10), he ignores the subtleties and nuances of

the doctrine as expressed by Christians and reproduced by him shortly before. Instead,

the complexities of the Trinity are condensed to the imprecise formula, "three are, in

some respect, made into one (*yuwaḥḥidūna*), and in another respect, the oneness (*al-

tawḥīd*) [of God] is made into three (*yuthallithūna*)."[702] David Thomas has noted a trend

in Muslim-Christian relations, in which "either side was conditioned by its own scriptures

and doctrines to fashion its own construction of the other."[703] Such an approach is evident

in this section of al-Qāsim's treatise, as the refutation in this section is hardly consistent

with the nuanced and detailed manner in which he previously articulated Christian

doctrines. Indeed, al-Qāsim returns to the qurʾānic foundation of his refutation that

resembles the manner in which he discussed Christian ideas in the first section. He relies

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[702] Ibid., 318.11.

[703] Thomas, *Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"*, 18.

228

heavily on qur'ānic formulations and explanations of Christian views on the fatherhood of God and the divine sonship of Jesus.

Having argued extensively for God's dissimilarity to all creation and the necessity of similarity in essence between the progenitor and the generated in the first section, followed by a summary of the Christian doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and atonement in the second section, al-Qāsim turns to a direct refutation of those doctrines in the third section of his treatise. He begins this section,

> We, God willing, begin by refuting chapter by chapter what they say and define. May someone from the *ahl al-tawḥīd wa-l-daʿwā* who wanted to debate them understand these things. Truly we, God willing, will provide the chapter on fatherhood and sonship (*ubūwah wa-l-bunūwah*).[704]

Al-Qāsim's refutation only addresses the points upon which the *Rūm,* Jacobites, and Nestorians agree: the Trinity and the divine sonship of Jesus. While the *Rūm*, Nestorians, and Jacobites disagreed in regard to the precise manner in which Jesus was both God and man and about the precise formulation of his nature(s), there was no significant dissension among these communities on the doctrine of the Trinity or that Jesus was God's divine Son. Al-Qāsim's following arguments address the common denominators between the three communities, and in doing so, he touches on the main points of theological contention between Muslims and Christians.

Al-Qāsim structures his refutation in this section in two parts. First, he presents an argument based on the nouns "father" and "son" in order to determine the precise nature of what is entailed when these nouns refer to individuals. Second, he takes the conclusions he has reached in his first argument and then reinterprets select biblical

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[704] *al-Radd*, 318.13-16.

quotations from the Gospels to demonstrate that the beliefs Christians hold about God as Father and Jesus as divine Son are not necessary. He begins with rational argumentation in both sections and then turns to scripture. In the first section, however, scripture (the Qurʾān) was used to support his rationalistic arguments. In this section, rational argument is used to disprove the validity of Christian interpretation of their Gospel, and then ultimately to show that the Gospel text itself is flawed.

7.1 CATEGORIES

Al-Qāsim's first argument is an examination of the nouns "father" (*ab*), "son" (*ibn*), and "holy spirit" (*rūḥ al-qudus*), and rhetorically asks to be informed about them.[705] His purpose for doing so in in order to determine what those labels imply when used in relation to the terms Christians use to refer to the persons of the Trinity. He begins by noting that nothing of what the Christians claim about these terms was evinced, whether by demonstrative proof (*qiyās*) or any of the five senses (*al-ḥawāss al-khams*).[706] He continues, asking what type of nouns Christians consider them to be, and provides three possible categories:[707] the first includes natural-essential-substantial nouns (*ṭabīʿiyyah dhātiyyah jawhariyyah*); the second includes individual-hypostatic nouns

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[705] Although he claims he is investigating all three names, he ends up focusing on "father" and "son."

[706] *al-Radd*, 318.18.

[707] Al-Qāsim's categories appears to be basing his names in part on Aristotle's *Categories*, by which beings are divided into two main categories, Substance and Accident. See Aristotle, *Categories*, trans. H.P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), V; Paul Thom, "Division of the Categories According to Avicenna," in *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Ahmed Alwishah and Josh Hayes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 30-49. Al-Qāsim's elaboration of essences and accidents is not nearly so detailed as other Arabic philosophical treatises as his aim is rather to address Christians using terminology with which they would be familiar.

(*shakhṣiyyah uqnūmiyyah*);[708] and the third includes accidental-incidental nouns

(*ʿaraḍiyyah ḥādithah*).[709]

Al-Qāsim begins his argument regarding these categories, stating that if someone

is referred to as "father" (*ab*) because he generated a child and a son (*walada waladan*

wa-ibnan), then these nouns (father and son) cannot be natural-essential nouns

(*ṭabīʿiyyah dhātiyyah*).[710] He later relates that this is because "natural nouns are only

named in reference to their natural qualities (*ṭibāʿ*) and their essence (*dhāt*) and with

reference to what all of what completes it in regard to its gathering (*ijtimāʿ*)."[711] A natural

noun refers to the very essence of the thing it names; it is permanent, does not vary or

differ, it is fixed and dedicated to it.[712] It is the "name of the thing itself, indicating it, not

its genus (*jins*). For example: earth, heaven, fire, water, and similar names, which

indicate the substances (*aʿyān*) of things. These are the nouns of essence (*dhāt*) and

natures (*ṭabāʾiʿ*)."[713] Al-Qāsim thus determines that nouns such as "father" and "son"

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[708] His grouping here of *shakhṣiyyah* and *uqnūmiyyah* into one category further points to the confusion over these terms in use by Christians when referring to the persons of the Trinity. See Chapter 6.2.

[709] *al-Radd*, 318.18-20. Al-Qāsim's argument here is brief and assumes a familiarity with Aristotelian philosophical terms and an underlying framework for how these terms relate to each other. A more detailed and thorough discussion of essences and accidents within an Islamic framework can be found in section three of al-Kindī's *On First Philosophy*. See Adamson and Pormann, *The Philosophical Works of al-Kindī*, 26-41.

[710] *al-Radd*, 318.20-21.

[711] Ibid., 318.23-24.

[712] Ibid., 319.2-3.

[713] Ibid., 319.4-6. This terminology, and even the examples provided are Aristotelian in origin (even if indirectly). Aristotle states in his *Physica*: "Of things that exist, some exist by nature, some from other causes. 'By nature' the animals and their parts exist, and the plants and the simple bodies (earth, fire, air, water)- for we say that these and the like exist 'by nature'." Aristotle, *Physica*, ed. W.D. Ross, trans. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 2:1. While only Arabic translations of Aristotle's *Physica* that were completed later than al-Qāsim's treatise are extant, it was likely translated first under the Barmakid viziers (786-803) by Sallam al-Abrash." F.E. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus: The Oriental Translations and Commentaries on the Aristotelian Corpus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 32. Thus, it is possible al-Qāsim was familiar with the work.

cannot possibly be related to the essence or substance of something due to the nature of fatherhood and sonship.

The second possibility al-Qāsim considers is that father and son are hypostatic or individual nouns. He contrasts these to natural and essential nouns that do not differ or vary, which, if they did, would indicate hypostases (*uqnūm*).[714] Thus, hypostatic nouns are not fixed to a thing in the same way that the essential or natural nouns are. Further, "hypostatic (*uqnūmiyyah*) nouns, which are neither natural (*ṭabīʿiyyah*) nor accidental (*ʿaraḍiyyah*), are like Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, Dawūd, and ʿĪsā."[715] That is, they are personal nouns given to individuals to refer to those specific people. Al-Qāsim thus argues that because "father" and "son" do not refer to specific individuals, they cannot be hypostatic-individual nouns.

Al-Qāsim considers the third possible category – that "father" and "son" are accidental-incidental (*ʿaraḍiyyah ḥādithah*) nouns. He determines that "father" and "son" do fall into this category because they "happen at the occurrence of children."[716] More abstractly, he notes that "the third noun is from an accident (*ʿaraḍ*) and an event (*ḥadath*) and every new thing (*muḥdath*) is called by it."[717] Thus, "fatherhood, sonship, actions, and powers are not natural nouns or personal-hypostatic nouns. Rather, they are nouns indicating knowledge of the substances (*aʿyān*), like humanity (*insāniyyah*) which

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[714] *al-Radd*, 319.3-4.

[715] Ibid., 319.6-7. Al-Qāsim's use of these particular names for his example is interesting, as Christian writers explaining this idea generally used "Peter, James, and John." Erismann, "Catachrestic Plural Forms: Gregory of Nyssa and Theodore Abū Qurrah on Naming and Counting Essences," 52. While al-Qāsim is likely getting his information for these categories from a Christian text, he replaces explicitly Christian names with qurʾānic names (I consider them qurʾānic due to the spelling of "Jesus," which would have been spelled Yasūʿ rather than ʿĪsā if he were using biblical names).

[716] *al-Radd*, 318.22.

[717] Ibid., 319.13.

indicates a human (*insān*)."[718]

Within this framework, al-Qāsim argues that because a man is referred to by the noun "father" at the birth of a child, "father" cannot be natural (*tabīʿiyyah*) or essential (*dhātiyyah*).[719] A father is not referred to as a father before the birth of the child and the child is not referred to as a child before his own birth.[720] Thus, al-Qāsim argues that because "father" and "son" are accidental-incidental nouns they cannot be essential or natural to God and Jesus respectively because they would have come to be at a specific point in time. Further, if Jesus is a son, then it would necessitate that he came into being after God the Father, which contradicts what the Christians believe, i.e., that "one of them [the persons of the Trinity] did not precede the others in existence."[721] Al-Qāsim is arguing that the terms with which Christians refer to the persons of the Trinity cannot refer to essences but rather to an event that took place at a specific moment in time, and if they do not refer to their essence then they cannot be true of God because it would require God to have added the accidents of fatherhood and sonship at a specific moment in time.[722] Such a claim is simply not possible for al-Qāsim, who opened this treatise with

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[718] Ibid., 319.8-9.

[719] Ibid., 318.21-22.

[720] Abū Rāʾiṭah uses a similar argument in support of the Christian understanding of God the Father begetting Jesus, although he does so to argue that the Father does not precede the Son. He writes in his *Second Risālah on the Incarnation:* "The name of fatherhood is only necessary for him with [the birth of] the son. How is one described as a father if he has no son and one who has no father [described] as a son? These names are reciprocal attributes. One of them does not exist with the loss of the other, and one of them exists with the existence of the other." Toenies Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth"*, 266.

[721] *al-Radd*, 315.4.

[722] Cf. Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, "Further, if the term 'Divinity' is derived from the subject being, and the term 'subject being' from the Divinity, and the subject being is not entitled to this term in itself but only through derivation from the term 'Divinity', and the Divinity is not entitled to this term in himself but only through derivation from the term 'subject being', and neither of these names is the root, established and entitled, either through derivation or through annexation, then they cannot ever be established, and neither the

the following statement about God: "[He is] free from every change, cessation, alteration, movement, and transition, or extinction or transformation."[723]

Returning to the question of the provenance for al-Qāsim's categories of names (essential, hypostatic, accidental) – I am not convinced that they are directly Aristotelian. Rather, it seems more likely that they are Aristotelian as re-formulated through the work of John of Damascus (or perhaps Abū Qurrah or another Christian theologian).[724] Al-Qāsim is careful to note that he is using the works of the scholars belonging to the opponent he is attempting to refute. Thus, when he notes, "nouns, according to them, are three nouns," it is likely that the "them" of his statement, "according to them," refers to something he has gathered from either a Christian text or a Christian informant.[725]

Regarding the specific wording al-Qāsim uses, it is worth noting that "hypostasis" is a non-Aristotelian concept[726] that had particularly Christian connotations due to its use

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Eternal One nor the contingent being is entitled to either of these names through himself or through the other." Thomas, *Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq's "Against the Trinity"*, 143.

[723] *al-Radd*, 304.2-3.

[724] Also, it is worth noting that, "From the late fifth and early sixth centuries onward, Greek philosophical texts were being translated into Syriac, and Syriac authors began to integrate many of the notions and terms they found in these texts into their own literature." Becker, *Fear of God*, 126. While there is no evidence al-Qāsim was able to read Syriac, "Syriac-speaking Christians were central to the early translation movement that rendered Greek texts into Arabic" and their influence on the cultural transmission of these philosophical ideas must be kept in mind. Ibid., 17.

[725] This does not rule out Aristotle directly, but there are adaptations to Aristotle's categories as provided by al-Qāsim that lead me to believe it was filtered through a Christian re-formulation. The adoption of Aristotelian ideas was common among Christian philosophers and theologians (including John of Damascus), and "in particular, the teachings of Aristotle's *Categories* and Porphyry's *Isagoge*, were progressively accepted as a tool in Christian theology." Erismann, "The Trinity, Universals, and Particular Substances: Philoponus and Roscelin," 277. The statement of Richard Frank on the early development of *kalām* is apt: "The kalām appears as a unique form of theologising, unique not simply in vocabulary and style but also in form and conception. Behind it, at a distance, we can discern – though never with satisfying clarity – a hellenistic and patristic background, but both its technical vocabulary and its conception are nevertheless stamped with a uniquely Islamic and Arabic quality." Richard Frank, "Remarks on the Early Development of the *Kalām*," *Atti del III Congreso di Studi Arabi e Islamici* (1967): 315-316.

[726] Erismann, "A World of Hypostases: John of Damascus' Rethinking of Aristotle's Categorical Ontology," 270.

in explaining the persons of the Trinity as well as the Incarnation. Further, Erismann has

noted that in the work of John of Damascus,

> the Aristotelian pair primary/secondary substances is replaced by the pair
> hypostasis/essence (*ousia*). The word *hypostasis* refers to individual entities; the
> term *ousia* is used only to refer to essence, understood as an Aristotelian
> secondary substance, which is common to all the members of the same species.[727]

While there are no direct quotations from Aristotle's works or those of John of Damascus

in al-Qāsim's *al-Radd*, and I am not convinced that he read any of their texts directly, it is

likely that the Christians al-Qāsim encountered would have read them and been familiar

with their ideas. Al-Qāsim demonstrates his familiarity with these Christological disputes

and it is plausible that the Aristotelian influences in this section have been adapted with

Christian terminology through the medium of this literature. Furthermore, as evidenced in

the previous discussion on al-Qāsim's summaries of Christianity, he demonstrates far

more than a passing knowledge of Christian beliefs. He appears to have been fairly well-

informed in regard to Christian theology and it is thus no surprise that he is able to

incorporate Christian adaptations of Aristotelian philosophical ideas in this treatise.

7.2 REINTERPRETING "FATHER" AND "SON"

Having established that the terms "father" and "son" are accidental names, al-

Qāsim builds upon this by reinterpreting select verses from the Gospels in which those

names are used to refer to God and Jesus respectively.[728] He presents five witnesses that

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[727] Ibid.

[728] It is this section of al-Qāsim's work that has resulted in his approach to the Christian scriptures being labeled so uniformly by scholars as the example *par excellence* of the accusation of the Bible being misinterpreted rather than textually corrupted (see Chapter 2). Although I argue in this dissertation that such an interpretation is flawed, I concede that in this section al-Qāsim explicitly charges the Christians with misinterpreting their scriptures and offers new interpretations of select biblical passages that he argues can be explained in a manner acceptable to Islamic beliefs.

he states will be determined to be reliable to both Muslims and Christians, thus removing

the possibility of throwing out the evidence based on a disagreement over the source. In

order to do so, however, he is necessarily bound to quoting these witnesses in a manner

consistent with Christian formulation, which he does. There are no theologically-

motivated edits to his Gospel quotations here. Rather, his purpose seems to be to establish

that even references from the Bible that Christians claim point to Jesus' divine sonship do

not necessitate the interpretation that Christians have imposed on them. He states,

> Moreover, regarding all of that which the *Naṣārā* said, we have ways out of all of that in a true interpretation (*taʾwīl*). They are obvious on account of what God made clear of it except to one who does not receive an illustration and admonition from God concerning it.[729]

But before he advances his own interpretation, al-Qāsim clarifies the parameters to which

he will be limiting his investigation—select witnesses from the Bible that are "most

reliable" and "most just" and that "it will be incumbent upon us and you that we accept

them." He states this is because,

> Truly we –neither us nor you – did not know the prophets or Christ son of Mary (The peace and blessings of God be upon him). Nor did we – neither us nor you – know one of his disciples. Then we would [have been able to] ask one of them whom we knew about what we – us and you – disagreed about.[730]

Thus, he is not allowing Christian interpretation or theology to inform him of the nature

of God and Jesus, as he did in section two, but is instead going directly to the supposed

source for beliefs about them. This section contains pleas for justice, equity, and he

implores the Christians to abandon their arbitrary views for the truth, along with the

similar qur'ānic appeal: "Establish what your Lord sent down to you, i.e., the *Torah* and

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[729] *al-Radd*, 319.22-24.

[730] Ibid., 319.28 - 320.2.

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the *Injīl*, and renounce the lie about God in both of them by the blindness of interpretation, so that you will be rightly guided, if God wills, to the aims of your paths."[731]

Al-Qāsim does not seem to consider it a realistic possibility, however, that Christians will abandon their interpretations in favor of the interpretation he offers. Consequently, he presents a short but pointed condemnation of Christian character in general that seems out of place for his refutation, which apart from this brief interlude, is exclusively concerned with theology rather than condemnation of Christians personally. Regardless, he argues that they practice greed, toil (*kidd*), and gain; that there are no people among the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*) more interested in food and drink and the accumulation of silver and gold than they,[732] quoting the Qur'ān for support: "Surely many of the teachers and monks consume the wealth of the people by means of falsehood, and keep (people) from the way of God. Those who hoard the gold and the silver, and do not spend it in the way of God – give them news of a painful punishment."[733] His condemnation of Christian character does not appear to be generated by actual circumstances he encountered though. Unlike al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868f), who refers to specific instances of Christians not behaving properly (in relation to their status as *dhimmī*) that he seems to have been familiar with directly, al-Qāsim's condemnation is textual; that is, he condemns Christians for what they are condemned of in the Qur'ān. While it is possible that his own experience mirrors that of the Qur'ān, it seems rather as

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[731] Ibid., 320.9-11.

[732] Ibid., 320.18 - 321.3.

[733] Qur'ān 9:34.

though he is simply incorporating the Qur'ān as support for why he assumes Christians will not abandon their beliefs about God's divine fatherhood and Jesus' divine sonship.

Al-Qāsim presents five groups of witnesses from the Gospels in support of his argument against the divine sonship of Jesus. They are: (1) God; (2) the angels; (3) Jesus; (4) Jesus' mother and father; and (5) the disciples. These testimonies come from the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John and testify to the breadth of al-Qāsim's knowledge of the Christian scriptures. He quotes or paraphrases statements attributed to the following figures in the Gospels: Matthew (Matt. 1:1),[734] Jesus,[735] Mary,[736] Philip (John 1:45),[737] John (John 1:12-13, 16),[738] the Angels who appeared to Mary (Luke 1:31-32),[739] the Angel who appeared to Joseph (Matt. 1:19-21),[740] God (Matt. 3:17),[741] and Peter (Matt. 16:16).[742] Al-Qāsim's claim that he had "encompassing knowledge" (*aḥāṭnā ma'rifah*)[743] of what is in the Gospels is likely more hyperbole than fact, but such a bold statement that is then supported by his quotations from three of the four Gospels are further evidence of his having access to some form of the Gospels in Arabic beyond only

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[734] *al-Radd*, 321.17-18.

[735] He does not provide specific quotations here, but notes "the testimony of Christ that the disciples are his brothers." Ibid., 321.22-23.

[736] Ibid., 321.24 - 322.1. He does not provide a specific reference here, although he could be referring to instances in which Mary refers to Joseph as Jesus' father. Cf. Luke 2:48.

[737] Ibid., 322.1-3.

[738] Ibid., 322.3-7.

[739] Ibid., 322.10-13.

[740] Ibid., 322.15-18.

[741] Ibid., 322.20.

[742] Ibid., 322.21.

[743] Ibid., 321.16.

testimonia collections.[744]

Indeed, al-Qāsim's use of the Bible in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is unlike the work of many other Muslim apologists and polemicists during this early period who primarily used biblical *testimonia* collections extensively to prove Muḥammad's prophethood. David Thomas considers al-Qāsim's text to "provide clear evidence that knowledge of the Bible and sophisticated methods of reading it did exist at a very early state. His achievement must rank as one of the most accomplished examinations of Christian scripture by any Muslim author."[745] Conversely, other Muslim polemicists of the eighth and ninth centuries primarily used *testimonia* collections. Furthermore, Clint Hackenburg has demonstrated in his recent dissertation that the work of Muslim polemicists and apologists using such *testimonia* collections is highly derivative and unoriginal; indeed, after ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. 860), it is likely that there was substantial re-use of biblical material in this particular genre.[746] Thus, while al-Qāsim's use of the Bible is evidence that Muslim investigation of scripture was at an advanced stage early on, al-Qāsim's investigation of the Bible in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* was atypical of the manner in which Muslim polemicists utilized and examined the Bible through the ninth century.

Al-Qāsim then works through the evidence provided by the witnesses mentioned above that allows an interpretation of Jesus' identity that aligns with qurʾānic and Islamic

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[744] Furthermore, al-Qāsim's explicit mention of "the four gospels" (321.19) leads me to believe that he might have actually had access to all four gospels in Arabic, not just the Gospel of Matthew. See Appendix C for a chart of all the biblical quotations in al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā.*

[745] Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 37.

[746] Hackenburg, "Voices of the Converted: Apostate Literature in Medieval Islam," 227, 272, 348.

principles. This is achieved in two ways: (1) by noting verses in which Jesus is referred to

as the son of someone other than God; and (2) by noting verses in which people other

than Jesus are referred to as God's children. Regarding the witness of the disciples he

notes that, not only are there divergent testimonies in all four Gospels, but that Matthew

begins his Gospel noting, "This is the birth of Jesus Christ (*Yasūʿ al-Masīḥ*), son of

David."[747] He continues, "In addition to this witness, there are many similar things in the

four gospels (*al-anājīl al-arbaʿah*)."[748] This includes Jesus telling his disciples that "they

are all sons (*banū*) of the father, and that God is the father of all of them together,"

which, al-Qāsim argues, "proves that the interpretation of fatherhood and sonship (*al-*

ubūwah wa-l-bunūwah) is different from the claim you [Christians] maintained about

them."[749] Al-Qāsim also draws attention to Jesus' statements that, "the disciples are his

brothers,"[750] after which he argues that whatever relationship exists between Jesus and

God must necessarily apply to the relationship between the Disciples and God.[751] Thus,

when Christians consider Jesus to be divine as a result of the familial wording used to

express the relationship between him and God, al-Qāsim's argument highlights that this

familial wording is used through the Gospel to express the nature of relationships

between God and other humans that Christians do not consider divine and should be

interpreted metaphorically. Thus, for Christians to single out Jesus as divine without

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[747] Matthew 1:1; *al-Radd*, 321.17-18.

[748] Ibid., 321.19.

[749]Ibid., 321.20-22.

[750] See Matthew 12:46-49, Mark 3:33-34; Luke 8:21; John 20:17.

[751] *al-Radd*, 321.23-24.

considering others who are referred to as sons of God or in some familial relationship to Jesus is inconsistent.

In regard to Jesus' relationship to Mary and Joseph, al-Qāsim writes: "Among them is the witness of his mother (Blessings of God be upon her), that he is the son of Joseph."[752] Al-Qāsim also includes quotations from the gospels in which Jesus is elsewhere referred to as the son of Joseph,[753] as well as John's claim that those who received Jesus' words and submitted to them were also born of God, and that the meaning of sonship and offspringship (*al-bunūwah wa-l-wilādah*) only refers to love, patronage, and worship.[754] He then makes a brief interjection, noting:

> The interpretation of this and things similar to it, if there was any truth in it (*in kāna ṣidq fīhi*), can only be according to that which would be valid for it to be true about it, and not according to what is impossible for hearts (*albāb*) and intellects (*ʿuqūl*). The teaching concerning the interpretation is false and self-contradictory (*yufsad wa-yunāqaḍ*)–that the lord is a slave (*ʿabd*), and the father (*wālid*), with his birth, is a son (*walad*). That is the most ignorant of ignorances and there is arrogance toward reason (*ʿaql*) in it.[755]

Al-Qāsim displays here an outline of his rationalistic hermeneutic and the manner in which the Bible should be properly interpreted. It must be in line with the manner in which God and Jesus are presented within the rational and qur'ānic framework al-Qāsim set forward in the first section of his treatise. Any interpretation that falls outside those boundaries is simply unacceptable, although al-Qāsim frames it in terms of rationalist argumentation rather than qur'ānic scriptural hegemony.

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[752] Ibid., 321.24-322.1.

[753] From John 1:45. "He is the one whom Moses mentioned in the Torah, and his genealogy (Blessings of God be upon him) is in it. When giving his name, he said: Jesus (Yasūʿ) son of Joseph." Ibid., 322.2-3.

[754] Ibid., 322.3-7.

[755] Ibid., 322.7-10.

Al-Qāsim continues to the witness of the angels in their annunciation to Mary of her conception, noting that they told her, 'You will give birth to a son.'[756] And in contrast, "They did not say, 'You will give birth to the son of God.'"[757] And further, (Luke 1:31-32) "They said, 'He will be called Jesus [*Yasūʿ*], and he will be greatly exalted by God and inherit the throne of his father, David.'[758] If he were like what they said, then the angel would have said, 'You will give birth to the Son of God.'"[759] Interestingly, al-Qāsim claims to provide an example where the wording used in the Gospel does not lead to ascribing divine sonship to Jesus. Instead, angels refer to Jesus using a term that denotes no special familial relationship between him and God. In the Christian version of his quotation from Luke 1:31-32, however, the angel states to Mary that she will give birth to the "Son of the Most High." The use of such language is a clear reference to Jesus' divine sonship that al-Qāsim ignores, particularly because he could have just as easily claimed it was a metaphorical reference rather than bearing any connotations of Jesus' divinity in relation to God as Father.

Al-Qāsim only once quotes the witness of God from the Gospels in this section of his treatise, and even then, he immediately discounts the authenticity of the particular quotation. He states:

> Among the things they claim, which they know is a proof against them, and testifies against what they claimed and they believed among the error of their teachings is that they claim [there is] a statement of God in their Gospel (*injīl*)

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[756] Luke 1:31.

[757] *al-Radd*, 322.12.

[758] Ibid., 322.13.

[759] Ibid., 322.13-14.

concerning (the) Christ, son of Mary (blessings and peace of God be upon him), 'This is my beloved and pure son.'[760]

He immediately follows this quotation with the complementary statement of Simon Peter to Jesus in Matthew 16:16, "You are the son of the true God."[761] Rather than explain those as metaphors, al-Qāsim takes a different line of argumentation since those are direct references to Jesus being God's son, one of which is supposed to reflect the direct speech of God. First he questions their veracity: "What they mentioned concerning this and things similar to it which they claim about God and about his messengers – if it is true –". Second, he claims that (regardless of its veracity), "there is an interpretation for it, which makes vain what they said and makes it cease, which they will not deny, nor will they refute it. They will not be able to call those who oppose them liars, nor will they be able to dispute it."[762] The evidence he presents is that the Angels and Messengers of God "did not glorify Christ at all, nor did they worship him. Not one of them claims that God begot him."[763]

Having provided a number of quotations from the Bible that he considers to support his claim against Jesus' divine sonship, al-Qāsim turns his attention to metaphorical interpretations of the word "son," in order to provide ways out of the interpretations Christians have advanced. Al-Qāsim does this by noting that both *ibn* and *walad* have been used "in the time of Christ and in every age" to refer to one they

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[760] Al-Qāsim does not specify from where he is taking this biblical quotation, but it is likely Matthew 3:17. Ibid., 322.20.

[761] Ibid., 322.21.

[762] Ibid., 322.21-23.

[763] Ibid., 322.24-26.

adopted and they loved.[764] Further, he argues that in the ancient past as well as more

recently, people of knowledge and the sages (*ahl al-ʿilm wa-l-ḥukamāʾ*) referred to their

pupils, saying "O, my little son" (*yā bunayya*).[765] Conversely, pupils have referred to

their teachers with names related to fatherhood (*ubūwah*).[766] Al-Qāsim states that this "is

the most common existing thing in all of the communities–the merciful among them say

it to one who was not a son born to him."[767] Thus, al-Qāsim contends that it is not

necessary to associate the terms surrounding fatherhood and sonship as anything more

than metaphors to signify the closeness of a relationship between a figure in authority and

his charge.

In support of the metaphorical interpretation of fatherhood and sonship, al-Qāsim

provides examples that he claims are repeatedly said by Christ to his disciples and that

the *Naṣārā* do not deny it. The first is "Lead us to our father,"[768] and the second is a

rendering of part of the Lord's Prayer, likely from the version in Matthew (6:11):[769] "Say,

'O, our father, make food descend from your heavens for us.'"[770] Then the preceding

verses of the Lord's Prayer from Matthew (6:9-10) immediately thereafter: "Say, 'O, our

father, may your name be glorified. May your kingdom and your justice descend on the

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[764] Ibid., 322.26 - 323.1.

[765] Ibid., 323.2-4.

[766] Ibid., 323.4.

[767] Ibid., 323.8-9.

[768] This reference does not actually appear to be biblical, but from a *ḥadīth* regarding the Day of Judgment which refers to mankind looking for intercessors and some seek out their first father, Adam. Cf. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī* 4:55.556

[769] It is more likely that he is quoting from the Gospel of Matthew, as the immediately following quotation from the Lord's Prayer is not in the version in Luke's Gospel.

[770] *al-Radd*, 323.10-11.

earth.'"[771] He uses these quotations to demonstrate that the fatherhood of God was something used in these quotations to denote a metaphorical relationship that was shared by others – it was not a designator of some special relationship between Jesus and God.

Al-Qāsim's interest in God's divine unity and dissimilarity to all creation that was noted in the examination of the first section of his treatise is reintroduced as he derisively asks a hypophoric question concerning God, "Would anyone imagine that he is a father, procreating and begetting and undergoing change and feeding himself? Or that crucifixion or hardship or pain would reach him?"[772] He immediately answers, "No! (To God be the praise!), not at all!"[773] These human limitations on Jesus are important to al-Qāsim's argument because he considers them to preclude his divinity because they would not only force human insufficiencies of essence and being onto God with the doctrine of the Incarnation, but they would also require this limited being to be associated with God according to the doctrine of the Trinity. Further, he considers it absurd that Christians consider a being who underwent the various difficulties and limitations Jesus did to be divine.

Al-Qāsim does make an argument for misinterpretation here in this section of his *al-Radd*. Unfortunately, it is this section of his work that scholars have used to characterize his entire approach to the authenticity of the Christian scriptures. This section, however, is better understood within the larger framework of his argument as a hypothetical to what he is primarily arguing – that is, he does not concede the full textual

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[771] It does not seem to be from Luke as his version does not mention God's will being done on earth like it does in Matthew. Ibid., 323.11-12.

[772] Ibid., 323.12-13.

[773] Ibid., 323.14.

authenticity of the Bible, but grants that even these limited passages are able to be interpreted in a manner consistent with Islamic teaching. To assume then that al-Qāsim's entire approach to the Bible can be characterized by his approach in this section is mistaken. Al-Qāsim is pragmatic in his refutation of Christianity and there is no reason for him to limit himself to one particular approach to the Bible. If there are passages from the Gospels that can be interpreted in a manner that supports his position, he is willing to use them. Conversely, if there are sections in the Bible he considers to be at odds with the Qur'ān or Islamic teaching, his use of limited biblical passages as authentic but misinterpreted should not be applied without due consideration of the context and nature of his entire argument. Further, he is also pre-emptively answering Christian objections by arguing for the reinterpretation of their Bible as well as the possibility that it has been corrupted. Thus, if one of his arguments against the Bible (misinterpretation or textual corruption) is dismissed, the other can stand in its place.

As previously mentioned, al-Qāsim argues in this section of his treatise that Christians have misinterpreted the Bible. To do so, he provides a limited number of quotations of witnesses from the four Gospels that can be reinterpreted in the light of the framework he established in the first section of his treatise– that is, God is dissimilar to all creation and Jesus is not divine. These principles form the basis for his reinterpretation of the Bible as he argues that the biblical basis upon which Christians have asserted Jesus' divinity is unsupported. His approach here, in which quotations from the Bible are presented as misinterpreted, should not be presumed to constitute al-Qāsim's entire approach to the Bible. Rather, it serves as one aspect of his argument, advanced for a precise and limited purpose. It should not be considered to explain or characterize the

246

entirety of his work for two reasons. First, the structure of the text in this section is substantially different from the structure of his later extended quotation from the Gospel of Matthew. In this section, al-Qāsim introduces each witness, provides the Bible reference without any obvious theologically motivated edits, then offers an interpretation that negates Christian views on Jesus' divine sonship. Second, he introduces these particular biblical quotations as proof-texts, noting that these are only a small sample of passages from the four Gospels.

<div align="center">7.3 FAULTY TRANSMISSION</div>

While the implicit argument for textual corruption of the Bible is more extensive in this section of al-Qāsim's text, it is important to note the explicit argument he makes for textual corruption that precipitates it. It is his explicit argument that calls into question the authenticity of the text and allows him to re-form the Gospel of Matthew into the image of the qur'ānic *Injīl* in the next section. Prior to the substantial biblical quotations at the end of his treatise, al-Qāsim establishes the following scenario: "The three sects of the *Naṣārā* claim (we take refuge in God from ignorance) that they find, in what is in their hands [what they posses], which are the books of the Prophets, that (the) Christ, son of Mary is God and he is the son of God."[774]

After castigating the Christians with a string of invectives for what he considers their impossible beliefs, he argues that the transmission of the text itself is unsound due to the untrustworthiness of the transmitters. He writes,

> According to what they claim, the *Naṣārā* only took and received these books (*kutub*) from the Jews, who, according to them, crucified Christ (the blessings of

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[774] Ibid., 319.13-15.

<div align="center">247</div>

God be upon him). According to the *Naṣārā*, there is not one among their [the Jews] leading people or among their common people who is just or praiseworthy. His testimony would not be accepted about a Jew like him, so how is their testimony about God the Most High and His Messengers accepted?[775]

Both David Thomas and Martin Accad have drawn attention to this passage, though they come to different conclusions. Thomas notes, "He [al-Qāsim] argues that Christians have accepted their Gospels from Jews whom they regard as untrustworthy in everything except this (p. 319, 19-22). It follows that the integrity of the Gospels cannot be accepted since they do not meet the criterion of sound transmission, even by Christian standards."[776] Conversely, Accad writes,

> It has to be pointed out that though it is clearly Biblical *Isnād* that is under fire here, ar-Rassī nevertheless does not draw the conclusion of textual *taḥrīf*. We should therefore not be too swift in drawing it ourselves from his argument, since the treatise as a whole does not sanction such an interpretation.[777]

Accad's conclusion discounts the evidence or reframes it avoid the conclusion that an early Muslim polemicist did advance charges of textual corruption. Rather than assuming that al-Qāsim does not mean what he says, it is likely that al-Qāsim is drawing on concepts pulled from the developing science of *isnād* criticism in the field of *ḥadīth* that would have been familiar to his Muslim audience and has direct parallels with his argument in this section.[778]

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[775] Ibid., 319.19-22.

[776] Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 33.

[777] Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible," 51.

[778] While the extent of al-Qāsim's affinities to the Muʿtazīlah are debated, it is worth mentioning that as early as Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 748), *ḥadīth* were judged based on the number of transmitters (on the assumption that a greater number of transmitters precludes the possibility of collusion on a false report). See Racha El-Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance: Classical Muʿtazilites on Ḥadīth," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 71, no. 2 (2012): 234. Van Ess notes that the use of the *isnād* was not yet common practice in the time of Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ, although he had developed a criterion of authenticity that came close to what would later be referred to as "*tawātur* (broad authentication)." See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesselschaft*, IV:649ff.

The main collections of *ḥadīth*, which incorporated sophisticated levels of *isnād*

criticism, were compiled by al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjaj (d. 875), both

of whom were younger contemporaries of al-Qāsim. In fact, Robson argues that, in

regard to producing authorities, "there is reason to believe that the practice was to some

extent in force before the end of the first century; but it was late in the second century

before it seems to have become essential to have a complete chain of authorities back to

the source."[779] Al-Qāsim's treatise was written sometime between 815 and 826, placing it

after the first generation of *ḥadīth* and *isnād* criticism. While the vast majority of the

technical vocabulary concerning *ḥādīth* criticism would develop later, there were

methods in place to ensure the accuracy of the transmission of a report, that were in part

based on the reliability of the transmitters in the *isnād*. Jonathan Brown explains the

nature of early *ḥadīth* criticism:

> *Ḥadīth* transmitter criticism (known as *al-jarh wa al-taʿdīl*, 'impugning and
> approving') and *isnād* evaluation began in full with the first generation of
> renowned *ḥadīth* critics, that of Shuʿba b. al-Hajjāj, Mālik b. Anas,[780] Sufyān al-
> Thawrī, al-Layth b. Saʿd, and Sufyān b. ʿUyayna, who flourished in the mid to
> late eighth century in the cities of Basra, Kufa, Fustat (modern-day Cairo), Mecca,
> and Medina. These scholars began the process of collecting people's hadith
> narrations and examining both their bodies of material and their characters to

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[779] J. Robson, s.v. "Ḥadīth," in *EI²*. It has also been noted that the specialty of the *ḥadīth* scholars Shuʿba (d. 776), Ibn Mahdī (d. 814), and Yaḥyā al-Qaṭṭān (d. 813) was that of "*ḥadīth*-transmitter criticism." See Scott Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿīn, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 130. Thus, al-Qāsim's application of "Bible-transmitter" criticism in order to call into question the reliability of the biblical text is representative of the time in which he was writing.

[780] Al-Qāsim learned *ḥadīth* from a nephew of Mālik b. Anas (d. 796). Mālik was known for his ʿAlid sympathies and had been minimally involved in the rising of the ʿAlid pretender Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh in 762. Furthermore, he lived in Medina throughout the period of al-Qāsim's adolescence, although there is no indication they met. The work Mālik b. Anas is most known for is the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, which "represents that transition from the simple *fiqh* of the earliest period to the pure science of *ḥadīth* of the later period." Indeed, Schacht notes that "the high estimation in which Mālik is held in the older sources is justified by his strict criticism of *ḥadīths* and not by his activity in the interests of *fiqh*." J. Schacht, s.v. "Mālik. b. Anas," in *EI²*.

249

determine if the material they purveyed could be trusted. Mālik is the first scholar known to have used technical terms such as '*thiqa* (reliable)' to describe these narrators.[781]

Thus, it is plausible that al-Qāsim was incorporating ideas drawn from *ḥadīth* criticism in his assessment of the Bible because: (1) he learned *ḥadīth* from the nephew of one of the earliest scholars to incorporate technical terminology regarding a transmitter's reliability; and (2) a number of other scholars in the decades prior to al-Qāsim writing his *al-Radd* begin to engage in *ḥadīth* and *ḥadīth*-transmitter criticism.

By questioning the reliability of the Bible's transmitters, al-Qāsim is issuing a direct challenge to the authenticity of the text itself. It is not merely the interpretation of the Bible that is troubling to al-Qāsim–although that is as well–it is the actual text itself that is supposed to have been preserved and transmitted by a group of people deemed so untrustworthy by Christians that their testimony against their fellow Jews is worthless. Yet, it is this same group that Christians admit to having transmitted their Bible, and this inconsistency cannot be tolerated by al-Qāsim. The text in the hands of the Christians fails the criterion for authenticity because the Jews were responsible for its transmission and cannot be trusted. In this case, the report, which al-Qāsim claims Christians are using to prove the logical absurdity that Jesus is God and Son of God, is unreliable on account of its chain of transmission (leaving aside what he clearly considers to be its equally problematic content).

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[781] Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 80. It is worth keeping in mind Reinhart's reservations regarding the apologetic nature of portions of Brown's work. See Kevin Reinhart, "Juynolliana, Gradualism, the Big Bang, and Ḥadīth Study in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 3 (2010): 436-439. It is noteworthy that it is Mālik b. Anas in particular who was known to have judged the authority of *isnād*s with limited technical terms. Given the connections discussed above between Mālik and al-Qāsim, it is possible al-Qāsim as familiar with such methods of evaluating the reliability of a text's transmitters, which he then used in arguing against the reliability of the Bible's transmitters.

In addition to the explicit claim that the transmission of the Christian scriptures is unreliable, there are other hints that al-Qāsim does not consider the text to be entirely sound. Al-Qāsim notes that "in all four Gospels (*anājīl al-arbaʿah*) [there are] divergent testimonies (*shahādāt mukhtalifah*),"[782] a claim that lends further credence to the likelihood that he is familiar with an Arabic translation of at least the Gospels. Further, he seems to be implying that the actual text, which he quotes immediately thereafter, contains divergent testimonies. The precise nature of these divergent testimonies is left unclear, but one must assume they relate to his sustained argumentation against Christians associating Jesus with God. Regardless, the fact that al-Qāsim considers there to be divergent testimonies in the different Gospels is an indication that he considers the scriptures in the hands of the Christians to be unsound.

Another instance of wording that hints at a charge of textual corruption comes shortly after his reinterpretation of the five witnesses noted above. He writes:

> They claim (*zaʿamū*) God said in their Gospel (*Injīl*) in regard to Christ, the son of Mary (blessings of God be upon him): 'This is my beloved and pure son.'[783] And the words of Simon Peter to him: 'You are the son of the true God.'[784] What they mentioned of this–if it is true (*in ṣaḥḥa*)–and things similar to it, which they were claiming about God and about his messengers, an interpretation was found for it, which makes what they said vain and vanishing.[785]

There are two statements in that quotation that point toward al-Qāsim not accepting the authenticity of the text of the Christian scriptures. In his initial wording, "They claim"

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[782] *al-Radd*, 321.15.

[783] Matthew 3:17.

[784] Matthew 16:16

[785] *al-Radd*, 322.19.

(*zaʿamū*), al-Qāsim is noncommittal regarding the scriptural authenticity of the references that immediately follow.[786] Rather, it is something that the Christians claim. Considering the qur'ānic framework al-Qāsim established for his argument in the first section of his treatise, it is worth noting that the root *z-ʿ-m* is used fifteen times in the Qur'ān in relation to various claims,[787] and the context in each reference establishes that the claim is a lie. Al-Qāsim also uses "they claim" when he is providing Christian beliefs about God regarding the Trinity and Incarnation which he is devoting his entire treatise to refute. The specific language al-Qāsim uses distances his position from that which he is explaining. Furthermore, al-Qāsim distances the text Christians are quoting from authentic Scripture by noting that it is "their Gospel (*Injīl*)." In doing so, he establishes a dichotomy between the *Injīl* that God was supposed to have revealed to Jesus and the one in "their hands" (i.e., what the Christians possessed).

Further evidence that he considers the text to be suspect is that he offers the qualifier, "if it is true (*in ṣaḥḥa*)" after quoting God and Peter's respective proclamations of the divinity and divine sonship of Jesus. It is not surprising that he does not accept their authority or authenticity given that the quotations explicitly refer to God as Father and Jesus as Divine Son. The qualifier al-Qāsim provides, "if it is true" is not referring to the interpretation due to the context of the statement. He immediately notes that there is an alternate interpretation that renders their interpretation invalid, and he then must be

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[786] Al-Jāḥiẓ uses similar language in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. See Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr Ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," in *Three Essays of Abū ʿOthman ʿAmr Ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869)*, ed. Joshua Finkel (Cairo: Salfyah Press, 1926), 27.13-18.

[787] 4:60, 6:22, 6:94, 6:136, 6:138, 17:56, 17:92, 18:48, 18:52, 28:62, 28:74, 34:22, 62:6, 64:7.

referring to what the Christians claim in in their Gospel, i.e., the quotations that are explicitly at odds with the Qur'ān's presentation of God.

In summary, al-Qāsim distances God from the references in the Bible by: (1) noting it is a Christian claim rather than God's words; (2) arguing that the text itself is suspect since it is "their Gospel"; and (3) questioning the veracity of the references to Jesus being God's son he had just quoted. This is not the approach of someone who accepts the unmitigated authenticity of the text; rather, this is the approach of a pragmatic polemicist who recognizes the value in multiple tactics of argumentation and is unwilling to concede that the text in question is authentic in its entirety. There is no polemical benefit for al-Qāsim to accept the authority of the Bible in full, particularly when he notes passages that are at odds with his entire project of establishing and preserving God's complete dissimilarity to all created things.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that al-Qāsim's argument against Christianity is three-fold in its attack, but single in its focus. He is concerned with the nouns "father" and "son" and how they should be understood. He began by demonstrating that the nouns "father" and "son" used by Christians in reference to God are neither essential nor hypostatic, but rather they are accidental. That is, they are only given because of a specific event that happened in time (in this case, the birth of a child). Thus, both "father" and "son" cannot be essential names for God because he is eternal. He then turned to other interpretations of the names "father" and "son" that do not entail the relationship he considers Christians to believe exists between God the Father and Jesus the divine Son.

253

He provides a number of examples of metaphorical relationships in which the names "father" and "son" are used as either terms of endearment or respect. Thus, the interpretations Christians reach in regard to the nature of Jesus and God in their scripture is not necessary. Having established those parameters, he sought to demonstrate that the Gospels present a picture of Jesus that does not entail any sort of divine sonship, but that he is like other men, is considered to be a son of a human father, that familial terms are employed between God and other human beings, and thus any familial terms in their Gospels should be interpreted metaphorically rather than literally.

Although al-Qāsim offers reinterpretations of a handful of verses with familial references from the Gospels, he also established his justification for his extensive alterations to the Gospel of Matthew that will be examined in Chapter 8. His argument, which is a challenge to the authenticity of the text itself, is that the transmission of the Bible is untrustworthy because the transmitters are flawed. Given al-Qāsim's explicit questioning of the reliability of the Bible's transmission, other clues al-Qāsim leaves as he discusses the Bible that further testify to his suspicion of its complete authenticity are more apparent: he introduced quotations from the Bible with "they claim," which points to his distrust of their authenticity; he established a dichotomy between the qur'ānic *Injīl* and the Gospel "in their hands;" and he interjected with "if it is true" when referring to quotations from the Bible that explicitly refer to God as Father and Jesus as divine Son in order to undermine their textual authority. He again gives rationalistic argumentation primacy and only after he has argued his point does he turn to scripture.

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Chapter 8
"A MUSLIM STORY IN ALL ITS PARTS AND REFERENCES":[788]
SECTION FOUR OF *AL-RADD ʿALĀ AL-NAṢĀRĀ*

Al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* concludes with an extended quotation from
the Gospel of Matthew that has been edited extensively. He has previously laid out a
qurʾānic and logical basis for God not being united to any created being, the
philosophical problems inherent in Jesus being divine, linguistic reasons why the names
'Father' and 'Son' in relation to God are problematic, a summary Christian beliefs on the
Trinity and Incarnation, reinterpretation of a select number of passages that are presented
without alteration in line with Islamic belief, and a brief argument against the textual
authenticity of the Bible as a result of what he considers faulty transmission. In order to
keep the canonical version of Matthew's Gospel distinct from al-Qāsim's version in this
study, I use the following scheme: al-Qāsim's version, which includes a reworked version
of chapters one through eight of the Gospel of Matthew, will be referred to as Q-
Matthew. The corresponding canonical version of that section will be referred to as C-
Matthew. While perhaps inelegant, this scheme should mitigate confusion regarding the
particular version to which I am referring and limit awkward and laborious phrasing.

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[788] This title is taken from David Thomas' article examining of the use of the Bible in the polemical texts
of al-Qāsim and ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī. It sums up well what I consider al-Qāsim to be attempting in his extensive
edits to the Gospel of Matthew in this section of his treatise. Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-
Christian Polemic," 35.

This fourth and final section (324.10 – 331.22) of al-Qāsim's treatise examines a unique aspect of Muslim disputational literature of the eighth and ninth centuries: an extended quotation from the Gospel of Matthew reproduced as though it has passed through a qur'ānic or Islamic filter. It is this section of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* that most directly forces a reconsideration of the categories used to describe early Muslim views regarding the authenticity of the Bible as well as the manner in which al-Qāsim's particular approach to the Bible has been characterized in recent scholarship. Rather than simply arguing that the Bible has been misinterpreted by Christians to advance their claims of Jesus' divine sonship, al-Qāsim takes the Gospel of Matthew and reforms it in light of the logical arguments he has presented earlier in his treatise as well as the qur'ānic proofs he has offered in support.[789] In doing so, he transforms the Gospel of Matthew, aligning it with qur'ānic and Islamic principles which makes it entirely acceptable to a Muslim audience. This chapter, however, is not an exhaustive analysis of this section of al-Qāsim's treatise. Rather, I focus specifically on aspects of the text that point toward a reconsideration of his views on the authenticity of the Bible.

I argue in this section that, in addition to explicit arguments against the authenticity of the Gospel text discussed in the previous chapter, al-Qāsim demonstrates through extensive additions, alterations, exclusions, and reordering, that he considers the actual text of the Bible to be corrupted. Al-Qāsim does not specifically note his

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[789] As a note, I use the New Oxford Annotated Bible, 3rd ed. (NOAB) of the Gospel of Matthew as a comparison to Q-Matthew. Although a pre- or early ninth-century Christian Arabic version of the Gospel of Matthew would be an ideal text for the purposes of comparison, such a text is non-extant. The NOAB was obviously not the original Biblical text upon which al-Qāsim is basing his version, but it serves as a general reference against which to compare. In that regard, I am justified in using a modern translation/version for two reasons: (1) there are characteristics of al-Qāsim's version that are distinctly Islamic/non-Christian; and (2) none of those characteristics are present in the Christian manuscript tradition.

polemically motivated changes or the reason for which certain passages are excluded. I am operating on the principle that the passages that are excluded are excluded for specific reasons, primarily because they contravene Islamic principles. While some of these exclusions are directly related to the fatherhood of God or the divine sonship of Jesus, al-Qāsim's edits are more extensive, insofar as the entirety of the text is reimagined through a qur'ānic filter and there are issues beyond God's fatherhood or Jesus' divine sonship in the Gospel of Matthew that are incompatible with the Qur'ān.

Rather than proceed sequentially, I examine this section according to different types of modifications al-Qāsim makes to Matthew.[790] I discuss the following: (1) the exclusion or alteration of familial language in relation to God; (2) the putative reasoning behind the exclusion of specific sections; (3) the specific designators al-Qāsim uses for Jesus; and (4) the qur'ānicization of Jesus, examined specifically in relation to miracles. Following these, I provide a translation of and then examine an extended pericope (Jesus' temptation in the desert in Matthew 4:1-11) that demonstrates the aforementioned alterations that typify Q-Matthew. I also examine Q-Matthew 5:17-19 that serves in many ways as a window into al-Qāsim's conception of Matthew in juxtaposition to the *Injīl*, as put into the mouth of Jesus. I conclude my examination of this portion of the text by arguing that the contents of Q-Matthew should be considered as an application of the principles outlined in his argument throughout his entire treatise. Al-Qāsim's extensive editing of Matthew is evidence that he considered the Gospel, as it was in the hands of

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[790] Because I will be quoting extensively from al-Qāsim's re-formulation of the Gospel and not doing so in order, I have included a translation of this final portion of his treatise in Appendix D in order to provide a better sense of his version of the Gospel of Matthew in its entirety. I have also included an index of his citations from the Gospels in Appendix C.

the Christians, to have been not only misinterpreted, but also textually corrupted, and that

he knew that the original *Injīl* should reflect the qur'ānic portrayal of God and Jesus with

which he began his treatise.

As a note, Guidi drew attention to the peculiar rhymed-prose style of the Gospel

translations of MS Leiden – 2378 (15th cent.), MS Vatican, arab. – 17 (copied in 1009),

and MS Vatican – arab. 18 (copied in 993),[791] to which Baumstark drew similarities with

al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*.[792] Vööbus further noted, "this artful literary form of

rhymed prose was something that appealed to the taste of the Moslems, being highly

esteemed by, and well known to, the readers of the Quran."[793] While even this portion of

al-Qāsim's *al-Radd* is in *saj ʿ* (rhymed prose), I am not convinced that any meaningful

connection between the literary form of the Qur'ān and Q-Matthew should be applied.

Because the entire treatise is written in *saj ʿ*. It is possible, however, that the other MSS of

the Gospels mentioned above do reveal such intentions with their use of *saj ʿ*, although

their examination lies outside the purview of this study. Al-Qāsim's use of *saj ʿ*, however,

is ubiquitous throughout his works and is thus not considered in this study as additional

evidence of his attempt to bring the Gospel into further alignment with the Qur'ān. I

consider it nothing more than a fortuitous coincident that al-Qāsim's regularly-used

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[791] Ignazio Guidi, *Le Traduzioni degli Evangelii in arabo e in etiopico*, Atti della reale accademia dei Lincei (Rome: Tipografia della r. accademia dei Lincei, 1888), 32, 25 ff. Kashouh also discusses these manuscripts, considering them as one MS family, translated from the Syriac Peshitta. He also notes that, "the archetype of this version must have emerged in an Islamic milieu translated by possibly a Christian arab whose aim was to communicate a Gospel, the linguistic features of which are familiar to the Muslim ear. It is not possible to determine how early this version is; any date between the eighth and early tenth century is a possibility." See Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels*, 128-130.

[792] Anton Baumstark, "Arabische Übersetzung eines altsyrischen Evangelientextes und die Sure 21. 105 zitierte Psalmenübersetzung," *Oriens Christianus* Series 3, Volume 9 (1934): 182.

[793] Arthur Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament: Manuscript Studies* (Stockholm: Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1954), 296.

writing style is consistent with that of the Qur'ān, which had become the normative

model of Arabic eloquence. Thus, the Qur'ān is exerting stylistic influence on al-Qāsim's

text, but I am hesitant to draw conclusions that the style was intentionally used to

conform the biblical text to the Qur'ān. The particular style al-Qāsim uses, however, is

further evidence that the Gospel portion of the text has been reworked and is not simply

being quoted by al-Qāsim.

8.1 PRELIMINARY MATTERS

Prior to the examination of Q-Matthew, it is worth considering the nature of the

text from which al-Qāsim is quoting, particularly when the argument is based upon

perceived theologically motivated alterations and exclusions al-Qāsim makes to the

Gospel text. While al-Qāsim does not make clear the particular source of his Gospel

quotations, I am convinced that he is working from a copy of at least the Gospel of

Matthew that was previously translated into Arabic. The reasons for considering al-

Qāsim to have access to a complete text of at least the portion of Matthew he quotes are:

(1) apart from Jesus' temptation in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11) being placed first, Q-

Matthew follows the sequential order of C-Matthew without interpolations from the other

Gospels, i.e., it is not from the diatessaron or a compilation of Gospel quotations; (2) it

generally adheres to the canonical text, and any significant theological differences can be

explained through al-Qāsim's polemically motivated edits;[794] (3) it contains the entire

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[794] Shlomo Pines argues briefly that two of the alterations in the text might point toward sectarian influences and a previously edited text. The first Pines considers is "sons of God" in Matt. 5:9 and 5:44-45, which is rendered as "sincere ones of God", although I consider this alteration to reflect al-Qāsim's insistence that God is not a father. The second is from Matt. 5:22, where C-Matthew has "fool," Q-Matthew has "uncircumcised." Pines argues, "a possible explanation might be that Judaeo-Christians had inserted in pre- or post-Islamic times the expression in question into the Sermon on the Mount in order to prove to the

text apart from select exclusions that contravene the Islamic principles al-Qāsim has outlined previously in his treatise;[795] (4) al-Qāsim's quotes part of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) twice; it first appears unedited in section three of his *Radd* and preserves the opening wording "our father (*abānā*),[796]" and appears next in section four with the opening wording changed to "our lord (*rabbanā*)";[797] and (5) there is reasonable evidence that the Gospels (and potentially more of the Bible) had been translated into Arabic by Christians prior to the point at which al-Qāsim is writing his treatise.[798]

Despite the fact that al-Qāsim is likely working from a previously translated version of the Gospel, it is simply not possible to determine his source at this time. There are, however, a number of peculiar word usages that might help point to a possible source

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uncircumcised Christians that there existed a scriptural sanction for considering the word 'uncircumcised' as a term of abuse." See Shlomo Pines, "Notes on Islam and on Arabic Christianity and on Judaeo-Christianity," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4 (1984): 148-149. David Thomas disagrees, noting that if Pines is correct, "then many of al-Qāsim's divergences can be explained as changes made by earlier hands rather than his own editing work. But since there is hardly any other instance where the version he transmits differs substantially from the received text for any reason that cannot be explained by reference to his own reworking, Pines' suggestion does not seem very likely." Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 34. While I do think al-Qāsim is working from a previously translated text, my examination of Q-Matthew in this chapter will demonstrate the manner in which the theological content has been conformed to the principles al-Qāsim established earlier in his treatise.

[795] This particular reason demonstrates why Martin Accad's table of Bible quotations, while useful, can be misleading because it does not take note of the theological motivations for what is *not* included. The exclusions from al-Qāsim's version demonstrate as much theological motivation as his alterations do to re-form the text into an acceptably qur'ānic and Islamic version. In addition, it is also not clear in Accad's table that the extended quotation from Matthew in al-Qāsim's treatise is not included as separate verses interspersed with commentary. See Martin Accad, "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table," in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, nos. 1-4 (2003): 67-91; 205-220; 337-352; 459-479.

[796] *al-Radd*, 323.10.

[797] Ibid., 328.11. He also includes God's voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:17, "This is my beloved and pure son," in section three of his treatise (322.20) but then excludes it in section four of his treatise but includes the surrounding verses. If he were working from a previously edited text, he would necessarily not have been able to provide the canonical version. Both instances point to specifically theologically motivated editing to remove aspects of the text that do not align with qur'ānic or Islamic principles.

[798] See Chapter 3.6 for further discussion of this point.

or later translations that fall within the same manuscript tradition, although a full

consideration of this issue lies outside the purview of this study. The first is al-Qāsim's

use of Shuʿayb instead of Ishʿiyā (Isaiah) in Matthew 4:14.[799] Shuʿayb is a qurʾānic

prophet who was never associated with the Biblical Isaiah, but came to be considered by

exegetes as Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, because both are mentioned in connection

with Madyan (Midian) in the Qurʾān.[800] There is a possible reason for the confusion

between Isaiah and Shuʿayb posited by Baumstark, who notes that in al-Birūnī's (d.

1048) *Kitāb al-athār al-bāqiyya*, Isaiah was written as *sh-ʿ-y-ā* and could have been

rendered then as *sh-ʿ-y-b* (Shuʿayb) due to a transcription error.[801] Curt Peters has noted

another use of Shuʿayb rather than Ishʿiyā in MS Leiden – 2378, although in contrast to

Baumstark, he considers the possibility of a transcription error causing the change to

Shuʿayb to be "thoroughly unbelievable."[802] His evidence is two-fold: (1) the form

Shuʿayb appears numerous times and in each of the Gospels in MS Leiden, 2378 and

could not possibly be the same transcription error repeatedly; and (2) al-Qāsim's citation

from Matthew 4:14 also has Shuʿayb, and he does not consider it plausible that the

authors of these two texts would have, independently of each other, made the same

transcription error.

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[799] *al-Radd*, 326.1.

[800] See Robert Tottoli, s.v. "Shuʿayb," in *EQ*; Andrew Rippin, s.v. "Shuʿayb," in *EI²*. Regarding the Madyan connection, cf. Q. 7:85, 11:84, 94-5, 29:36, 20:40, and 28:22-8.

[801] Anton Baumstark, "Zu dem Aufsatz S. 165-188 (Arabische Übersetzung eines altsyrischen Evangelientextes und die Sure 21. 105 zitierte Psalmenübersetzung)," *Oriens Christianus* Series 3, Volume 9 (1934): 278.

[802] Curt Peters, "Von arabischen Evangelientexten in Handschriften der Universitäts-Bibliothek Leiden," *Acta Orientalia* 18, no. 2 (1940): 128-129.

I consider the transcription error a possibility, however, in al-Qāsim's treatise. If he had come across Matthew 4:14 and seen *sh-ʿ-y-ā* (assuming the same form for Isaiah mentioned in al-Birūnī's text), rather than *I-sh-ʿ-y-ā*, but from the context of the verse knew that it was supposed to be a prophet, it is plausible that he mistook the identity and inserted Shuʿayb (a prophet with which he would have been familiar from the Qurʾān) in place of *sh-ʿ-y-ā*. Alternatively, is it possible that this transcription error made its way into the manuscripts sometime after al-Qāsim wrote the treatise, although it should be noted that "Shuʿayb" appears in all five of the existing manuscripts of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd*.

Another interesting difference between al-Qāsim's text and the Christian version is in Matthew 2:22. Rather than Archelaus reigning after Herod, al-Qāsim's version replaces Archelaus with Claudius (Kilādūs).[803] Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any other instances of this particular alteration in any other manuscript, and this change does not help bring the text into conformity with the Qurʾān or Islamic principles. Further, there does not appear to be a possibility of any obvious transcription mistake like with Shuʿayb. The only possible reason seems to be historical confusion over which "Herod" Matthew is referring to and an attempt to then correct the text based on the confusion. It is implausible that al-Qāsim had access to Roman chronicles or historical materials that would have led to this correction, but was likely in the text from which he was working and might help point toward the provenance of his translation, although I was unable to find any similarities with known manuscripts.

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[803] *al-Radd*, 325.6.

The present study is not an investigation of the particular source of al-Qāsim's translation. It does seem highly probable that he was working from a version of the Gospel of Matthew previously translated into Arabic, although the particulars of that translation are currently unknown. While it would be a worthwhile endeavor to consider more closely the similarities between al-Qāsim's text and the available manuscript tradition in order to potentially determine this, it lies outside the scope of this dissertation and remains for another project. While the provenance will be difficult to trace due to the style in which the text is written, it might prove worthwhile to compare al-Qāsim's version of Matthew with the other Gospel MSS that are also written in rhymed prose: MS Leiden – 2378; MS Vatican, Arabic – 17; MS Vatican, Arabic – 18.

8.2 Familial Language Excised

Al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is replete with instances where select words present in the parallel Christian version are absent or altered from the version al-Qāsim provides so as to bring the text in line with the rational and theological framework he previously established.[804] What makes these exclusions particularly pertinent is that there are specific polemical and theological reasons for which al-Qāsim likely excluded them from his version of Matthew. There are two specific words that al-Qāsim removes and/or alters uniformly and without exception: "father" and "son" when they appear in reference to relationships between God and others.[805] This is no surprise, though, considering that

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[804] Because al-Qāsim's text is written in rhymed prose a certain amount of leniency must be granted for word choice, reordering, and stylistic changes. I focus only on edits for which a clear theological motivation is apparent. I have determined this theological motivation by his emphasis on God's *tawḥīd* and denial of Jesus' divine sonship in the earlier sections of his treatise.

[805] Instances in which "father" or "son(s)" appear not in relation to God are left unaltered by al-Qāsim.

263

al-Qāsim has explicitly argued against the possibility of God as Father and Jesus as divine Son. Thus, in his version of the text, such familial language present in the Christian version of Matthew has been brought into line with the Qur'ān's presentation of God's divine unity and Jesus' humanity – two emphases from earlier in his *Radd* using both logical argumentation and qur'ānic proofs.

In the section from C-Matthew parallel to Q-Matthew, the word "Father" appears seventeen times in reference to God.[806] Of these, al-Qāsim substitutes "God" (*allāh*) seven times,[807] he substitutes "God your Lord" (*allāh rabbukum*) three times,[808] he substitutes "Lord" (*rabb*) twice,[809] and he excludes it with the surrounding context three times.[810] "Son" appears five times to refer to Jesus[811] in C-Matthew, while Q-Matthew has it once as "pure one" (*ṣafī*),[812] once as "beloved to him [God]" (*lahu ḥabīb*),[813] once it is the first-person possessive suffix, "my" (*-ī*),[814] and twice it is omitted with its

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[806] Matthew 5:16, 5:45, 5:48, 6:1, 6:4, 6:6 (twice); 6:8, 6:9, 6:14, 6:15, 6:18 (twice), 6:26, 6:32, 7:11, and 7:21.

[807] Matthew 5:45, 6:1, 6:6, 6:14, 6:18, 7:11, and 7:21; *al-Radd* 327.24, 328.3, 328.6, 328.16, 328.17, 330.9, and 330.25.

[808] Matthew 5:16, 6:4, and 6:26; *al-Radd* 326.27, 328.5 and 329.7

[809] Matthew 6:9 and 6:32; *al-Radd* 328.11 and 329.18.

[810] Matthew 5:48, 6:6, and 6:18.

[811] Matthew 2:15, 3:17, 4:3, 4:6, and 8:20.

[812] Matthew 2:15; *al-Radd* 325.3.

[813] Matthew 4:3; *al-Radd* 324.20.

[814] Matthew 8:20; *al-Radd* 331.18.

surrounding context.[815] "Sons" is used twice to refer to humans in relation to God in this

section of Matthew's Gospel and it is changed to "pure ones" (*aṣfiyāʾ*) both times.[816]

The differences between C-Matthew and Q-Matthew demonstrate more than

simple stylistic changes or word choice. Al-Qāsim established earlier in his treatise that

he is working within a qurʾānic framework in regard to the nature of God and Jesus, and

his exclusion of all words denoting any sort of familial relationship with God

demonstrate that he is imposing that qurʾānic framework. Al-Qāsim argued in the first

and third sections of his treatise that God's fatherhood and Jesus' divine sonship lay

outside the bounds of reason and are incompatible with the Qurʾān. His project in section

three was to establish that the Gospels do not require the interpretations Christians have

come to in regard to God's fatherhood and Jesus' divine sonship, although he makes his

argument without altering any of the quotations to remove the familial language. Thus,

when familial language is altered/excluded in this section, one can infer that al-Qāsim is

not simply continuing his argument from section three. Rather, he re-articulates the

Gospel of Matthew in this section in a manner consistent with the principles he

established regarding the nature of God and Jesus earlier in his treatise. Thus, "Father"

becomes *allāh* / *rabb* / *allāh rabbakum* or is excluded; "Son" becomes *ṣafī* / *lahu ḥabīb* /

-*ī* or is excluded; and "Sons" becomes *aṣfiyāʾ*.

A similar transformation of *ab* into *rabb* occurs in Ibn Isḥāq's (d. ca. 770) *Sīrat*

rasūl allāh, in a quotation taken from the Gospel of John. While the purpose for which

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[815] Matthew 3:17 and the surrounding context have obvious Trinitarian significance and Matthew 4:6 is part of Jesus' temptation in the desert that gets excluded and there are other significant alterations to this section. It will be discussed separately below.

[816] Matthew 5:9 and 5:45; *al-Radd* 326.16 and 327.24.

Ibn Isḥāq alters the text does not concern us here, in his analysis of that passage

Guillaume has noted that,

> *Aba,* father (which can mean 'my father' in Syriac and Jewish Aramaic) becomes *rabb.* Undoubtedly the alteration is intentional because, owing to the carnal association of fatherhood in Islam, father is a blasphemous term to use in reference to God and bears the stigma of trinitarianism.[817]

While I agree with Guillaume's analysis on this point, as he extrapolates further he makes more tenuous claims. He notes that,

> *Rabb* is similar in sound, and not entirely devoid of the same connotation, for the verb which denotes lordship and mastery can be applied also to the bringing up of children and thus in a sense, a *rabb* can be an *ab.* The use of *rabb* here seems to point to a desire on the part of the translator to keep as near as possible to the original text of the Gospel."[818]

Guillaume's analysis is unconvincing and ignores the critical fact that the Qur'ān is clear in its proscriptions of God being considered a father.[819] It does not appear to be the concern of early Muslim writers in their editing of Gospel quotations to "keep as near as possible to the original," as Guillaume suggests, and his contention that *rabb* and *ab* have similar connotations simply does not hold up to scrutiny given the Qur'ān's repeated insistence on denying God's fatherhood.

Griffith offers a more plausible explanation of Ibn Isḥāq's alteration of *ab* into *rabb,* He writes,

> On the evidence of his alteration of 'father' to 'Lord' throughout the passage, we have already seen that Ibn Isḥāq must rather have intended accurately to quote from John's copy of the gospel as it would have been originally, when God gave it to Jesus, according to the Qur'ān's teaching, and not to reflect what in his view

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[817] Alfred Guillaume, "The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina *Circa* 700 A.D.," *al-Andalus* 15 (1950): 294.

[818] Ibid.

[819] Cf. Q. 2:116, 5:18, 39:4, 6:101, and 112:1-4.

would have to be instances of textual alterations introduced later by the Christian community in support of their unique doctrines about God and Jesus. Religious accuracy, and hence scriptural accuracy, for Ibn Isḥāq, would have been measured by the Qurʾān's teachings, and not by Christian manuscripts in Greek, Syriac, or Arabic.[820]

Similar to Ibn Isḥāq, al-Qāsim's purpose in rewording *ab* to *rabb* in the Lord's Prayer does not appear to be for the purpose of altering it to a similar sounding word. I think it was more a happy accident for Muslim polemicists that *ab* and *rabb* sound similar. That said, al-Qāsim does not always alter *ab* to *rabb*, which negates the sound of the word being the determining factor for what *ab* was altered to. His purpose is to reformulate the text in line with the nature of God and Jesus as expressed in the Qurʾān and established by al-Qāsim earlier in his treatise. In the same manner as Griffith's conclusions regarding Ibn Isḥāq's alteration of *ab* into *rabb*, al-Qāsim's understanding of the Bible's scriptural accuracy seems to have been dictated by the Qurʾān's teaching and any aspects of Matthew's Gospel that transgressed those boundaries were changed or removed.

8.3 EXTENDED PASSAGES EXCLUDED

In addition to specific words that are removed or altered for theological reasons, there are also passages excluded, the contents of which are either considered superfluous or, more importantly for this study, cannot be conformed to qurʾānic sensibilities. The sections that do not appear in Q-Matthew are 2:16-18, 3:1-12, 3:16-17, 4:5-7, 4:16-17, 4:18-22, 5:25-26, 5:27-30, 5:31-32, 5:38-39, 6:7-8, 8:1-4, 8:5-10, and 8:14-17. Of these, the following seem to have been excluded simply because they are superfluous to the story al-Qāsim is presenting because he focuses specifically on the story of Jesus: Matt.

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[820] Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic," 140.

2:16-18 (Herod killing the male babies), 3:1-10 (John the Baptist), and 4:18-22 (fishers of

men) and will not be examined here. The following sections, however, seem to have been

omitted for specific theological reasons: 3:16-17 (Trinity and Jesus' baptism); 4:5-7

(Jesus' second temptation); 5:25-26 (come to terms); 5:27-30 (lust); 5:31-32 (divorce);

5:38-39 (retaliation); 8:1-4 (Jesus heals a leper); 8:5-10 (Jesus heals a centurion's

servant); 8:14-17 (Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law). I examine each of them in turn

below; although Jesus' second temptation (Matt. 4:5-7) is included in my analysis of the

passage regarding Jesus' temptation in the desert,[821] and Matt. 8:1-10, 14-17 is

considered with my discussion of Jesus' miracles.[822]

8.3.1 MATTHEW 3:16-17 (JESUS' BAPTISM)

Matthew 3:13-17 contains the story of Jesus' baptism, although al-Qāsim

concludes his version with verse 15. Verses 16 and 17, which are omitted in al-Qāsim's

text, are as follows:

> And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly
> the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a
> dove and alighting on him. And, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the
> Beloved (or, Beloved Son), with whom I am well pleased.'[823]

Jesus' baptism is not problematic to al-Qāsim. Rather, it is the obvious Trinitarian and

Incarnational implications of the verses that are the concern. Jesus, the Spirit of God, and

a voice from heaven (presumably God) are presented. Further, God's fatherhood and the

divine sonship of Jesus are emphasized when the voice from heaven refers to Jesus as

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[821] See Chapter 8.6.

[822] See Chapter 8.5.

[823] Matthew 3:16-17 (NOAB).

"beloved Son." There is little need to explain why these particular verses would be deemed unacceptable by al-Qāsim, given that these two doctrines are the main target of his entire refutation. While al-Qāsim regularly displays his ability to transform the text by removing or altering specific offending words and phrases, the amount of editing that would be necessary to preserve these two verses in any recognizable form after altering every offending aspect (filial language referring to Jesus, Spirit descending, voice from heaven, and Trinitarian implications) is simply untenable. Thus, he removes these verses entirely and in doing so, removes the Trinitarian and Incarnational associations of these verses from Q-Matthew.[824]

8.3.2 MATTHEW 5:25-26 (COMING TO TERMS)

Matthew 5:25-26 does not have the obvious difficulties of reconciliation that the Trinitarian and Incarnational language of the previous exclusion contained. Rather, it concerns Jesus' admonition to settle financial disputes before court. It states:

> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.[825]

The significance of this particular passage is more difficult to ascertain, although I think a case can still be made for it being excised for a specific theological purpose. In regard to

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[824] Interestingly, later Muslim polemicists such as ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. 860), al-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb (fl. ca. mid-10th cent.), and Yūsuf al-Lubnānī (d. ca. mid-13th cent.) would *use* this miracle in their own polemics as evidence that Jesus is not the divine Son of God because someone who is chosen (*mūṣṭafā*) cannot be God. For a discussion of this, see Hackenburg, "Voices of the Converted: Apostate Literature in Medieval Islam," 117-118, 221-222, 299-300. ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's discussion can be found in al-Ṭabarī, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 141. Al-Ḥasan's discussion is quoted in Taymiyyah, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, 104. Yūsuf al-Lubnānī's discussion can be found in Yūsuf al-Lubnānī, *Risālah fī-l-radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā* MS Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – 1669 (Cod. A.F. 397), 8v.

[825] Matthew 5:25-26 (NOAB).

this passage, David Thomas has contended, "it could be argued that these teachings all water down Islamic principles of justice and fairness (as they originally contradicted Jewish regulation)."[826] This interpretation leaves a puzzle though – this excluded verse is part of a larger section in which Jesus' teachings are framed in opposition to the Torah (i.e., You have heard it said in the Torah [X], I say [Y]). Al-Qāsim does not exclude Jesus' expansion of the Torah in regard to murder (in which he states that even anger is like murder), or in regard to oaths (which he says should not be done at all).

If al-Qāsim is concerned with Jesus' contravention of Jewish regulations, it is curious that he does not exclude or alter every instance of Jesus doing so in this section. Rather, I think it is because it contravenes the third of the five specific principles of religion al-Qāsim outlines in his *Khamsat al-uṣūl*: "He rewards to an atom's weight of good [that is done] and he rewards to an atom's weight of evil [that is done].[827] One [the former] he sends to the reward, and he is in it perpetually, eternally, forever and ever. One [the latter] he sends to punishment which he cannot escape."[828] Thus, Jesus' statement that anger is akin to murder and will be punished accordingly is consistent with al-Qāsim's presentation of divine justice and retribution. Jesus' teaching about coming to terms with the accuser, however, contravenes al-Qāsim's (and the Qur'ān's) view of God's justice and presents a loophole of sorts around a justly deserved punishment. Thus, it is omitted from Q-Matthew.

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[826] Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 35.

[827] Cf. Qur'ān 99:7-8, "Whoever has done a speck's weight of good will see it, and whoever has done a speck's weight of evil will see it."

[828] Griffini, "Lista dei Manoscritti Arabi Nuovo Fondo della Biblioteca Ambrosiana di Milano," 606. A German translation is included in Madelung, *Der Imam*, 104. A French translation is included in Gimaret, "Les *Uṣūl al-Khamsa* du Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār," 67.

Matthew 5:27-30 relates Jesus' teaching on lust, in which he equates lust with

adultery, and then offers a drastic remedy. It states,

> You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you
> that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery
> with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it
> away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to
> be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw
> it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body
> to go into hell.[829]

The Qur'ān is clear in its proscription of lust[830] and is largely consistent with Matthew's

proscriptions here. There are however, two possibilities that seem plausible for why this

passage was not retained in Q-Matthew. The first is its thematic similarity with the

following section regarding divorce and adultery, which is also excluded from Q-

Matthew. Thus, in al-Qāsim's reading of the text, he conceivably considered Matthew

5:27-32 as one thematic unit, the latter half (vv. 31-32) of which was more problematic

due to its inconsistency with qur'ānic rulings on divorce.[831] The second possible reason

might simply be the drastic nature of the solution implied in the passage. While self-

castration was not a widespread occurrence in the Church, there were well-known

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[829] Matthew 5:27-30 (NOAB).

[830] Cf. Qur'ān 24:30-31, "Say to the believing men (that) they (should) lower their sight and guard their
private parts. That is purer for them. Surely God is aware of what they do. And say to the believing women
(that) they (should) lower their sight and guard their private parts, and not show their charms, except for
what (normally) appears of them. And let them draw head coverings over their breasts, and not show their
charms, except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their
husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, of their sisters' sons, or their women, or what their
right (hands) own, or such men as attend (them who) have no (sexual) desire, or children (who are) not
(yet) aware of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they hide of
their charms. Turn to God (in repentance) – all (of you) – believers, so that you may prosper." See also
Harald Motzki, s.v. "Chastity," in *EQ*.

[831] For discussion of these reasons, see Chapter 8.3.4.

examples of the practice, Origen of Alexandria (d. 254) being the most prominent.

Furthermore, it was condemned by the Council of Nicaea in Canon 1 (325),

demonstrating that it was prevalent enough to address, and continued to be condemned by

later theologians such as Ambrose of Milan (d. 397), John Chrysostom (d. 407), and John

Cassian (d. 435).[832]

8.3.4 MATTHEW 5:31-32 (DIVORCE)

Matthew 5:31-32 contains Jesus' teaching on divorce in which he equates

marrying a divorced woman with adultery:[833]

> It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of
> divorce.' But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the
> ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a
> divorced woman commits adultery.[834]

The exclusion of this passage from Q-Matthew is most likely for theological reasons, due

to qur'ānic rulings regarding divorce.[835] Furthermore, Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab,

a divorcée,[836] was used in Christian arguments against the prophethood of Muḥammad.[837]

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[832] Matthew Kuefler, s.v. "Desire and the Body in the Patristic Period," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender.*

[833] David Thomas also considers that this passage, like the two previous passages discussed, was excluded because it diluted Islamic principles of fairness and justice. See Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 35.

[834] Matthew 5:31-32 (NOAB).

[835] For a summary, see Harald Motzki, s.v. "Marriage and Divorce," in *EQ.*

[836] C.E. Bosworth, s.v. "Zaynab bt. Djaḥsh b. Ri'āb al-Asadiyya," in *EI²*; Barbara Stowasser, s.v. "Wives of the Prophet," in *EQ.*

[837] Sahas notes that, "This incident, which is recorded in the Qur'ān, became a favorite subject for polemics," and that John of Damascus uses it in his *Heresy of the Ishmaelites.* Daniel Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), 91. Theodore Abū Qurrah does not discuss this topic in relation to Muḥammad's prophethood, but instead frames the general Muslim practice of "marrying divorced [women] and regarding those whom their companions had previously entered as permissible" as contravening the commandments of Christ. David Bertaina, "An Arabic Account of Theodore Abu Qurra in Debate at the Court of Caliph Al-Maʾmun: A Study in Early Christian and Muslim Literary Dialogues" (Ph.D., The Catholic University of America, 2007), 445.

In the purported correspondence (ca. 717-720) between ʿUmar II and Leo III,[838] ʿUmar

writes, "You criticize us because our Prophet married a woman whom her husband had

repudiated and with whom he had ceased to have relations, without any use of violence,

and without any attempt to force him to repudiate her."[839] The Muslim writer then draws

in similar circumstances from the Hebrew Bible, noting,

> It is indeed what David did in the case of Uriah and his wife, and later God forgave him and he repented. We certainly commit grave sins, and many shameful actions, 'and if God does not forgive us and take pity on us, we will certainly be among the losers.'[840]

Interestingly, the Muslim writer (as portrayed by the Christian author of the text) does not

attempt to justify Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab as something that was done without

sin; rather, he justifies it by demonstrating the similar situation of David, another

blameless prophet, and Bathsheba, noting that David was forced to repent. Rather than

assume the sinlessness of the Messengers and Prophets, the author brings Muḥammad

into the tradition of Prophets who sin and seek forgiveness.[841]

Q-Matthew however, demonstrates a different approach. Al-Qāsim's argument

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[838] See Chapter 10.8 for further discussion of this correspondence.

[839] Jean-Marie Gaudeul, "The Correspondence between Leo and ʿUmar," *Islamochristiana* 10 (1984): 153. Leo III's half of the correspondence was preserved in Ghevond's *Armenian History*. ʿUmar II's half of the correspondence has not survived in its entirety, although there are sections that remain in the Arabic and a Spanish version. The translation here is from Gaudeul.

[840] Ibid. Al-Ṭabarī's account of Muḥammad's encounter with Zaynab must be taken into consideration considering that the story of David and Bathsheba is offered. See Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Victory of Islam*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, trans. Michael Fishbein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 2.

[841] This approach is indicative of the early stage of Muslim thought on the sin of David (and other Prophets) in the *tafsīr* (exegetical literature on the Qurʾān). Khaleel Mohammed charts the progression of Muslim exegetical thought on David and notes that the exegetes of the formative period (up through the 9th cent.) accept that David sinned by sending Uriah to his death and that he sought forgiveness, though the adultery with Bathsheba present in the biblical account goes unmentioned. This is due to the fact that the Islamic conception of the sinlessness of the Prophets (the doctrine of ʿiṣma) does not fully develop until after the formative period. Later Muslim exegetes, however, viewed David as an impeccable prophet who only seeks forgiveness for impropriety (the particular impropriety varies depending on the exegete) that does not affect his sinlessness. See Mohammed, *David in the Muslim Tradition*.

does not require a direct response to Christian contentions that Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab was problematic. It is likely al-Qāsim would have been familiar with this argument given his familiarity with Christian texts, but rather than have Jesus say something that justified Muḥammad's marriage of a divorcée, the passage is simply excluded from Q-Matthew. In doing so, al-Qāsim has brought the words of Jesus into conformity with qur'ānic teachings about divorce, of which no precondition of infidelity is required and to which no stigma of adultery is associated.[842] Although Muslim writers claim that the divinely instituted cultural practices of earlier revealed religions could have been different from that of Islam and that the inconsistency provides no problem because the doctrine of abrogation applies,[843] al-Qāsim makes no such argument. His polemical purpose is much easier served with Jesus' conformity to qur'ānic and Islamic principles and the manner in which he approaches the Bible allows him the freedom to alter the text as necessary. In Q-Matthew, Jesus, as a true Muslim and Prophet, does not propose or do anything in contradiction to the Qur'ān or Islamic principles and practice. As a result, Jesus' teaching on divorce that appears in C-Matthew is omitted from the text and Jesus is presented in conformity to his characteristics outlined in the Qur'ān. Instead of having two of the most revered prophets in Islamic tradition at odds with each other, al-Qāsim eliminates this tension by omitting Jesus' words on divorce. With this alteration to the Gospel text, Jesus is no longer condemning the actions of Muḥammad. Again, al-Qāsim's project of qur'ānicizing the Gospel, and specifically the person of Jesus, is clear.

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[842] Harald Motzki, s.v. "Marriage and Divorce," in *EQ*.

[843] John Burton, s.v. "Abrogation," in *EQ*.

Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:38-42 concerns retaliation and resisting one who is evil is excluded from Q-Matthew. It states:

> You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse any one who wants to borrow from you.

Again, there is no statement from al-Qāsim as to why this particular passage was not preserved in Q-Matthew. While it may have been because of it "watering down Islamic principles of fairness and justice,"[844] it is worth considering another possibility more closely related to al-Qāsim's religio-political affiliations. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, al-Qāsim was a Zaydī and one of the main functions of the Zaydī imam was resisting the unjust ruler. Thus, Jesus' teaching to "not resist an evildoer" would have been in direct conflict with one of the main tenets of the development and continued existence of Zaydism as a challenge to what they considered to be illegitimate rule. Thus, for al-Qāsim to preserve a passage in which Jesus teaches a principle that is at odds with his own community's views is unlikely. Furthermore, al-Qāsim's own father and brother were involved in direct armed rebellion against the Caliphate and thus he had very personal reasons to not consider Jesus' teaching in this passage to be authentic.

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[844] David Thomas considered all the exclusions from Matthew 5 to be because of this line of reasoning. See Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 35.

It has been demonstrated above that al-Qāsim considers the Qurʾān to have

scriptural priority over the Bible through various alterations and exclusions observed in

Q-Matthew. Continuing with this theme, another example of al-Qāsim bringing the

Gospel into greater alignment with the Qurʾān (C-Matthew → Q-Matthew) is through his

use of specifically qurʾānic or Islamic designators and honorifics. The most obvious and

important of them are his designators[845] for Jesus. The person of Jesus figures

prominently in al-Qāsim's *al-Radd*, although he uses different designators throughout the

treatise. Further, there appears to be specific theological reasons behind the specific name

or designator al-Qāsim uses (or does not use), which is demonstrated by where the

designator appears in the text. There are five main designators al-Qāsim uses to refer to

Jesus: *ibn/walad, al-Masīḥ*, Yasūʿ, and ʿĪsā. I will deal with each of them in turn.

8.4.1 *Ibn* and *Walad*

Ibn and *walad*[846] are two filial terms that are often simply translated as "son."

Walad can also mean "child" or collectively "children," although there are also

differences important for understanding their use in Islamic literature in relation to Jesus.

Ibn, which is only used once in the Qurʾān in relation to Jesus (Q. 9:30) as a claim that

Christians make, "may be understood metaphorically to mean son through a relationship

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[845] I refrain from using "name" here because al-Qāsim refers to Jesus by his proper name as well as by his relational designator (son) and his title (Messiah).

[846] I consider them together here due to their similarity as well as the important contrast that can be drawn between them.

of love or adoption."[847] *Walad,* however, occurs in fourteen *āyāt* in the Qur'ān[848] to counter claims that God begot a son (or some other offspring) and "primarily signifies physical generation and sonship."[849] Ayoub, however, does not consider many of the Qur'ān's references in which God is argued to not have *walad* to be referring to Jesus, but to pre-Islamic Arabs. My concern here is not with understanding *who* is intended by the use of *walad* in the Qur'ān, but to note that al-Qāsim considers Jesus to be a *walad* based on qur'ānic evidence. Furthermore, al-Qāsim's earlier argument that Jesus should be considered a metaphorical son (*ibn*) according to love or adoption uses non-qur'ānic evidence in support.[850] Regardless, as has been mentioned above, there is no filial language used to refer to Jesus in Q-Matthew. Rather, the metaphorical meaning possible for *ibn* is made explicit in some cases by replacing it with *ṣafī* (pure/sincere friend), while it is removed with its context in other places. Thus, Jesus retains an important position in relation to God through al-Qāsim's word choice, but there is no possible confusion that Jesus should be considered God's son (whether *ibn* or *walad*).

8.4.2 *AL-MASĪḤ*

The designator "*al-Masīḥ*" is used eleven times in the Qur'ān[851] without the same negative connotations associated with the filial terms *ibn* and *walad*. Rather, it often

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[847] Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub, "Jesus the Son of God: A Study of the Terms *Ibn* and *Walad* in the Qur'an and Tafsīr Tradition," in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Z. Haddad (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995), 66.

[848] 2:116, 4:171, 6:100-101, 10:68, 18:4, 19:35, 19:88-92, 21:26, 23:91, 25:2, 39:4, 43:81, 72:3, and 112:3.

[849] Ayoub, "*Ibn* and *Walad*," 66.

[850] For further discussion on this point, see Chapter 7.2.

[851] 3:45, 4:157, 4:171, 4:172, 5:17 (twice), 5:72 (twice), 5:75, 9:30, 9:31.

appears as an honorific title in combination with ʿĪsā or *ibn Maryam* (son of Mary). It is the Arabic equivalent of "Messiah" or "Christ," and was used by Arabic speaking Christians.[852] It is used regularly by al-Qāsim in his treatise, although it appears most prominently in sections two and three, which are his summary and refutation of Christian doctrines, respectively. Interestingly, in Q-Matthew, it is only used three times as a designator for Jesus in the story of his temptation in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11), once when al-Qāsim is summarizing Matt. 2:13, and not again in the rest of the treatise.[853] It is worth noting, however, that his use of *al-Masīḥ* is consistent with his qur'ānicization of Jesus' designator in Q-Matthew.

<center>8.4.3 YASŪʿ</center>

The designator Yasūʿ only appears three times in al-Qāsim's treatise. In all three instances it is in a direct and unedited quotation from the Bible in the third section of al-Qāsim's treatise: Matthew 1:1,[854] Luke 1:32,[855] Matthew 1:21.[856] This designator is simply translated into English as Jesus, although there are distinctly Christian connotations to the term. Yasūʿ was the chosen rendering for Jesus' name among Arab-speaking Christians and, as noted in al-Qāsim's quotations, it is used in the Bible. Neal Robinson notes that "after the rise of Islam, the gospels were eventually translated from Syriac into Arabic and Yeshūʿ was rendered Yasūʿ, which is what Arab Christians call

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[852] Georges Anawati, s.v. "ʿĪsā," in *EI²*.

[853] There is a discrepancy with the ordering of Q-Matthew, in that al-Qāsim includes Jesus' temptation in the desert prior to the rest of his version of Matthew's Gospel.

[854] *al-Radd*, 321.18.

[855] Ibid., 322.13.

[856] Ibid., 322.18.

Jesus to this day."[857] It is thus noteworthy that in al-Qāsim's treatise, Yasūʿ is only used

three times in specific quotations he notes Christians would agree upon, and then in al-

Qāsim's rendering of Matthew's Gospel at the end of his treatise, Yasūʿ is not used at all

as the designator for Jesus.

8.4.4 ʿĪsā

Al-Qāsim's designator of choice for Jesus in Q-Matthew is the primary designator

for Jesus in the Qurʾān: ʿĪsā.[858] In every rendering of Jesus' name in Q-Matthew (apart

from the three times at the beginning when he uses *al-Masīḥ,* noted above), al-Qāsim

uses ʿĪsā. Considering that he is familiar with the designator Yasūʿ and even uses it three

times in his unedited quotations from the Gospels in section three of his treatise, al-

Qāsim is clearly drawing Matthew's representation of Jesus closer to the qurʾānic version

by using the qurʾānic equivalent for his name. While there are various theories for the use

of ʿĪsā as the proper name for Jesus in the Qurʾān rather than Yasūʿ,[859] what is important

for this study is that this distinction between the biblical and qurʾānic designators for

Jesus was present and noted. Al-Qāsim's use of ʿĪsā is thus a calculated alteration that

cannot simply be attributed to accident. He is careful in his use of terms throughout the

Radd and would have been aware of the connotations of the different designators.[860]

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[857] Neal Robinson, s.v. "Jesus," in *EQ.*

[858] It occurs twenty-five times to refer to Jesus. Cf. Q. 2:87, 2:136, 2:253, 3:45, 3:52, 3:55, 3:59, 3:84, 4:157, 4:163, 4:171, 5:46, 5:78, 5:110, 5:112, 5:114, 5:116, 6:85, 19:34, 33:7, 42:13, 43:63, 57:27, 61:6, and 61:14.

[859] See Robinson*,* s.v. *″*Jesus,*″* in *EQ.*

[860] Al-Qāsim also uses honorifics such as *ṣallā allāh ʿalayhi*, although he only does so inconsistently after Jesus and other prophets are mentioned in his version of Matthew in section 4. He does use them with more consistency in the previous sections apart from his direct and unedited quotations from the Bible in section 3.

The Jesus of Matthew's Gospel is a prolific miracle worker. His ability to perform

miracles is similarly present in the Qur'ān, where Jesus is shown to perform miracles

even beyond what he does in the canonical Gospels.[861] Yet, in Q-Matthew, there is a

noticeable absence of the vast majority of the miracles attributed to Jesus in C-Matthew

(Matt. 4:3, 8:1-4, 8:5-10, 8:14-17).[862] Further, the one instance of Jesus performing

miracles that Q-Matthew preserves (Matt. 4:24) shows evidence of being subtly, yet

significantly altered. There are reasonable explanations for both the exclusion of the

majority of the miracles as well as the alteration of the one remaining instance.

Regarding the exclusion of miracles, al-Qāsim may simply be recognizing the

connection Christians make between the miracles Jesus performed and the divinity they

ascribe to him. As mentioned above, Jesus' ability to perform miracles is attested in both

the Bible and the Qur'ān. Muslims, however, do not consider those miracles to be a result

of Jesus' divinity. To that end, Muslim polemicists, including Ibn al-Layth,[863] ʿAlī al-

Ṭabarī,[864] and the writer of the letter from ʿUmar II to Leo III,[865] compared Jesus'

miracles to those performed by other prophets to demonstrate that divinity was not

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[861] Jesus speaks as an infant while in the cradle in Q. 3:46, creates a bird from clay and breathes life into it in, can heal the blind and the leper, can bring life to the dead, and knows what people have just eaten and what is stored in their houses in Q. 3:49.

[862] He also does not include the potential miracle of Jesus turning stones into bread during his temptation in the desert from Matthew 4:5-7. This will be discussed below.

[863] Muḥammad Ibn al-Layth, *Lettre du calife Hârûn al-Rašīd à l'empereur Constantin VI*, ed. and trans. Hadi Eid (Paris: Cariscript, 1992), 178-180.

[864] al-Ṭabarī, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 115-148.

[865] Arthur Jeffery, "Ghevond's Text of the Correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III," *The Harvard Theological Review* 37, no. 4 (Oct. 1944); Gaudeul, "The Correspondence between Leo and ʿUmar."

required in order to perform miracles.[866] In doing so, they argued that Jesus' miracles were in no way superior to those of other men who performed similar actions by the power and permission of God. Thus, Christians would have to grant the divinity of everyone they consider to have performed miracles, or conversely, the miracles are not proof of Jesus' divinity.

Al-Qāsim, however, makes no argument comparing Jesus' miracles to those of other prophets in his treatise. Rather, he has already noted earlier in his summary of Christianity that Christians consider Jesus' divine nature to be responsible for the miraculous actions he performed. He writes in his summary of the *Rūm*: "His resurrection of the dead and healing of the blind and leper and things similar to it were done by his divine nature."[867] Thus, when Jesus is said to have performed various miracles in C-Matthew, Christians would have associated those miracles with his divinity. Al-Qāsim is thus in a bind. He is stuck between affirming Jesus' miracles (which are clearly attested in the Qur'ān) and the problematic association of miracles with Jesus' divinity (not to mention the Christian contention during this period that Muḥammad's prophethood was questionable because he did not perform miracles). Al-Qāsim takes a middle road. He allows one instance of Jesus performing miracles, but alters it to portray a more qur'ānic version of Jesus.

A comparison of C-Matthew's version of Matthew 4:24 to Q-Matthew demonstrates important alterations that provide evidence of al-Qāsim's project to

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[866] Thomas also draws attention to the fact that al-Jāḥiẓ and Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq were aware of such comparisons even if they did not employ them. David Thomas, "The Miracles of Jesus in Early Islamic Polemic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39, no. 2 (1994): 221-243.

[867] *al-Radd*, 316.18-20.

conform the Gospel to the Qur'ān. I have produced this passage from both Q-Matthew

and C-Matthew here side-by-side to more clearly exhibit the differences between the two.

Matthew 4:24 (Q-Matthew)	Matthew 4:24 (NOAB)
All those who had a pain or sickness among the lepers and the possessed and the blind and the crippled came. He healed them, with the permission of God, from their various horrible sicknesses.[868]	They brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them.

The differences between the two are significant. There are a number of clues that point to

the influence of the Qur'ān on the alterations in this particular verse, including: (1) the

specific miracles Jesus is said to have performed; (2) his word choice; and (3) the power

by which Jesus performs the miracles.

Regarding the first point, there are differences between the two versions in regard

to which miracles Jesus is said to have performed. Both versions mention people with

various pains or sicknesses, the crippled/paralytic, and the (demon) possessed. The

canonical version includes epileptics among those whom Jesus is healing, while al-

Qāsim's version substitutes the blind and the leper in their place. Jesus healed the blind

and leper elsewhere in the Christian version of the Gospels, and this particular alteration

would not be theologically problematic to Christians. This leads one to question whether

this should even be considered a significant alteration. Interestingly though, and I think a

plausible explanation for this alteration is that it furthers al-Qāsim's project of

conforming the Bible to the Qur'ān. In Qur'ān 3:49 it states, "And I shall heal the blind

and the leper, and give the dead life by the permission of God." And 5:110, "and you

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[868] Ibid., 326.4-6.

healed the blind and the leper by My permission." Thus, there is a specific qur'ānic

referent al-Qāsim is including when he substitutes the healing of the blind and the leper

in place of the epileptics.

Regarding the second point, al-Qāsim refers to the blind people that Jesus heals in

this passage with the word "*kumh*." Apart from the fact noted above that this miracle is

not in the Christian version, it is likely that this word is used due to its qur'ānic

significance. There are two different roots used to refer to the blind/blindness in the

Qur'ān: *'-m-y,* which appears 33 times in 30 different *ayāt* and refers to those who were

born seeing and went blind;[869] and *k-m-h*, which appears only twice and refers to those

who were born blind.[870] The former is never used in reference to people whom Jesus

healed, while the latter is only used in that regard. Thus, al-Qāsim's use of *kumh* to refer

to the blind rather than the more common *a'mā* is noteworthy. It is not surprising that

when altering this particular miracle of Jesus, al-Qāsim substitutes a miracle present in C-

Matthew with a miracle Jesus performs in the Qur'ān, and then employs the specific

word the Qur'ān uses when Jesus performs that miracle in Qur'ān 3:49 and 5:110.

Regarding the third point, there is an addition to al-Qāsim's version that further

demonstrates that he is altering the Gospel of Matthew to a more qur'ānically-acceptable

form based on Q. 3:49 and 5:110. Apart from the particular miracles and word choice, the

Qur'ān is insistent that the miracles Jesus performed (healing the blind and leper) are

done by the permission of God (*bi-idhni allāh*). The Christian version offers no such

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[869] 2:18, 2:171, 5:71 (twice), 6:50, 6:104, 7:64, 10:43, 11:24, 11:28, 13:16, 13:19, 17:72 (twice), 17:97, 20:124, 20:125, 22:46 (twice), 24:61, 25:73, 27:66, 27:81, 28:66, 30:53, 35:19, 40:58, 41:17, 41:44, 43:40, 47:23, 48:17, and 80:2.

[870] 3:49 and 5:110.

qualification of Jesus' ability to perform miracles. Thus, al-Qāsim emphasizing that Jesus is performing these miracles under the direction of God and because God willed it to be so.

8.6 A Pericope Examined (Matthew 4:1-11)[871]

While I have examined various aspects of al-Qāsim's version of Matthew that point to the conclusion that he is passing the Bible through a qur'ānic filter, my examination of this final section of his treatise has been thematic rather than sequential. While there are benefits to this method, in that the manner in which those particular types of edits are prevalent throughout his treatise is made more apparent, there is also something lost by not proceeding sequentially through the text. To remedy this lack to at least some degree, I provide here an extended pericope from Matthew 4:1-11. In doing so, the manner in which each of the elements already discussed is exhibited in a single passage. The reworking demonstrated in this passage below is typical of the whole, although due the nature of the biblical text, not every passage demonstrates each type of alteration.

Q-Matthew (324.13-22)	C-Matthew 4:1-11 (NOAB)
Christ went forth from the villages and he withdrew into the desert forty days, fasting. He did not eat any food in them [during that period of time], and he did not drink a drink in them [during that period of time]. Then *Iblīs* came to him during his fasting and his retreat, he laid before him all the splendors of the world, and he showed them to him. When Christ saw all of that, *Iblīs* asked him to	[1] Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.[2] He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. [3]The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." [4] But he answered, "It is written, "'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" [5] Then the

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[871] My arguments here expand upon the conclusions offered in Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 35.

prostrate before him one prostration, and on that basis, he would give him all that he saw. Then Christ cursed him and dishonored him, saying, "Prostration to another than God is not permissible. Far be it from you, oh enemy of God." They claim *Iblīs* said to him, among those other sayings between him [*Iblīs*] and between him [Christ], "Today is forty days to you. You did not drink a drink, and you did not eat any food. Call God, if you are beloved to him, and ask him to make these stones as silver and gold for you. He [Jesus] said to him [*Iblīs*], "Do you not know, O Accursed One, that the words of God are sufficient as a replacement for all food and drink for those who love God?	devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple [6] saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" [7] Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" [8] Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; [9] and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." [10]Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'" [11] Then the devil left him, and behold, suddenly angels came and waited on him.

8.6.1 DESIGNATORS FOR JESUS

Beginning with the subject in the first passage there is a noteworthy difference between the two versions. C-Matthew uses the word Jesus (which would be Yasūʿ in the Arabic) while Q-Matthew uses *al-Masīḥ* (Christ). A similar substitution of *al-Masīḥ* for Yasūʿ is repeated two more times in this passage. As noted above, Christians referred to Jesus with the designator Yasūʿ, while the Qurʾān refers to him using either ʿĪsā or *al-Masīḥ*. Al-Qāsim's consistency in using qurʾānic designators for Jesus in place of Christian designators demonstrates his consideration of the Qurʾān as the arbiter of scriptural accuracy and Q- Matthew accordingly reflects that.[872]

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[872] On a related note, al-Qāsim's use of "Accursed One" at the end of the passage to refer to Satan is unusual as it is not qurʾānic and a version of the word only appears once in Matthew 25:41.

The rest of the first sentence similarly demonstrates theologically-motivated alterations in Q-Matthew, as the cause and purpose for which Jesus leaves to the desert/wilderness is different between the two versions. Regarding the cause, where C-Matthew mentions that Jesus "was led up by the Spirit," there is no similar leading in Q-Matthew. Rather, he states Jesus "went forth" (*kharaja*), and it is of his own volition apart from any influence by the Spirit. There is a clear theological reason for which al-Qāsim makes this alteration, as the Trinitarian significance associated with C-Matthew attributing the leading of Jesus to "the Spirit". Further, al-Qāsim does not mention like the Christian version that he was sent for the express purpose of being tempted by the devil. Rather, the devil appears to be opportunistic in al-Qāsim's version, taking advantage of Jesus' weakness due to his extended fast.

8.6.3 REORDERING FOR EMPHASIS

Another significant alteration al-Qāsim makes is the order of the temptations. While the Christian version builds off the mention of Jesus' hunger due to his fast by placing Satan's challenge for Jesus to turn the stones to bread first, al-Qāsim moves the third temptation in the Christian version to the first spot in his version. David Thomas, who has previously analyzed this passage, provides the likely reason for such an alteration, stating that it was in order to "give the major significance to Jesus' insistence that worship should be given to no other than God, and hence his exclusion of himself from veneration."[873] This interpretation is consistent with al-Qāsim's earlier challenge to

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[873] Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 35.

Christians' veneration of Jesus and he thus stresses Jesus' insistence that worship belongs only to God. In this way, he is using biblical prooftexts in support of his earlier argumentation and qur'ānic prooftexts that Jesus is human like his mother and should not be venerated or worshipped.

<div align="center">8.6.4 EXCLUSIONS</div>

The second temptation, in which Jesus is taken to the pinnacle of the temple (vv. 5-7 in C-Matthew), is removed in its entirety from Q-Matthew. There are three aspects of this temptation that likely led to its exclusion. First, Jesus is referred to as the "Son of God" in C-Matthew, and filial language to refer to Jesus is categorically excluded from Q- Matthew. Second, Satan's quotation of prophecy implies that he has a special relationship with God which affords him special protection by the angels, particularly when considered with the title "Son of God." This special relationship is reinforced in C-Matthew by the angels coming to minister to Jesus after the temptation is over in v. 11. Third, Jesus' response to the devil's challenge could potentially be interpreted in a manner that considers Jesus divine. While Jesus is actually referring to God the Father as the one who should not be put to the test in v. 7, it is possible that in al-Qāsim's reading of the passage he considered Jesus to be referring to himself. Thus, by excising this temptation in its entirety from Q-Matthew, al-Qāsim removes mention of Jesus' divine sonship, does not have to explain the special relationship to God implied by his special protection from the angels, and escapes any potential confusion over whom Jesus is referring to as God in v. 7.

The second temptation in Q-Matthew, which is the first in C-Matthew and concerns the transformation of stones, has three important alterations that point to al-Qāsim's project of qur'ānicization. First, Jesus is referred to as "son of God" in C-Matthew in v. 3, but as "beloved to him [God]" (*lahu ḥabīb*) in Q-Matthew. Alteration of filial language is a regular occurrence throughout Q-Matthew and has been discussed previously. Second, al-Qāsim removes the possibility of Jesus performing the miracle of changing the stones by turning Satan's urging, "command these stones to become loaves of bread" in C-Matthew v.3, to "call to God […] so that he would turn these stones into silver and gold for you." With this change, God becomes the one who would be performing the miracle rather than Jesus, which is consistent with his alterations elsewhere of limiting Jesus' ability to perform miracles and then highlighting God's role in those miracles. Third, al-Qāsim alters what the stones would be turned into. As noted above, C-Matthew considers the stones to be turned into bread (in response to Jesus' hunger), while Q-Matthew states they would be turned into silver and gold. There is no obvious connection to the context of Jesus' fasting and resultant hunger, and the only association that seems possible are two references to silver and gold in the Qur'ān (3:14 and 9:34). In both of these *āyāt*, silver and gold are held up as revered earthly treasures that have the potential to pull people away from the path of God. It is at possible that al-Qāsim is drawing that connection here with the Qur'ān rather than remaining with the bread that is considered in the Christian version.[874]

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[874] It is curious though that al-Qāsim does not emphasize Jesus' hunger that is already present in the Christian version by preserving the temptation as it was. He has previously drawn importance to Jesus'

Al-Qāsim's presentation of Jesus' temptation in the desert provided an opportunity to examine the manner in which his various means of bringing the Gospel into alignment with the Qur'ān, Islam, and the logical argument he presented through his entire treatise are united. He reorders to emphasize, alters words, excludes portions, excludes any filial language to refer to Jesus, uses qur'ānic designators for Jesus, and limits Jesus' miraculous abilities while simultaneously expanding the role of God in miracles. As Thomas has aptly noted about this passage,

> The final result of this reworking is that the episode is changed from an account of the vindication 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. It becomes a Muslim story in all its parts and references.[875]

8.7 NO ĀYAH ALTERED (MATTHEW 5:17-19)

While there have been various ways in which I have demonstrated al-Qāsim's alterations to the Gospel of Matthew, there is one passage that best encapsulates al-Qāsim's project. This is not specifically on account of the alterations he makes, though those are noteworthy, but for the content of the specific words he has Jesus say, which demonstrates that al-Qāsim cannot consider the Gospel in the hands of the Christians to be authentic. The passage in question is Matthew 5:17-19 and contains Jesus' statement that he did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. C-Matthew reads:

> [17] Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill. [18] For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. [19] Therefore whoever breaks (annuls) one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the

humanity specifically because of his need to eat and it would seem an opportune moment to emphasize that point.

[875] Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 35.

kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.[876]

Compare the corresponding section from Q-Matthew:

> Let no one think that I came in order to refute the Torah, the Gospel, or the Prophets, nor to destroy anything of all the things that came from God. Rather, I came to complete all of those things, and for the confirmation of all the orders of God and his messengers in it. Even more, I tell you a true saying, and announce news to you, so understand it as true, that not one of the verses of God will undergo alteration or change, until the heavens and earth are changed and pass away. One who destroys one of the verses of God, or alters the most minor of his commandments, having taught these alterations and deviations to one of the people, whether the verse was small or large, will be considered vile and deficient in the kingdom of God. But the one who teaches them just as they were sent down will be complete and pure in the end.[877]

There are a number of noteworthy features of this particular passage, although I will limit my examination to the following points: (1) the distinction between the *Injīl* and the Gospel of Matthew; (2) alteration and change of scripture; (3) consequences of deviation; and (4) the nature of scripture.

Regarding the first point, the passage begins with Jesus mentioning two texts considered within the Islamic tradition as Scripture (the Torah and the *Injīl*), and then the Prophets, which is included in the original version. While there is similarity between the C-Matthew and Q-Matthew, the addition of Jesus referring to the *Injīl* in Q-Matthew forces two conclusions. First, it is consistent with the Qur'ān to refer to the *Injīl* as a singular text. The Qur'ān does not demonstrate any recognition of the Christian idea of the four Gospels (let alone the New Testament) and instead considers it as one text, revealed by God to Jesus. Second, al-Qāsim cannot consider the Christian gospels to be

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[876] Matthew 5:17-19, (NOAB).

[877] *al-Radd*, 327.1-8.

synonymous with the qur'ānic *Injīl,* considering that he refers to the *Injīl* in a text the Christians consider to be one of the Gospels. In the scenario al-Qāsim sets up in this passage, Jesus is aware of the Gospel, and as the Gospel of Matthew (which al-Qāsim is currently correcting) references it, then it necessarily was sent down prior to the Gospel of Matthew. Thus, the Gospel (or gospels) the Christians possess cannot be consistent with the *Injīl* of the Qur'ān.

Regarding the second point, Jesus' words are shifted from a direct statement in v. 18 about nothing from the Law passing away until it has been fulfilled in C-Matthew to a general statement in Q-Matthew that not one of the verses of God will undergo alteration or change. Al-Qāsim does not include any mention of the Law being accomplished in his version, as there is no conception of this within the Islamic tradition. It is interesting, however, that al-Qāsim uses language related to corruption of Scripture, using *āyāt*. The logic of the statement is confused in Q-Matthew as he shifts directly from saying no alteration or change will occur to any of the Scriptures noted in v. 17, to warning those who introduce alteration or change of the consequences.

Regarding the third point, C-Matthew juxtaposes two types of people: those who perform and teach the commandments, and those who do not. The former will be called great in the kingdom of heaven, while the latter will be called least. Q-Matthew again shifts the focus to alteration of God's *āyāt*, noting that those who destroy the verses of God or alter even the most minor of his commandments and then teach these alterations and deviations will be vile and deficient in the kingdom of God. These are then juxtaposed to those who teach God's *āyāt* "just as they were sent down," who will be complete and pure in the end.

291

Regarding the fourth point, al-Qāsim is again bringing the text back to an Islamic understanding of scripture, in which the texts were "sent down" rather than written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit, as is posited in a Christian understanding of the Bible's authorship. Al-Qāsim must assume that such alterations of God's *āyāt* are possible, which contradicts the strict statement he made earlier that none of the verses of God will be altered or changed. It is also further evidence that he does not consider the Gospel of Matthew, as it was then in the hands of the Christians, to be among the *āyāt* of God. If he did, his obvious alterations would be in direct contradiction to his invective against those who make such alterations and changes. Rather, he must consider himself to be removing the corruption to the text introduced by those who "taught these alterations and deviations" about God that are inconsistent with the logical argumentation he laid out as well as the qur'ānic proofs he used in support of them.

8.8 Conclusion

The final section of al-Qāsim's treatise is one of the most interesting treatments of Christian scripture by a Muslim polemicist up through the ninth century.[878] Beyond the extensive knowledge of the gospels he demonstrated, al-Qāsim's treatment of the Gospel of Matthew in the final portion of his treatise presents a challenge to the prevailing categories for understanding *taḥrīf* as articulated by early Muslim polemicists. It has been demonstrated in this chapter that the particular manner in which al-Qāsim edits the section of Matthew he includes demonstrates more than a simple charge of

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[878] Al-Qāsim is unique for his inclusion of such an extensive portion of the Gospels this early in the history of Muslim anti-Christian polemic. The majority of early Muslim polemicists left the Bible largely unexplored because of its inaccessibility and because its contents were considered generally unreliable. See, David Thomas, ed. *The Bible and the Kalām*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2007), 175.

misinterpretation. Apart from his explicit charge that the transmission of the Gospel is suspect in section three, it is the content and nature of al-Qāsim's treatment of the Gospel at the end of his treatise that forces a reconsideration of the manner in which his work has been understood.

In this chapter, I have argued, in contrast to the majority of previous scholarship,[879] that close examination of the *Radd* demonstrates that al-Qāsim advances an implicit argument for the *textual* corruption of the Christian scriptures. As mentioned previously, "his reworking presupposes the text has been contaminated."[880] I argued that Q-Matthew is the product of passing C-Matthew through an Islamic and qur'ānic filter. This filtering was demonstrated in al-Qāsim's text in the following ways: (1) his exclusion or alteration of all familial designators in relation to God; (2) exclusion of select passages that contravene qur'ānic/Islamic principles; (3) qur'ānicization of the actions and words of Jesus, specifically in relation to miracles; (4) use of qur'ānic rather than Christian designators for Jesus; and (5) reordering of content to emphasize Jesus' humanity.

After each of the aforementioned components was considered separately, I examined compared the C-Matthew and Q-Matthew versions of Jesus' temptation in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11) to demonstrate how the various alterations were used in combination to produce a "Muslim story in all its parts and references."[881] Finally, al-

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[879] Chapter 2 demonstrated that scholars consider early Muslims (and al-Qāsim in particular) to have advanced charges of Christian misinterpretation of the Bible rather than its textual corruption.

[880] Thomas, "The Bible in Early Muslim Anti-Christian Polemic," 38 fn. 28.

[881] Ibid., 35. While Thomas is referring specifically to the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert, his statement is equally applicable to the entirety of al-Qāsim's version of the Gospel of Matthew.

Qāsim's reformulation of Matthew 5:17-19 demonstrated a more explicit purpose statement regarding his understanding of the nature of scripture and alteration of it. It demonstrated that al-Qāsim cannot consider the *Injīl* to be consistent with the Christian version of the Gospels. This position allowed al-Qāsim considerable freedom to alter the Gospel in the hands of the Christians to bring it into conformity with the Qur'ān and Islamic principles.

Ultimately, this chapter demonstrated that al-Qāsim is arguing for more than a charge of the Bible's misinterpretation (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*); rather, by altering the text to bring it into conformity with the Qur'ān, he implicitly advances the charge that the Gospel text has been corrupted. In doing so, Jesus is presented as a prophet while simultaneously being made to repudiate the beliefs Christians hold about him. The alterations made to Matthew 1-8 demonstrate a thorough realignment of the Gospel as it was in the hands of the Christians to qur'ānic and Islamic principles, and in so doing, al-Qāsim ensured its scriptural accuracy.

Chapter 9
TAḤRĪF AL-NAṢṢ IN 8ᵀᴴ- AND 9ᵀᴴ-CENTURY MUSLIM DISPUTATIONAL LITERATURE

The first ʿAbbāsid century (750-850) witnessed a boom in inter-religious

polemics by Muslims. The need to differentiate Islam in contradistinction to the

monotheistic faiths of the Near East was amplified by greater access to non-Muslim

religious texts in Arabic as an extensive translation movement took shape and a greater

number of non-Muslims began speaking and writing in Arabic. Furthermore, the gradual

conversion to Islam of peoples living in lands brought into the *dār al-Islām* (lands under

rule of Islamic government) led to greater need to prove the validity of Islam in

distinction to the former religious affiliations of Muslim converts. That it was a

productive and formative period for the genre of Muslim polemical treatises is clear.

While the entirety of Muslim literature that quotes the Bible in the early ʿAbbāsid period

cannot be examined in exhaustive detail, it is worth considering select authors and their

respective texts in order to better situate al-Qāsim's text and provide support for a more

robust picture of early Muslim views on the authenticity of the Bible. The authors chosen

for discussion are Ibn al-Layth (d. ca. 819), ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. 860), al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868f), and

Ibn Qutayba (d. 889). I have chosen these authors because they wrote works within the

same genre of disputational literature as al-Qāsim, they are contemporaries or near-contemporaries, and they refer to the Gospel in their respective works.[882]

Although the primary focus of this dissertation is al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, this chapter demonstrates that while he is atypical in his approach, he is not unique among early Muslim polemicists in assuming the textual corruption of the Bible. In this chapter I argue that Ibn al-Layth, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī, al-Jāḥiẓ, and Ibn Qutayba all consider the Christian scriptures in a more negative light than is generally posited in contemporary scholarly accounts. Their works are not uniform in their approach to or use of the Bible and they do not simply consider the Christian scriptures to be misinterpreted. It must be kept in mind, however, that I am not claiming that these authors did not accuse Christians of misinterpreting the Bible. They did – and it is misinterpretation of the Bible that makes up the main thrusts of their respective views of the Bible and this is how they have been interpreted in the scholarly literature. My contention, however, is that although they are categorized as solely advancing charges of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* and that they assumed the textual authenticity of the entire Bible, a closer examination of their respective texts demonstrates otherwise. Indeed, their respective texts reveal that they are not willing to assume the authenticity of the Bible unquestioningly and only use select proof-texts they determine to be authentic, some of which show evidence of being brought into alignment with qurʾānic and Islamic principles.

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[882] The neglect of the polemical treatises of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq in a discussion of eighth and ninth-century Muslim polemics is glaring, but necessary. While his work is important for better understanding Muslim polemics against Christianity in the ninth century, he simply does not concern himself with questions of the Bible's authenticity and his lack of quotations from the Bible leave little to be discussed in regard to the focus of this dissertation.

All four authors considered in this chapter appear to be working primarily from *testimonia* collections rather than from complete texts of the Bible (or even the Gospels), or are simply selecting proof-texts that fit their specific purposes. They do not demonstrate any awareness of the context of the verses they quote and do not bother to examine any references that cannot be reconciled with qur'ānic or Islamic principles by means of exegesis, some of which includes alteration. These collections were developed specifically to prove the truth of Islam and Muḥammad's prophethood as well as for disproving the interpretations of the Christian views of Jesus' divine sonship and the authenticity of the scriptures in the hands of the Christians.

In this chapter, I provide brief biographical information for each author selected and a summary of the text or texts under consideration. Then I present evidence from those texts that demonstrate that, even though they are primarily concerned with reinterpreting Christian and Jewish scripture in a way that supports qur'ānic and Islamic principles, they are not unquestioning in their support of the authenticity of the previous scriptures. Rather, there are hints that, while not explicit, provide further evidence that they were suspicious of the authenticity of the entirety of the Bible. I am particularly interested in their discussion of the Bible as it relates to the question of its textual inauthenticity and discuss *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* in their texts only insofar as it comes up in my discussion of their other arguments.

This chapter continues to build the case against the dichotomization of *taḥrīf* by focusing on the specific ways in which the Bible is referred to in these texts in manners other than simple misinterpretation. The positive use of biblical *testimonia* collections by the Muslim polemicists of the eighth and ninth centuries that are considered in this

297

chapter does not necessitate that they considered the entire text to be sound. Absent any

definitive statements that they consider the text authentic, one must consider the

testimonia collections as evidence only for those specific verses quoted. As a result, early

Muslim disputational literature provides further evidence that Muslims did not accept of

the authenticity of the Bible entirely, although they considered particular verses as sound

but misinterpreted by Christians. I argue that this particular method of selecting biblical

quotations for specific apologetic purposes is indicative of their disregard for the

authenticity of the entirety. And conversely, the assumption that considering select verses

as authentic and simply misinterpreted characterizes Muslim polemicists' views on the

Bible in its entirety transfers something that is only true of part (verses considered to be

sound) improperly to the whole (the entirety of the Bible).

9.1 IBN AL-LAYTH

The date of Abū al-Rabīʿ Muḥammad b. al-Layth's birth is unknown, although it

was sometime in the first half of the eighth century. Ibn al-Layth was of Persian

background, with ancestry supposedly leading back to King Darius.[883] He was a *mawlā*

of the Umayyads, but after the ʿAbbāsids came to power, he advanced to positions of

importance within the courts of the caliphs al-Mahdī (r. 775-785), al-Hādī (r. 785-786),

and Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809). Ibn al-Nadīm notes that he was a secretary to the

Barmakid, Yaḥya ibn Khālid, and was known for his abilities as a jurist (*faqīh*), an orator

(*balīgh*), letter-writer (*mutarassil*), secretary (*kātib*), theologian (*mutakallim*), and skilled

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[883] Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, I.II:375.

298

(*bāriʿ*) in his craft.[884] Ibn al-Layth's qualities demonstrate his acumen, and maintaining his position in the caliphal court through at least three caliphs over a span of thirty years points to his abilities to successfully navigate the intrigues of ʿAbbāsid court life (with only minor hiccups).

Ibn al-Layth first appears in sources as a secretary and advisor to al-Mahdī, and the historian al-Yaʿqūbī considers Ibn al-Layth to have risen to the status of *wazīr* to al-Mahdī.[885] He had a close relationship with the Barmakids, even writing a work on *adab* for Yaḥyā al-Barmakī entitled, *Kitāb ilā Yaḥyā ibn Khālid fīl-adab*, and another on penmanship for his son entitled, *Kitāb al-khaṭṭ wa-l-qalam.* Eventually this affiliation ended. Perhaps in a political power play, Ibn al-Layth criticized the influence of the Barmakids on the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. The Barmakids responded by accusing him of being a heretic (*zindīq*) and the caliph sent Ibn al-Layth to prison. As court intrigue often goes, the tables turned and the Barmakids eventually fell out of favor with the caliph, although the particular reasons for their fall are uncertain.[886] Ibn al-Layth was able to earn his way back into the good graces of the Caliph and subsequently "blackened the Barmakids' name before Hārūn."[887]

Ibn al-Nadīm notes in his *Fihrist* that among Ibn al-Layth's works was a *Reply to Constantine for al-Rashīd*.[888] D.M. Dunlop, however, argues that calling it a "reply"

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[884] Ibid.

[885] Barbara Roggema, s.v. "Ibn al-Layth," in *CMR1*, 347.

[886] See Kevin van Bladel, s.v. "Barmakids," in *EI³*.

[887] Roggema, s.v. ″Ibn al-Layth,″ in *CMR1*, 347. Roggema also notes that Ibn al-Layth's *al-Radd ʿalā al-zanādiqah* was likely written with the Barmakids in mind in response to them accusing him of being a *zindīq*.

[888] Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, I.II:375.

appears to be a mistake – Hārūn al-Rashīd likely never received a letter from the Byzantine Emperor, and "there is at all events no indication in the *Risālah* that it is a reply to anything except, from the Caliph's standpoint, a vexatious situation."[889] This "vexatious situation" refers to a period of difficult relations between the Byzantine and Muslim Empires over tribute no longer being paid by and culminates in a successful expedition by Hārūn al-Rashīd against the Byzantines in 797.[890] Since the contents of the letter do not lend credence to the idea that it is actually a reply to anything the Byzantine Emperor had sent Hārūn al-Rashīd, Dunlop traces the available evidence and deduces that this letter was written sometime around 795-796.[891] This would place its writing likely in Baghdad, as it was not until 796 that Hārūn al-Rashīd moved the capital of the ʿAbbāsid government to al-Raqqa for the duration of his reign.

While the *Risālah* of Ibn al-Layth does not fall within the technical parameters of a polemical treatise against Christianity since it is written in the form of correspondence between political leaders, the contents of the text have bearing on the topic at hand. Zaman notes that, "The letter is a long disquisition on why the emperor should convert to Islam, or failing which, what advantages would accrue from the payment of the *jizya*."[892]

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[889] D.M. Dunlop, "A Letter of Hārūn al-Rashīd to the Emperor Constantine VI," in *In Memoriam Paul Kahle*, ed. Matthew Black and Georg Fohrer (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1968), 111. For a synopsis of the circumstances leading up to the letter, see Nadia Maria El-Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 91-93. Interestingly, the existence of the letter was unknown to Byzantinists until recently and the extent of its influence on Byzantine-Muslim relations must therefore remain to be determined. See Rochow, "Zu den diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Byzanz und dem Kalifat in der Zeit der syrischen Dynastie (717-802)," 319-320.

[890] F. Omar, s.v. "Hārūn al-Rashīd," in *EI²*.

[891] Dunlop, "A Letter of Hārūn al-Rashīd."

[892] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 188.

Of primary importance for this study is his inclusion of a select number of biblical quotations used to support his claims.

Ibn al-Layth was a Muslim of Persian descent, and Dunlop notes that because he was, "no convert from Judaism or Christianity, it is next to impossible that Muḥammad b. al-Laith knew the original languages, and Syriac also is very unlikely."[893] He was thus either working from a previously translated text or had an informant. Camilla Adang notes that,

> The oldest more or less substantial collection of biblical testimonies to the Prophet of Islam that has come down to us is contained in the epistle that Abū'l-Rabīʿ b. al Layth, a courtier of Hārūn al-Rashīd's, directed to the Byzantine emperor, Constantine VI (*regn*. 780-797 CE), inviting him to embrace Islam. Ibn al-Layth's biblical material shows Syriac influences and is clearly of Christian provenance.[894]

Given the likely date of the work in either 795 or 796, even if Ibn al-Layth's work reflects the continuation of a trend within oral argumentation by Muslims to cite biblical passages in support of Muḥammad's prophethood, "the *Risāla* is a chronological anchor in the history of Muslim apologetic thinking,"[895] on account of it containing the earliest collection of biblical *testimonia* regarding the prophethood of Muḥammad.

While the accumulation of evidence from the Bible by Muslims seeking to prove Muḥammad's prophethood is evident in the disputational literature as early as al-Mahdī's debate with Timothy I (ca. 781), van Ess notes in regard to Ibn al-Layth's *Risālah*, "New, however, is that Hārūn now also names miracles of Muḥammad, the factuality of which

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[893] Dunlop, "A Letter of Hārūn al-Rashīd," 107.

[894] Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism*, 21.

[895] Roggema, s.v. "Ibn al-Layth," in *CMR1*, 351.

he tries to convince the Emperor."[896] This method of argumentation, in which proofs for Muḥammad's prophethood from the Bible are combined with lists of miracles Muḥammad was supposed to have performed, would continue as a theme in Muslim apologetic writings even into the modern era.[897] Furthermore, Ibn al-Layth's *Risālah* is referred to positively by later Muslim apologists such as ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025).[898]

Turning to the contents of the *Risālah*, Ibn al-Layth's primary argument related to the Christian scriptures is that they have been misinterpreted. He explicitly states that the books of God are preserved (*maḥfūẓah*),[899] although the Jews and Christians went astray with falsification of interpretation of the words (*taḥrīf taʾwīl al-kalām*) and alteration of the interpretation of the books (*taṣrīf tafsīr al-kutub*).[900] His argument is laid out along two tracks. First, he provides biblical proof-texts to argue that Muḥammad was foretold in the Bible, and second, he provides biblical proof-texts to argue that Jesus is not the divine Son of God.

In regard to Muḥammad's being foretold in the Bible, Ibn al-Layth cites John 15:26,[901] Isaiah 21:7,[902] Psalm 9:20,[903] Habakkuk 3:3-15,[904] Psalm 144:1-8,[905] Isaiah

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[896] van Ess, *Theologie und Gesselschaft*, III:25. "Neu aber ist, daß Hārūn nun auch Wunder Muḥammads nennt, von deren Tatsächlichkeit er den Kaiser zu überzeugen versucht."

[897] See Hackenburg, "Voices of the Converted: Apostate Literature in Medieval Islam," 148 ff.

[898] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Tathbīt dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*, ed. ʿA. K. ʿUthmān (Beirut: 1966), 77-78.

[899] Muḥammad ʿAbduh Khālid Muḥammad Ibn al-Layth, *Risālat Abī al-Rabīʿ Muḥammad ibn al-Layth min Hārūn al-Rashīd ilā Qusṭanṭīn Malik al-Rūm* (Giza: Maktabat al-Nāfidhah, 2006), 51.19-20.

[900] Ibid., 52.1-2.

[901] Ibid., 52.3-9. Equating the Paraclete with Muḥammad is attested in the *Sīrah* and was used repeatedly in apologetic/polemical works by medieval Muslim authors and remains one of the standard arguments in the Muslim apologetic arsenal to this day. For the *Sīrah*, see Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* [The Life of Muḥammad], trans. Alfred Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 103.

[902] Ibn al-Layth, *Risālat Abī al-Rabīʿ Muḥammad ibn al-Layth*, 52.10-14.

[903] Ibid., 52.15-18.

42,[906] and Psalm 45:3-6.[907] The quotations as presented by Ibn al-Layth are generally

consistent with the Christian versions and only the verse he provides regarding the

Paraclete is theologically inconsistent with the Christian version. He does not mention

God as Father as the Christian version does, nor does Ibn al-Layth mention that the

Paraclete will bear witness of Jesus (both are problematic to his interpretation and are

thus silently excised). He provides Deuteronomy 33:2 and his exegesis of it that explains

the revelation of the Torah to Moses (on Mount Sinai), the revelation of the *Injīl* (Gospel)

to Jesus (on Mount Sāʿīr), and the revelation of the Qurʾān to Muḥammad (on Mount

Pārān).[908]

In regard to the second point, he argues that the Gospels offer evidence that Jesus

cannot be the divine Son of God as Christians consider him to be. To that end, Ibn al-

Layth quotes the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, "Our father in heaven, hallowed is your

name" and then asks, "How is it that Jesus (ʿĪsā) was a son apart from them (his

disciples), and he (God) was a father to him (Jesus)?"[909] He draws attention here to the

fact that Jesus instructs his disciples to refer to God as father, and yet Christians

distinguish Jesus apart from them. Shortly thereafter, he notes that Jesus says to the

disciples, "You are my brothers."[910] Ibn al-Layth then questions rhetorically, "If all of

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904 Ibid., 52.19 – 53.4.

905 Ibid., 53.5 – 53.11.

906 Ibid., 53.15 – 54.1.

907 Ibid., 54.2-6.

908 Ibid., 54.8-13.

909 Ibid., 55.7-8.

910 Ibid., 55.12.

these [the disciples] are brothers to Christ, then are they not all gods?"[911] He then turns to responding to arguments Christians put forward as to why they worship God, although he does not quote any further biblical proof-texts in support.

It must be conceded that Ibn al-Layth clearly and explicitly states that he considers Christians to be misinterpreting their scriptures and that the books of God are preserved and guarded. His argument is consistent with that statement and he presents biblical proof-texts to support his claim that Muḥammad was foretold in the Bible as well as in support of his argument that Jesus is not the divine Son of God. What is problematic about assuming that he only thinks the Bible has been misinterpreted is that he quotes only a small handful of verses. He does not show any awareness of the contents of the Bible beyond these passages and he was likely quoting from a *testimonia* collection that only contained biblical proof-texts Muslims could use for their apologetic/polemical purposes. Further, his altering of the verse regarding the Paraclete, in which "father" is changed to "lord" is consistent with the *Sīrah.* Ultimately, Ibn al-Layth's *Risālah* does not provide much evidence that he considered the text of the Bible to be corrupt. Rather, *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* seems to be the extent of Ibn al-Layth's accusation against the Bible.

9.2 AL-JĀḤIẒ

Born in 776f, Abū ʿUthman ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Fuqaymī al-Baṣrī, who is more commonly known as al-Jāḥiẓ, referring to his bulging eyes, was a prolific writer and well-known figure in the Muslim world of the ninth century. His family was of African origin and his ancestors had been slaves, although they had at some point become *mawālī*

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[911] Ibid., 55.13-14.

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(clients) of the Banū Kinānah. He was born in Baṣrah and attended Qurʾān school in the Banū Kinānah quarter and apparently had "an invincible desire for learning and a remarkably inquisitive mind."[912] This natural inquisitiveness did not seem to be coupled with any industriousness, however, and resulted in idleness spent at the mosque discussing varied questions with the *masjidiyyūn* (mosque-idlers).[913] He also had the opportunity to attend lectures on philology, lexicography, and poetry by figures such as al-Aṣmaʿī, Abū ʿUbayda, and Abū Zayd, and his tutelage under these figures helped him acquire fluency and refinement in Arabic – skills that would serve him well later in life.[914] These skills were not put in the service of steady work, however, and al-Jāḥiẓ was not known for his industriousness or religiosity, something for which he was later rebuked.

After achieving a degree of notoriety for his writings on the imāmate that won him the favor of al-Maʾmūn, al-Jāḥiẓ moved to Baghdad, although he returned with some frequency to Baṣrah. The biographical sources on his life during this period are scant and the source of his livelihood is unclear–he is said at one point to have held a secretarial position in the chancellery during the reign of al-Maʾmūn that lasted only three days.[915] Although al-Jāḥiẓ supplemented his income by occasional teaching, his writing appears to have been the most profitable.[916]

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[912] Charles Pellat, s.v. "al-Djāḥiẓ," in *EI²*.

[913] The particulars of al-Jāḥiẓ's education are described in Charles Pellat, *The Life and Works of al-Jāḥiẓ* (London: William Clowes and Sons, Limited, 1969), 109-110.

[914] Ibid., 109.

[915] Ibid., 4.

[916] Ibid., 6.

Al-Jāḥiẓ's most important work for the purposes of this study is his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*.[917] The particular purpose for which he wrote this treatise is debated: it was either written at the behest of the caliph al-Mutawakkil as part of his anti-*dhimmī* measures of 850, or that the "reason for its composition was a letter from a group of Muslims asking for al-Jāḥiẓ's help to answer a series of questions asked them by some Christians,"[918] as he states at the beginning of his treatise. It is likely that the latter reason is more literary device than reality, but regardless of the catalyst for its composition, the contents of the text are of significance for the present study. Even if the *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* was not a semi-official polemical treatise, it was well known to later Muslims who either used it or referred to arguments contained therein and its importance in the history of Muslim polemics against Christianity therefore remains.[919]

The structure of al-Jāḥiẓ's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is as follows.[920] First, he lists six questions posed by the Christians, followed by a substantial account of the social successes and resultant moral failings of the Christians living under Muslim rule, with occasional comments on the Jews. He then addresses the questions posed by the Christians he noted at the beginning of his text as well as others that can be found in other

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[917] Al-Jāḥiẓ's *Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* was edited and published along with two other works of al-Jāḥiẓ in al-Jāḥiẓ, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā." A portion was later translated into English in Joshua Finkel, "A Risala of al-Jahiz," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 47 (1927). The entirety of the treatise was translated into English in Charles D. Fletcher, "Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: A Translation and Analysis of Abū 'Uthman 'Amr b. Bahr al-Jāḥiẓ's Risala: Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā (A Reply to the Christians)" (M.A., McGill University, 2002), 55-98. While useful, Fletcher's translation leaves something to be desired and any translations of al-Jāḥiẓ in this dissertation are my own unless otherwise noted.

[918] David Thomas, s.v. "al-Jāḥiẓ," in *CMR1*, 710.

[919] Thomas notes that Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 915-6) and ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) used it in their works, while al-Māturīdī (d. 944) and al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) were aware of its arguments. See David Thomas, s.v. "al-Jāḥiẓ," in *CMR1*.

[920] For a more in-depth outline of the argument, see Fletcher, "Translation and Analysis of al-Jāḥiẓ's Risala," 125-129.

polemical texts. While al-Jāḥiẓ's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is often referred to in regard to the insight it provides into the social and legal conditions of Muslim-Christian relations during this period and for evidence of the relative ease with which Christians moved in ʿAbbāsid society, it is also worth taking note of the evidence it provides concerning ninth-century Muslim views on the Bible.

The argument presented by al-Jāḥiẓ in regard to the authenticity of the Bible stems from his response to challenges by the Christians who utilize disparities between the Bible and the Qurʾān to prove that the latter "is false and our instruction is corrupt."[921] Al-Jāḥiẓ spends the most time discussing the final example (the claim in Q. 3:46 that Jesus spoke as an infant in the cradle), noting that Christians, despite their large numbers and diverse opinions, agree that they have never heard or claimed such a thing.[922] Even further, the Christians say the Jews, Majus, Ṣabians, Buddhists, Turks, or Khazars have never heard such things.[923] Interestingly, al-Jāḥiẓ notes that Christians say the miracle of Jesus speaking while an infant is not found in either the *Injīl* or in the "account of the attributes of Christ" (*dhikr ṣifāt al-masīḥ*).[924] He seems to be drawing a

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[921] al-Jāḥiẓ, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 10.8. These disparities that Christians reject were things that they claim are not known among them or among their ancestors, including: that Jesus told people to take him and his mother as gods beside God in Qurʾān 5:116; that the Jews claimed ʿUzayr is the Son of God in Qurʾān 9:30, that the hand of God is tied in 5:64, and that God is poor and they are wealthy in Qurʾān 3:181; that Hāmān is placed anachronistically in the time of Pharaoh in Qurʾān 40:36; that no one is supposed to have been previously named Yaḥya, son of Zakariyyah, according to Qurʾān 19:7, but that the name is derived from someone else; and finally, that Qurʾān 3:46 claims Jesus spoke in the cradle. Ibid., 10.9-12.4.

[922] Ibid., 12.4-7.

[923] Ibid., 12.7-9.

[924] Ibid., 12.9-10.

distinction here between the qur'ānic conception of the *Injīl*[925] and any other text that offers an account of Jesus' life.[926]

While al-Jāḥiẓ does not initially present a direct argument against the Bible's authenticity, he does accuse the Christians of tampering with texts other than scripture. In an argument about the nature of Greek learning, he notes that the Greek texts revered by Arabs were not written by Byzantine or Christian scholars.[927] Rather "their [the Greeks] religion (*dīn*) was not their [the Christians] religion (*dīn*),"[928] and that Christians were merely inheritors of that knowledge and tradition by virtue of geographical proximity.[929] In building a case for Christian tampering, al-Jāḥiẓ accuses Christians of attributing Greek texts to themselves and changing them to reflect their confession.[930] While this argument should not be expanded beyond the specific reference to Greek texts, it is evidence that al-Jāḥiẓ considers the Christians guilty of tampering with the contents of texts. Further, when such characteristics are combined with his views of the Gospels in the hands of the Christians, it further testifies to an accusation that goes beyond simple misinterpretation. Rather, he has a varied and far-reaching argument against the

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[925] He uses the singular, *injīl*, to refer to the Gospel rather than the plural, *anājīl,* despite later noting that the Christians have four Gospels.

[926] There were a number of non-Gospel accounts of Jesus' life that were in circulation at this time and al-Jāḥiẓ might be referring to any of these.

[927] Gutas notes that in al-Jāḥiẓ's *kitāb al-akhbār* the distinction between the Greeks and Byzantines present in his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is blurred, and "the thrust of the argument against the Christian Byzantines is not that Christianity is to be disapproved of simply because Islam superseded it, but because Christian beliefs are inherently *irrational*, a regrettable situation that can befall even an otherwise enlightened people." Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 86.

[928] al-Jāḥiẓ, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 17.1-2.

[929] Ibid., 17.2-3.

[930] Ibid., 17.3.

authenticity of the books from which the Christians have received their religion, which is what he considers the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to be.

After a lengthy calumny against the character, practices, and intellectual positions of the Christians, al-Jāḥiẓ returns to the miracle in the Qur'ān in which Jesus spoke in the cradle, stating,

> If they [the Christians] asked us themselves, saying: 'How do we not know that and no one at all told us?' We will answer them after refuting their objections and their slander and the falsification of their witness. Our answer: 'Indeed, they only received their religion from four people: two of them they claim were the disciples John and Matthew, and two of them believed after, they are Mark and Luke. These four were not free from error, forgetting, intentional lies, collusion over matters, and agreement in distribution of the leadership, each one handing his portion over to his companion, which is his provision.' If they say: 'Surely they were better than to lie deliberately, more retentive than to forget things, better than to err concerning the religion of God the Exalted or lose something well-known.' Then we say: 'Surely their disagreements in their accounts with respect to the Gospel, and contradictions of meanings of their books, and their differences concerning the person of Christ along with the differences in their religious laws are proof of the truth of our statement about them and your negligence about them. One cannot deny that someone like Luke could say a lie since he was not a disciple and only a few days before that was a Jew.'[931]

Al-Jāḥiẓ presents here a three-fold argument against the authenticity of the Bible: (1) Christians received their religion from individuals who are not free from errors, deliberate lies, and collusion; (2) there are disagreements and contradictions between the four gospels; and (3) Luke was not an Apostle and therefore could have lied. I examine the three points below.

His first charge is that the Gospel writers are not free from errors, deliberate lies,

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[931] Ibid., 24.7-17. The Jews are similarly considered to be the source of biblical corruption in al-Qāsim's treatise (see Chapter 7.3) as well as in a later Christian work by Agapius of Manbij (d. 10th-cent.). In his *Kitab al-ʿUnwan* (*Book of the Title*), he considered the Syriac version of the Old Testament to be corrupt because it was translated from the Hebrew, which he considered to have been corrupted by the Jews. John C. Lamoreaux, "Agapius of Manbij," in *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700-1700: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. Samuel Noble and Alexander Treiger (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014), 136-159.

and collusion. It is simply contradictory to consider al-Jāḥiẓ as advancing charges of misinterpretation when he considers the Gospel writers to have erred, lied, and colluded. Such actions are inconsistent with a text revered as scripture. He cannot consider the texts written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to be synonymous with the *Injīl* as it was originally supposed to have been revealed to Jesus if they are full of lies and errors.

His second charge is a response to the Christian claim that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were "better than to deliberately lie, more retentive than to forget things, better than to err concerning the religion of God the Exalted or lose something well-known."[932] To do so, he notes that there were "disagreements in their accounts with respect to the Gospel," "contradictions of meanings in their books," and "differences concerning the person of Christ along with the differences in their religious laws," all of which point to an opposite conclusion of what the Christians reach. Despite being an explicit argument against Christians rather than against the authenticity of the Gospels, this argument depends on an unstated assumption that the *Injīl* differs from the writings the Christians consider to be the Gospels and that the differences in theology and law are evidence that the writings upon which they base those things (the works of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are in fact full of errors and lies and their respective authors are guilty of forgetfulness and collusion, as he argued in his first point.

Al-Jāḥiẓ's third charge is the condemnation of Luke because of his late conversion and because he was a Jew. The latter relates to an earlier argument by al-Jāḥiẓ against the sure authenticity of the text due to the untrustworthy nature of the Jews. After

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[932] al-Jāḥiẓ, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 24.12-14. While it is framed as a hypothetical "if they say," it likely reflects situations in which Muslims would have found themselves, whether in court *munaẓarāt* or elsewhere.

previously noting that Christians disregard the qurʾānic miracle of Jesus speaking in the cradle on the basis that the Jews did not transmit such information to them, he notes that the Jews reject all the other miracles of Jesus.[933] He then concludes, "How can you call upon a people as witnesses [who have] this teaching about your founder when they say: 'How is it possible that a boy spoke in the cradle as an infant and his guardian and enemies be ignorant of it?'"[934] Important to the argument against the authenticity of Christian Scripture is that al-Jāḥiẓ notes the unreliability of the Jews as witnesses according to Christians on certain points, drawing attention to the inconsistency of Christians who accept some of their statements and disregard others arbitrarily. Further, he notes that not only was Luke not an Apostle, but he was also Jewish.[935] The possibility of lies being introduced into the texts of the Christians is admitted, and even without calling attention to any specific lies Luke supposedly introduced, al-Jāḥiẓ has provided an argument that allows any contradictory statements to be discounted as inauthentic.

The lack of quotations from any of the Gospels in the previous argument of al-Jāḥiẓ is conspicuous, particularly since he shortly thereafter quotes from the Bible, noting that certain Muslim theologians permit Christians' and Jews' claims regarding God as father from the Torah, Gospel, Psalms, and books of the Prophets, interpreting them metaphorically.[936] Al-Jāḥiẓ considers such claims about God's fatherhood in these works

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[933] He specifically mentions the following miracles: Jesus resurrecting four people, healing the paralytic, the multiplying of the loaves and fish, transformation of water into wine, and walking on water. Ibid., 22.15-23.18.

[934] Ibid., 23.17-18.

[935] This argument against the reliability of the Jews was also advanced by al-Qāsim as evidence against the inauthenticity of the text, although al-Qāsim focused on the issue of transmission rather than initial production.

[936] al-Jāḥiẓ, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 25.1-9.

to be false (even metaphorical reinterpretation), noting that had God accepted such

claims, then he would not have been angry with them for saying, "We are sons of God,"

as he is in Qur'ān 5:18.[937] Rather, "God, the exalted, is greater than to have fatherhood

among his attributes and people are lower than to be sons of God the Exalted, from his

lineage."[938] Having established that the biblical doctrine about God's fatherhood is

incompatible with the Qur'ān, al-Jāḥiẓ argues that such views about God are the result of

faulty translators. He argues that if they had the "intelligence of the Muslims" (ʿuqūl al-

muslimīn) they would have found acceptable interpretations for these problematic

expressions.[939]

Similar to al-Qāsim, al-Jāḥiẓ repeatedly uses language that distances the beliefs of

the Christians from the Gospels. Similar to al-Qāsim, he repeatedly uses "they have

claimed" (zaʿamū) when referring to particular instances from the Gospels and Christian

beliefs theology that are at odds with the Qur'ān or Islamic doctrine. In one instance, he

notes that

> The Christians have claimed (zaʿamat) that God is the Messiah son of Mary and
> that the Messiah said to the disciples, 'My brothers.' Thus, if the disciples had
> children, God would be their paternal uncle. Indeed, they claimed that Mark is the
> son of Simon Peter and that Zūzrā[940] is his daughter and the Christians accept
> that, in the Gospel of Mark [it says], 'Mā zādh[941] your mother and your brothers

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[937] ibid., 27.4. Qur'ān 5:18, The Jews and the Christians say, 'We are the sons of God, and His beloved.'
Say: 'Then why does He punish you for your sins? No! You are human beings, (part) of what He created.
He forgives whomever He pleases and He punishes whomever He pleases. To God (belongs) the kingdom
of the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them. To Him is the (final) destination.'

[938] Ibid., 27.11-12.

[939] Ibid., 28.6-8.

[940] It is unclear who Zūzra is or from where al-Jāḥiẓ is obtaining this information. According to Christian
tradition, Peter's daughter's name was Petronilla, and there does not seem to be any connection to the name
Zūzra that al-Jāḥiẓ provides.

[941] Mā zādh is likely a mis-transliteration of the Syriac, "māran," which means "our Lord/teacher."

are at the door.'[942]

Al-Jāḥiẓ then goes on to explain that "*Mā zādh*" means "teacher" (*muʿallim*) and refers to Jesus; thus if Jesus is God, then God would necessarily be a father, grandfather, and uncle.[943] Al-Jāḥiẓ distances the *Injīl* from such doctrine by referring to it as something that Christians claim rather than something that is in the *Injīl*.

Al-Jāḥiẓ's polemic against Christians is only related in a limited manner to the falsification of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. He is primarily concerned with combatting what he seems to consider the undue influence and status of Christians who, at the time of al-Mutawakkil, were the subject of more intense state-sponsored repression than they were under previous caliphs.[944] Al-Jāḥiẓ, writing in the ʿAbbāsid capital at the time in which this repression is under way and, possibly at the behest of the caliph himself, focuses his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* on social rather than theological issues. That is not to say, however, that theology does not play a role in his treatise, but that it is not as central to his argument as it is to other polemicists during this period.

Al-Jāḥiẓ appears to draw distinctions between the *injīl* (singular), the *anājīl* (plural), the four works from which the Christians received their religion (*dīn*), and a text that contains the account of the attributes of Christ. Further, he distances the quotations from the works of the writers of the Gospels by prefacing the quotations with qualifications such as they "claim" (*zaʿamat*) or "affirm" (*tuqirru*), without affording the quotations the authority or authenticity he does for the Qur'ān. While he does not clearly

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[942] al-Jāḥiẓ, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 27.13-18.

[943] Ibid., 28.6-8.

[944] Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 103-112.

assert the textual falsification of the Christian scriptures, the manner in which he approaches the Christian scriptures appears to point in that direction. In particular, his insistence that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were liable to err, lie, and forget, demonstrates that he does not consider their Gospels untainted. Their respective works, then, are not divine scripture conforming to the model of the Qurʾān, but are simply the words of men and subject to the weaknesses and deficiencies of humanity.

9.3 ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī

Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Sahl Rabban al-Ṭabarī, who will be referred to as ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī to distinguish him from the polymath Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, was born around 780 in Merv. The name "Rabban" does not seem to refer to any Jewish lineage despite being considered as such in later works[945] but was likely an honorific title from Syriac meaning "our master" that was given to his father for his pre-eminence as a physician.[946] As further evidence of ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's Christian lineage, in his *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla,* he refers to his uncle Abū Zakkār Yaḥya ibn Nuʿmān who had written a Christian, anti-Islamic treatise entitled *Answer to Adherents to Religions* that is no longer extant.[947] He notes that his uncle was "renowned for his ability in discussion and for the superiority of his intelligence" and that the arguments in his treatise were "a strong objection for me also, and I did not cease to be deceived and fascinated by it until I seceded from his faith."[948] ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's Christian upbringing and lineage seems to be confirmed.

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[945] See David Thomas, s.v. "al- Ṭabarī," in *EI²*.

[946] David Thomas, s.v. "ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī," in *CMR1*, 669.

[947] al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla*, 147.

[948] Ibid.

Sometime after 818, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī moved to Ṭabaristān, which is how he acquired the *nisbah* al-Ṭabarī. Once there, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī joined government service as a secretary to Māzyar b. Qārīn. His service was short-lived, as Māzyar b. Qārīn was executed in 840 by al-Muʿtaṣim after open rebellion.[949] ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī did not suffer the fate of his employer and was instead pardoned by the caliph. He settled in the new capital of Sāmarrāʾ and entered the service of the caliph. It is there that he wrote his most well-known work, *Firdaws al-ḥikma* (*The Paradise of Wisdom*), completed in 850.[950]

Although ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī was born into a Christian family and supposedly remained a Christian throughout much of his life, at some point in his later years he converted to Islam, although the precise date for his conversion is disputed. Ibn al-Nadīm states it was under the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 833-842),[951] while ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī states that the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861) "guided me and made me profit by words heard from him."[952] Given that ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī likely converted after the rebellion of Mazyār and was in the service of al-Mutawakkil at the time of his writing *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla*, it is possible that the reference previously mentioned is nothing more than flattery rather than evidence of al-Mutawakkil's influence in his conversion. Further evidence for the date of ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's conversion is provided in his *Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*,[953] where he

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[949] Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism*, 24.

[950] Thomas, s.v. "ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī," in *CMR1*, 669.

[951] Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, 1:696.

[952] al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla*, 4.

[953] There is no original title actually affixed to what I am referring to as *Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. Samir K. Samir prefers the title *Kitāb al-naṣāʾiḥ* (*The Book of Advice*), although this title is also not original. Since both titles are unoriginal to the text, I have decided to use *Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*, as it is both a common title for anti-Christian polemic of this period and it is in greater use by scholars to refer to this particular text. See Samir Khalil Samir, "La réponse d'al-Ṣafī Ibn al-ʿAssāl à la réfutation des chrétiens de ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī," *Parole de l-Orient* 11 (1983): 290-292.

notes that he converted at the age of 70.[954] Unfortunately, there is no solid evidence for

the year of his birth, although Thomas notes that

> if he meant this literally [that he was 70 years old at conversion], he provides an important item for dating, for since *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* must have been written after 847, ʿAlī cannot have converted much earlier without having grown improbably old before writing this work […]. This would give 850 as the approximate date for the *Radd ʿalā l-Naṣārā*, and a few years later for the *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla,* and it indicates that he was born in about 780.[955]

ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's refutations of Christianity are unique for this period because he is writing

as a convert from Christianity to Islam. It is no surprise that he demonstrates greater

facility with the Bible than his contemporary Muslim polemicists. While he may not

focus as extensively on philosophical argumentation against Christianity in his

refutations, he seeks to build a case for the prophethood of Muḥammad based on

extensive testimony from the Jewish and Christian scriptures, arguing that a proper

interpretation of certain verses reveals Muḥammad having been foretold.

ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's view on the Bible is not simply that it is has been misinterpreted.

To be sure, he does consider Christians to have misinterpreted many passages in the

Bible, but it is incorrect to assume that he only advances that particular argument. Rather,

his *Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* is multi-faceted , and he does question the authenticity of the

biblical text. This can be seen in three ways in his *Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. First, he

explicitly states the Bible has been corrupted. Second, he distances a supposed real

Gospel from what the Christians consider to be the Gospel. And third, he brings select

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[954] al-Ṭabarī, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 119. It is likely that "seventy years" is not literal and refers instead to "many years," a trope that has precedent in Semitic contexts. See Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism*, 23, fn. 1.

[955] Thomas, s.v. "ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī," in *CMR1*, 670. However, if ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī is referring to *ḥijrī* years (which is likely), then his birth would have been around 782.

passages from the Bible into alignment with the Qur'ān and Islamic principles. Each of these elements will be discussed in turn.

ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī styles himself a restorer of the original Christianity that had since been defiled by Christians and attempts to restore what has been lost through a reinterpretation of the Bible that demonstrates the validity of Islam and proves the prophethood of Muḥammad. ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī does not hide that he considers the Bible to be corrupted. Near the beginning of his treatise he lays out the purpose for which he is writing, stating:

> It was not my design in what I offered and established in my book, to refute Christ (peace be upon him) nor the people of his truth (*ahl al-ḥaqqihi*), but [to refute] those from the sects (*ṣunūf*) of the *Naṣārā* who contradict Christ and the Gospels (*al-anājīl*) and distorted the words (*ḥarrafa al-kalimāt*).[956]

ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī is straightforward in his assessment of the authenticity of the Christian scriptures in that he considers these Christian sects to have distorted the words, not just the interpretation of their scriptures.

In the quotation above, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī also makes an important distinction between two types of Christians. There are those who follow the Messiah correctly, (i.e., the people of his truth), and those who contradict the Messiah and the Gospels and – most importantly for this study – distort the words of the Gospels. These "contradicters" are the different sects of Christians that would have been prevalent and appear ubiquitously as the antagonists in all the eighth- and ninth-century polemical/apologetical texts: Melkites/Rūm, Jacobites/Monophysites, and Nestorians/Church of the East.

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[956] al-Ṭabarī, "al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā," 120.6-8.

ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī makes clear in the rest of his treatise the distinction is primarily a

theological one with those who contradict the Messiah considering him to be the divine

son of a Trinitarian God. Conversely, those who correctly understand the Bible and

interpret it correctly are the "people of truth" because they recognize and affirm the

tawḥīd of God. As a convert from Christianity to Islam, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī no doubt

considered himself as part of this "people of truth" and offers a corrected reinterpretation

of the Gospels and in some instances a corrected and Islamicized text of the Gospel. The

distinction between his interpretation of the Bible and the Christian interpretation are

apparent when he writes, "Because the Christians, if they agree with me about it, then

they depart from their religion (*dīn*) which they professed, and if they contradict me, then

they contradict the Torah and the Gospel (*Injīl*)."[957]

Examples of Islamicization of the Bible in ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's text are less frequent

than in al-Qāsim's *al-Radd*, although they do appear. For example, ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī writes:

"John said in the 17th chapter of his Gospel, 'Christ raised his eyes to the heavens and

supplicated to God. And he said: "[for] eternal life, it is necessary for people that they

know that you are God, the One, the True. And that you sent Jesus (Yasūʿ) Christ."'"[958]

There are significant differences between the version ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī provides and the

standard version that cannot be accounted for by paraphrasing or misremembering (if he

is quoting from memory). Rather, there are clear theological edits made to the text. In

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[957] Ibid., 120.13-14.

[958] Ibid., 121.20-122.2. Compare the Christian version: John 17:1-3 (NOAB) ""After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's version, Jesus no longer refers to himself as "Son," God is no longer

referred to as "Father," and 17:2, in which Jesus is said to have been given authority by

God over humanity and to give eternal life, is removed entirely. This type of editing

reveals a very clear project by ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī to sanitize the text from Trinitarian and

Incarnational accretions when necessary to bring it into alignment with qurʾānic and

Islamic principles. Because he selects verses for his purposes as needed, he is not

required to make as many edits as al-Qāsim does. Still, alterations to some of the verses

he quotes testify to the fact that his view of the Bible is not simply that it has been

misinterpreted but that the Qurʾān is the ultimate source of scriptural accuracy and only

when the Bible conforms to it can it be considered authentic.

9.4 IBN QUTAYBA

ʿAbū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh ibn Qutayba was born in 213/828 in Kūfa, but little

is recorded concerning his childhood. Of his known teachers, Lecomte draws attention to

three: Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Rāhawayh al-Ḥanẓalī (d. 237/851), a disciple of Aḥmad ibn

Ḥanbal and Sunni theologian; the philologist and traditionist Abū Ḥātim Sahl b.

Muḥammad al-Sijistānī (d. 250/864); and the ʿIrāqī philologist, al-ʿAbbās b. al-Faraj al-

Riyāshī (d. 257/871).[959] Lecomte considers these three as the most influential on ibn

Qutayba's intellectual development, and notes that they are men who owe their reputation

to their attachment to the *Sunna*, whether as a theologian, traditionist, philologist, or

some combination thereof.[960] Of the three scholars, Ḥuseini argues that it was Isḥāq who

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[959] G. Lecomte, s.v. "Ibn Qutayba," in *EI²*. For a full list of those whose traditions he cites, see Isḥāq Mūsa Ḥuseini, *The Life and Works of Ibn Qutayba* (Beirut: Printed at the American Press, 1950), 30.

[960] Lecomte, s.v. "Ibn Qutayba," in *EI²*.

had the most influence on Ibn Qutayba and "established in Ibn Qutayba the firm doctrine of 'Ḥadīth', and who pass on to him, the principles of this school, for which Ibn Qutayba fought during the whole of his life."[961] Ibn Qutayba had sought out Isḥāq in Nīshāpur to study under him sometime around 848 and remained there until Isḥāq's death in 851. Even upon relocating back to Baṣra after Isḥāq's death, the school Ibn Qutayba chose for his literary education was that of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Qurayb al-ʾAṣmaʿi, a scholar who is described as a "pious orthodox, anti-Muʿtazilite and anti-Ḥanafite."[962] His proclivity toward the positions of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* is consistent.

There is little information about Ibn Qutayba's career, but based on his penchant for the *Sunna* as the source of religious authority, his work began to be in favor after al-Mutawakkil's (d. 861) assumption of the caliphate in 847. [963] The content and skill of his writing, coupled with the growing influence of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* scholars, were the likely catalysts for his appointment around 851 to the position of *qāḍī* of Dīnawar by the vizier Abū al-Ḥasan ʿUbayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān.[964] His appointment to this position marked a turning point in Ibn Qutayba's career and served as formal recognition of his shift from student to that of a scholar patronized by those in authority, which in and of itself is evidence of the significant shift in the nature of religious authority. Indeed, Ibn Qutayba enjoyed the continued support of the caliphate: he was provided a position by al-Mutawakkil and was kindly received by his son al-Muwaffaq (d. 891), and Ḥuseini notes

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[961] Ḥuseini, *The Life and Works of Ibn Qutayba*, 16.

[962] Ibid., 25.

[963] Lecomte, s.v. "Ibn Qutayba," in *EI²*.

[964] Ibid.

that "the effect of these good relations with the civil authorities is marked in his books."[965]

There are four works of Ibn Qutayba that contain quotations from the Bible: *K. al-maʿārif, K. ʿuyūn al-akhbār, K. taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth,* and *K. taʾwīl mushkil al-Qurʾān.*[966] His *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa* (*Signs of Prophethood*)[967] contained biblical quotations, but all that remains of it are short quotations in the later works of Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Ḥazm, among others. It is similar to ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's in that it contained numerous proof-texts from the Bible meant to prove Muḥammad's prophethood. In that regard, Thomas notes the similarity between the works of Ibn Qutayba and ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī and suggests a close, although not necessarily direct, relationship between the two.[968] It is possible that both are drawing from a separate, unidentified *testimonia* collection circulating during this period.[969] Although it was not preserved in its entirety, and contains much of the same material as ʿAli al-Ṭabarī's *K. al-dīn wa-l-dawla*, Ibn Qutayba's work proved to be the more popular of the two.[970]

While Ibn Qutayba's literary output was prodigious, it is his *K. taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* that is particularly important for this study on account of the nature of the

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[965] Ḥuseini, *The Life and Works of Ibn Qutayba*, 41.

[966] There is a table of the biblical citations in all of Ibn Qutayba's works in Karoui, *Die Rezeption der Bibel*, 286-350.

[967] It is also known by the title *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (*Proofs of Prophethood*). See Schmidtke, "The Muslim Reception of Biblical Materials: Ibn Qutayba and His *Aʿlām al-nubuwwa*," 249.

[968] David Thomas, s.v. "Ibn Qutayba," in *CMR1*, 817; David Thomas, s.v. "ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī," in *CMR1*, 673.

[969] Both ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Qutayba worked in the court of al-Mutawakkil and it is possible that the *testimonia* collection they both consulted was available there. See Thomas, s.v. "Ibn Qutayba," in *CMR1*, 817.

[970] Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism*, 148.

biblical quotations it contains. Ibn Qutayba's biblical quotations are extensive, and it is simply not feasible to examine all of them in this chapter. Furthermore, the majority of his quotations are consistent with the Christian version of the text and do not demonstrate any inconsistency or alterations to bring them into alignment with the Qur'ān or Islamic principles. Instead, Ibn Qutayba's primary purpose appears to be to use the Bible to prove the validity of Islam. There are certain instances, however, that point to the possible claim of scripture falsification in Ibn Qutayba's texts that are examined here. While a careful evaluation and analysis of every citation in his works would perhaps be worthwhile, select quotations that testify to Ibn Qutayba viewing the Bible in a manner other than simply misinterpreted will be sufficient. It should be noted, however, that the majority of biblical quotations in the works of Ibn Qutayba do not bear evidence of any theologically motivated alterations.

In Ibn Qutayba's *K. taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, he quotes Matthew 5:33-37 in order to validate *ḥadīth* that some consider suspect. Prior to quoting these verses, which are consistent with the Christian formulation, he writes, "I read in the genuine [ṣaḥīḥ] Gospel."[971] By drawing attention to the fact that he read from a genuine [ṣaḥīḥ] Gospel, Ibn Qutayba allows one to infer that he considered a falsified Gospel to exist. Regarding this particular quotation, Isteero notes that, "The emphasis on the genuine Gospel likely reflects a Muslim suspicion at the time that the Christians had altered (ḥarrafa) their Biblical text. It is important for Ibn Qutayba, in quoting the Bible in his arguments, to

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[971] Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muslim Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhrī al-Najjar (Cairo: Maktabah al-Kulliyyah al-Azhariyyah, 1966), 213-214.

assure his reader that it is the unaltered Bible."[972] That, however, is not evidence that Ibn Qutayba considered the entire text to be authentic, but that he considers the specific verses he quotes directly thereafter to be authentic. Furthermore, the need to mention that the Gospel he is quoting from is not altered is evidence that some considered the Gospel to have been altered. Had there only been arguments against Christian interpretations of the Gospel rather than against its textual authenticity there would have been no need for Ibn Qutayba to insist that this quotation comes from the genuine Gospel.

Another example of Ibn Qutayba's Gospel quotations echoes the project of al-Qāsim. In his *K. taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* he quotes both Matthew 6:14 and 6:26 in support of a *ḥadīth* that relates to God being in heaven.[973] Again, prior to the quotation he mentions that it comes from the "genuine Gospel," although what is more pertinent is in the actual quotation of the verses. He writes: "'If you forgive men, your Lord who is in heaven will forgive you your injustice (6:14). Look at the birds of the sky, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and your Lord who is in heaven feeds them. Are you not better than they? (6:26)'"[974] While these quotations by Ibn Qutayba read similarly to the Christian version, there are subtle, yet significant differences. Where it reads "Lord" in both verses in Ibn Qutayba's quotation, the Greek and Syriac both read "Father."[975] While the precise wording of al-Qāsim's and Ibn Qutayba's is not identical, they both substitute "Father" for "Lord" in these verses. Given Ibn Qutayba's purpose here to

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[972] Albert Isteero, "ʿAbdullāh Muslim Ibn Qutayba's Biblical Quotations and Their Source: An Inquiry into the Earliest Existing Arabic Bible Translations" (Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University, 1990), 194-195.

[973] Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, 273.

[974] Isteero, "Ibn Qutayba's Biblical Quotations," 198.

[975] Ibid., 199.

support a *ḥadīth*, the purpose behind his alteration seems apparent: a biblical quotation

that associates some sort of divine fatherhood to God, particularly given Christian

insistence on Jesus' divine sonship, is problematic. Ibn Qutayba's alteration of the text in

this way allows the evidence from the Gospels to be accepted in a way it would otherwise

not because it has been altered to conform to a qur'ānic picture of the nature of God. Had

it been left unaltered, it likely could not have served as effectively for Ibn Qutayba's

purposes.

Although Ibn Qutayba appears comfortable with the metaphorical fatherhood of

God (as opposed to biological), Isteero considers the change to be "best explained by Ibn

Qutayba's desire to avoid confusion on the part of his readers."[976] I am not convinced of

this interpretation, though, as it seems incompatible to consider a text to be authentic

Scripture as it stands while simultaneously altering it. It is a much simpler interpretation

of such edits by Ibn Qutayba to consider them as consistent with a principle of qur'ānic

primacy: Gospel quotations were filtered through the Qur'ān and altered as necessary to

display a qur'ānic view of God's *tawḥīd.* Ultimately, the Qur'ān was the criterion by

which Ibn Qutayba evaluated the authenticity of the Gospel.

Other examples of Islamization of the biblical text in quotations by Ibn Qutayba

include additions of exaltations of the deity and reverences for prophets. Isteero notes

that,

> In most cases when Ibn Qutayba uses the name of God (Allah) he follows the
> Muslim traditions of attributing reverent terms to God, e.g. *ta ʿālā* (almighty),
> *tabāraka wa-ta ʿālā* (who is blessed and exalted), and *ʿazza wa-jalla* (who is
> exalted and sublime).[977]

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[976] Ibid., 200.

[977] Ibid., 69.

In addition, terms of reverence, e.g. "*ṣallā allāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam* (may God bless him and give him peace) and *ʿalayhi al-salām* (peace be on him)"[978] are attributed to the prophets in Ibn Qutayba's quotations from the Bible and are obvious additions to the text that do not appear in Christian versions. These additions of honorifics to the text are minimally intrusive, but point to a perceived insufficiency in the original text and are further evidence that Ibn Qutayba approaches the Bible as a text that can be added to or altered as necessary in order to bring it into alignment with what is to be expected from Scripture.

Lecomte has noted specifically that Ibn Qutayba sought to conform some of his biblical citations to Islamic tradition.[979] Adang agrees with the plausibility of Lecomte's conclusions, stating, "there are indeed cases in which an otherwise correct biblical passage is adapted to the Muslim taste and deprived of elements which could be shocking or objectionable for Ibn Qutayba's Muslim readership."[980] Indeed, the simple fact that Ibn Qutayba makes these alterations demonstrates that he considers it both incomplete and violable. Furthermore, even if there are only limited instances in which his language suggests the text to have been altered, his mention of a "genuine Gospel" is potentially further evidence that the authenticity of the Christian scriptures was being called into question at the time Ibn Qutayba was writing.

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[978] Ibid., 70.

[979] G. Lecomte, "Les citations de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament dans l'œuvre d'Ibn Qutayba," *Arabica* 5, no. Jan (1958): 36.

[980] Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism*, 113. Adang provides instances in which Ibn Qutayba's quotations from the Torah are reformulated to conform to Islamic principles.

9.5 CONCLUSION

There are significant similarities between the four polemicists discussed in this chapter: all four were writing from the seat of ʿAbbāsid power, all were close to the respective caliph in power at the time, three of the four likely wrote at the behest of the caliph, and all four used biblical proofs for Muḥammad's prophethood as a component of their respective polemic/apologetic.[981] There are, however, differences between the four in regard to their respective cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, and myriad other factors. What is striking, however, is that the differences between the authors do not lead to significant disparities between their uses of the Bible. Rather, these polemicists demonstrate a united opposition to Christian beliefs that transcends any intra-Muslim sectarian disagreements they may have had. There is, however, a difference between the manners in which these four authors utilized the Bible in their respective works compared to al-Qāsim that likely stems from the source of their biblical quotations.

Al-Qāsim likely had access to a copy of (at least) the Gospel of Matthew in Arabic. This allowed him to understand the context of the biblical quotations he provided, but it also forced him to navigate around these particularly difficult passages through more extensive editing. Conversely, Ibn al-Layth, Ibn Qutayba, al-Jāḥiẓ, and ʿAlī

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[981] Muḥammad is conspicuously absent from al-Qāsim's *al-Radd*. The majority of Muslim polemicists sought to not only counter the claims of Christianity in their polemical treatises, but also to demonstrate that Muḥammad had been foretold in the Bible. In doing so, they attempted to lay claim to the religious heritage of Christianity and Judaism, while also asserting the superiority of Islam. It is curious then, that al-Qāsim does not address this in his treatise. It is implausible that al-Qāsim was unfamiliar with such attempts or that he did not have access to these. Rather, it seems more plausible that al-Qāsim, as a (putative) Zaydī imam, would have considered himself the representative of God and the importance of proving Muḥammad's prophethood in that regard is lessened. Furthermore, al-Qāsim was focused on disproving Christian claims about God's fatherhood and Jesus' divine sonship and considering Muḥammad's claim to prophethood using biblical evidence laid outside the aims of his treatise.

al-Ṭabarī demonstrate less knowledge of the context of the biblical verses they quote and seem to have derived them from *testimonia* collections. Indeed, scholarship has posited that Ibn Qutayba and ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī were possibly working from the same *testimonia* collection (or that Ibn Qutayba borrowed from ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī),[982] and that ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's *K. al-dīn wa-l-dawla* borrowed from Ibn al-Layth's *Risālah*.[983] While it is plausible that ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī, a convert from Christianity, would have been familiar with the Bible and potentially had access to one, his polemical and apologetic works use the same quotations present in other Muslim *testimonia* collections.

The purpose for which the four authors in this chapter used the Bible in their respective works was apologetic rather than just polemic. Unlike al-Qāsim, they utilized the Hebrew Bible to demonstrate that Muḥammad had been foretold and that qur'ānic and Islamic views of God were not inconsistent with select passages from the Bible. These authors demonstrate an interest in proving the authority of Muḥammad as a prophet in line with the monotheistic tradition who had been foretold in the Torah and Gospel. Al-Qāsim does not share this interest, and he only mentions Muḥammad insofar as Muḥammad comments on Jesus in the Qur'ān.

This chapter demonstrated, by contrast, that while al-Qāsim may have used the bible more extensively, his view of the Bible was not unique among Muslim polemicists of the early ʿAbbāsid period. To be sure, al-Qāsim's approach was different than the others, and he focused more on polemic against Christianity than apologetic for Islam,

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[982] See Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism*, 112; Thomas, s.v. "Ibn Qutayba," in CMR1, 817; Thomas, s.v. "ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī," in CMR1, 673.

[983] Dunlop, "A Letter of Hārūn al-Rashīd," 112; Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism*, 111. Regardless of who borrowed from whom, it was Ibn Qutayba's work that surpassed ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī's in popularity. Ibid., 147-148.

but he was not alone is considering the scripture the Christians possess to be suspect. That said, the manner in which the four roughly contemporary Muslim polemicists discussed in this chapter viewed the Gospels is not uniform. While they make no explicit claims for the Bible's textual inauthenticity in their works, it is incorrect to consider them as solely and uniformly advancing charges of the Bible's misinterpretation (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*). While none of the four uses the Gospels to the extent al-Qāsim does, they are each familiar with the scriptures of the Christians and quote them in support of their beliefs. It must be kept in mind, however, that these authors only quote a limited number of verses and seem to be using *testimonia* collections designed specifically for their apologetic and polemical purposes. Taking only a small handful of verses from the entirety of the Bible that can be explained in a manner consistent with the Qur'ān while ignoring or avoiding the rest is not conclusive evidence that they considered the entire text of the Bible to have been preserved without corruption. Rather, it is only evidence that they considered the specific passages to which they refer as authentic, and even then, some verses are altered to further conform to qur'ānic and Islamic principles.

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Chapter 10
PERCEPTIONS OF MUSLIM ACCUSATIONS IN 8TH- AND 9TH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN DISPUTATIONAL LITERATURE

This chapter examines Christian disputational literature from the eighth and ninth centuries written by Christians living under Muslim rule in order to determine how Christians understood Muslim arguments regarding the authenticity of the Bible. While the texts under consideration in this chapter are not direct responses to any of the Muslim polemical works discussed in previous chapters, in fact, the majority of them are earlier than the Muslim texts under consideration. Despite this, their contents provide further evidence that even the earliest Muslim polemical arguments against the Christian scriptures were not only accusations of misinterpretation. While the texts considered in this chapter are not by Muslims and can only be said to be reproducing perceptions of Muslim arguments, it worth examining these works to gain the perspective of the community against which these accusations are directed as they may offer further insight into the criticisms leveled at them by Muslims.

Christians considered Muslims to be attacking not just the interpretation of scripture, but also the very authenticity of the revealed text. This is demonstrated through an examination of select works by, ascribed to or describing the (real or imagined) encounters of Timothy I (d. 823), the Monk of Bēt Ḥālē (late 8th/early 9th cent.), Theodore

Abū Qurrah (d. after 816), Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭah (d. ca. 835), ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (d. ca. mid-9th cent.), ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (likely d. ca. 9th cent.), Abraham of Tiberias (ca. mid 9th cent.), and the Byzantine emperor Leo III (8th cent.).[984] The examination of Christian disputational literature in this chapter further testifies to what has been demonstrated in the examination of Muslim disputational literature in previous chapters – that Muslims are advancing accusations of textual falsification of the Bible in the eighth and ninth centuries. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the texts under consideration in this chapter represent Christian perceptions of Muslim beliefs about the authenticity of the Bible. While these Christian texts cannot be said to reproduce the precise wording of the Muslim interlocutors faithfully, the contents of the texts appear to represent the general nature of inter-religious dialogue and debate during the eighth and ninth centuries fairly, and, when considered together with Muslim disputational literature discussed in the previous chapters, it is impossible to dismiss the likelihood that Muslims were advancing claims of the Bible's textual corruption in what has been considered the "early" period of Muslim polemical literature.

10.1 TIMOTHY I'S DEBATE WITH THE CALIPH AL-MAHDĪ

Timothy I, Catholicos of the Church of the East from 779-823, penned a work detailing the events of a dialogue he was supposed to have had in the court of the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775-785) in Baghdad over the course of two days in 782/783. Two versions of the debate survived; a Syriac version that is assumed to have been completed by

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[984] This chapter is not an exhaustive examination of any of the texts under consideration. Rather, I consider select portions that concern Christian perceptions of Muslim accusations of the Bible's falsification.

Timothy I himself, and an Arabic version that is likely a translation of the Syriac.[985]

While the text purports to be the dialogue between the Caliph and the Patriarch, it is

probably a creative fiction to some degree. Mingana contends that it is a generally

faithful retelling of the event, even if not a verbatim account.[986] Literary versions of

debates were often recast in such a way as to cast the writer of the account (or his

champion) as the clear winner. Given that this was written from the perspective of the

Christian disputant, Timothy, it is no surprise that he emerges victorious in the debate.

That is not to say, however, that the topics Timothy I writes about are

disingenuous to the nature of the interactions between Muslims and Christians at the

time. Rather, the re-imagined dialogue covers a wide range of topics prevalent in the

debates between Muslims and Christians during the early ʿAbbāsid period (and some of

them remain relevant to Muslim-Christian dialogue to this day), including

> Jesus' birth and resurrection, Mary's virginity both before and after the birth of
> Jesus, the Trinity, the integrity of the Old and New Testaments, biblical
> prophecies, Muhammad's status as a prophet, the divine nature of the Qur'ān, and
> religious customs, such as direction of prayer and circumcision.[987]

The sections most pertinent to the present discussion are Timothy's responses to the

Caliph's questions about the integrity of the Bible and Muḥammad's status as a prophet,

for which biblical evidence is called into question.

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[985] Clint Hackenburg, "An Arabic-to-English Translation of the Religious Debate between the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I and the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mahdī" (M.A., Ohio State University, 2009), 5; Martin Heimgartner, s.v. "Timothy I," in CMR1, 522-526. There is a new edition by Samir Khalil Samir with parallel English translation by Wafik Nasry that will be published by Brigham Young University Press in August 2016 as part of the Eastern Christian Texts Series.

[986] Alphonse Mingana, *Timothy's Apology for Christianity*, Woodbrooke Studies 2 (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1928), 11.

[987] Hackenburg, "Religious Debate," 9.

In the eighth section of Timothy's dialogue, the Muslim interlocutor states, "If you had not changed the Torah and the Gospel (*Injīl*), you would have seen (*tushāhidūna*) Muḥammad also with the other prophets."[988] Timothy's response demonstrates that he does not consider this to be a charge of misinterpretation, but rather of textual alteration. He argues that the Torah and Prophets are not altered because: (1) the Torah and Prophets testify to Christian teachings and thus Christians would have no reason to alter them;[989] and (2) Christians and Jews would have had to agree on falsification, which is not possible due to the enmity between them.[990] Then, in regard to the falsification of the Gospel, Timothy then responds to al-Mahdī that it, like the Torah and Prophets, has not been changed (*ghayyara*) or falsified (*ḥarrafa*) for the following reasons: (1) the Gospel's teaching about Jesus is resonant with what is in the Torah and Prophets;[991] (2) Christians would have omitted vile and contemptible things (fear, beatings, crucifixion) from the Gospel if it had been falsified.[992] He concludes, "We have not, therefore, changed (*ghayyara*) or falsified (*ḥarrafa*) one solitary line in the book of God."[993]

It is not charges of misinterpretation that are advanced in al-Mahdī's questions, nor in Timothy's response to them. Rather, Timothy is clear in his dialogue that the Muslim interlocutor is advancing charges of the textual falsification and alteration of the

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[988] Ibid., 135. Hackenburg's thesis includes both the Arabic text as well as his English translation. Any quotations from this work are my own translation from Hackenburg's Arabic text.

[989] Ibid., 136.

[990] Ibid., 138.

[991] Ibid., 140.

[992] Ibid., 141.

[993] Ibid., 142.

Torah, Prophets, and Gospel. While the specific words of the debate are likely a later

reconstruction, there seems to be no possible benefit to the Christian community for

Timothy I to have invented Muslim arguments against the Bible simply for the purpose of

refuting them. Rather, Timothy I's Dialogue with al-Mahdī further testifies to the fact

that the textual corruption of the Bible was a charge advanced by Muslims in

disputational literature much earlier than is proposed in academic discourse.

<u>10.2 A Monk of Bēt Ḥālē</u>

A disputation recorded in Syriac between a Muslim and a monk of Bēt Ḥālē is

another of the texts belonging to this disputational literature genre that unfortunately

lacks certain provenance or dating.[994] As Taylor notes, the ecclesiastical affiliation of the

author is clear; Bēt Hālē was a monastery in the East Syriac (Nestorian) tradition, the

work is only preserved in East Syriac manuscripts, and a number of theological

distinctives in the text that are unique to the East Syriac tradition.[995] The interlocutors are

nameless, although a later Syriac tradition ascribes the name Abraham to the monk,

which unfortunately is ubiquitous among Syriac monks and really provides little in the

way of information.[996] The Muslim interlocutor is "referred to as a notable from the

entourage of governor Maslama," (d. 738) who was a son of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r.

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[994] It has been edited and translated into English in David G.K. Taylor, "The Disputation between a Muslim and a Monk of Bēt Ḥālē," in *Christsein in der islamischen Welt: Festschrift für Martin Tamcke zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Sidney Griffith and Sven Grebenstein (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 187-242. All quotations from this work are Taylor's translation.

[995] Ibid., 189.

[996] Ibid., 191.

685-705) and governor of Iraq.[997] Barbara Roggema considers this as evidence for its

provenance, and dates the disputation to the 720s,[998] although David Taylor considers this

unlikely and provides a later date (late eighth/early ninth cent.) to the text that takes into

account greater historical indicators in the text.[999] The reference to Maslama is likely a

misleading ascription that does not require the disputation to have occurred under his

auspices because of the "abiding fame of Maslama, who is regularly referred to in Syriac

chronicles[1000] and, more importantly, entered both Christian and Islamic legend because

of his siege of Constantinople in 717-718."[1001]

The disputation upon which the Syriac text was based was possibly conducted in

Arabic due to the fact that the monk asks for the Muslim to speak to him "without a

translator."[1002] Similar to other disputations, the encounter may have been based on a

historical event and the topics discussed are consistent with known concerns in Muslim-

Christian disputation, but the debate was fictionalized and the Christian author presents

the monk as the clear victor. The contents of the debate include:

> the theological significance of the Islamic conquests; fidelity to the
> commandments of Abraham (notably circumcision and sacrifice); Christ's

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[997] Barbara Roggema, s.v. "The Disputation between a Monk of Bēt Ḥālē and an Arab Notable," in *CMR1*, 268.

[998] Ibid., 269.

[999] He notes that the 720s as the date of the disputation is "not compatible with the *Disputation*'s erroneous claim that in the time of Maslama a number of major cities in Iran, which were also Church of the East episcopal sees, had non-Islamic rulers. It is also incompatible with a reference to Sergius Baḥira by this name, whose legend is thought to date to the early 9th century." Taylor, "The Disputation between a Muslim and a Monk of Bēt Ḥālē," 200.

[1000] Taylor notes that a list of references to Maslama in Christian chronicles can be found compiled in M. Canard, "Les expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende," *Journal Asiatique* 208 (1926): 80, fn. 5.

[1001] Taylor, "The Disputation between a Muslim and a Monk of Bēt Ḥālē," 192.

[1002] Ibid., 207.

divinity and suffering; the Trinity; the status and teaching of Muḥammad; Christian use of crosses, images, and relics; Christian prayer towards the East; and the ability of Muslims to enter the Kingdom of God.[1003]

The authenticity of the Bible is not called directly into question as a sustained component of the dispute, although it is addressed. The Muslim interlocutor is referred to as being "well educated in our Scriptures and their Qur'ān."[1004] Despite this, the Muslim is quick to note that "we do not accept all your scriptures." The particulars of what is or is not accepted is not immediately noted, although the monk assures the Muslim that the Christians will "provide an answer, either from the Scriptures, or from rational argument" about anything whose veracity he doubted.[1005]

Interestingly, after a considerable amount of dialogue, in which the Muslim primarily serves as a vehicle for progressing an explanation of Christian doctrine, wants to know how Christians justify the worship of images, crosses, and the bones of martyrs. In response, the Monk states, "If you seek to learn, listen clearly, and accept whatever I adduce for you as proof from the Torah and the prophets."[1006] Rather than immediately dismiss them as false, the Muslim responds, "Truly, I will accept a proof (taken) from the Old (Testament)."[1007] We may thus infer that it is the New Testament the Muslim interlocutor did not accept when he stated previously that he did not accept all the scriptures. There is no further discussion of the veracity of the Bible and this text, while potentially early, seems primarily to serve as a vehicle for proclaiming Christian belief.

[1003] Ibid., 188.

[1004] Ibid., 206.

[1005] Ibid., 208.

[1006] Ibid., 225.

[1007] Ibid.

The Muslim arguments are less rigorous than in other Christian disputational literature, and obviously far less than Muslims produced.

10.3 THEODORE ABŪ QURRAH

Theodore Abū Qurrah was a prolific writer and theologian who belonged to the Chalcedonian Christian community. He was a student of John of Damascus who advanced his ideas among a growing body of Arabic-speaking Christians toward the end of the eighth century. I provide examples and analysis from two texts that demonstrate that he considered Muslims to be advancing charges of textual corruption.

The first text under consideration is a dialogue purported to be between Abū Qurrah and a number of Muslim interlocutors versed in dialectical theology in the court of the caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 833) in 829,[1008] although there is disagreement in Western scholarship regarding the authorship and date of the text. [1009] Bertaina concludes after surveying the available evidence,

> In conclusion, the literary parallels between Theodore's writings and the Abū Qurra debate text indicate that a ninth-century Arab Orthodox Melkite who was closely connected with Theodore Abū Qurra, his writings, and his style of argumentation (most likely a monk or clergy member) sought to create an Arabic literary dialogue that was based upon a real meeting, perhaps even including first-hand memories of the debate such as we have in the dialogues composed by John the Deacon.[1010]

Like Timothy I's debate with al-Mahdī, the event itself probably took place, although David Bertaina argues that such literary dialogues were constructed as

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[1008] David Bertaina has produced a translation and a transcription of one of the manuscripts in Bertaina, "An Arabic Account of Theodore Abu Qurra in Debate," 388-433, 434-464.

[1009] See ibid., 232 ff.

[1010] Ibid., 256.

hagiographic accounts of hope for future generations, catechetical tools for their audience, apologetic primers for students, rhetorical devices of Christian empowerment and entertaining stories that inculcated Christian socio-cultural values and prevented conversion to Islam.[1011]

If these dialogues were meant for such purposes, it is likely that they would have reflected re-creations of Muslim arguments based generally on actual arguments in order to better serve the Christian population for whom they were written. With this in mind, Abū Qurrah's responses in this stylized, literary dialogue shed light on the nature of Muslim arguments against Christianity and the Bible.

In the first literary dialogue under consideration, Abū Qurrah states to his Muslim interlocutors, "You say about us that we have added to (*zidnā*) and voided (*naqaḍnā*) our gospel (*Injīlnā*), even though you know that our Gospel precedes your Qur'ān by 614 years and not one letter was added to it nor was one letter taken out of it."[1012] The specific mention of adding to and violating the Gospel, particularly because he mentions letters being added or taken out, testifies to the fact that Abū Qurrah considers the Muslims to be advancing a charge of the textual corruption of the Bible rather than a charge of misinterpretation.

In another literary dialogue recorded in Greek by a certain John the Deacon that purports to detail an encounter between Abū Qurrah and an unnamed "Saracen," the issue of biblical falsification is again broached. In this dialogue, however, it stems from Abū Qurrah's contention that Muḥammad is not a prophet. The section of the dialogue dealing with this topic follows below:

[1011] Ibid., i.

[1012] Ibid., 445.

Theodore:	My father taught me to accept someone as a messenger only if he was prophesied by an earlier prophet or through signs established himself as worthy of belief. Your Muhammad, however, could appeal to neither of these conditions. No earlier prophet declared him to be a prophet and he did not engender faith in himself through signs.
Saracen:	That's not true. In the gospel, Christ wrote: 'I shall send to you a prophet named Muhammad.'
Theodore:	The gospel has no such prediction.
Saracen:	It used to, it's only that you all deleted it.[1013]

Muḥammad's prophethood was a regular point of contention between Muslims and Christians and Muḥammad's lack of miracles was brought up by Christians in order to prove that he could not possibly be a prophet. The Muslim interlocutor's response in this situation is likely a reference to the common Muslim argument equating the Paraclete in John's Gospel with Muḥammad. Most importantly, the Muslim interlocutor's contention that Christians deleted a reference to Muḥammad in the Gospel demonstrates that Christians perceived Muslims to consider the Bible to be purposely corrupted for their own ends.

10.4 Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭah

Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭah (d. ca. 835) was the author of a number of theological treatises and a member of the Jacobite community.[1014] His works concerned both intra-Christian theological disputes as well as inter-religious debate with Muslims.

[1013] Abū Qurrah and Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, 215. All quotations from Lamoreaux's edition are his translation.

[1014] Biographical information on Abū Rāʾiṭah has been discussed in Chapter 3.5.

His focus is primarily on the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, although he does respond briefly to Muslim arguments regarding the authenticity of the Bible.

Abū Rāʾiṭah's first *Risālah* on the Holy Trinity presents various rationalistic arguments and analogies to describe the manner in which the different persons of the Trinity are united. After this, he introduces a number of quotations from the Bible and the Qurʾān that are used to support his argument.[1015] He then preempts a Muslim response to these references from the Bible:

> If they deny this teaching and they reject it, and they say, 'The prophets did not say it. Rather, you corrupted (*ḥarrafa*) the words from their places and made them [the prophets] say a falsehood and a lie.' Say, to them, 'If these books were in our hands without being in the hands of our enemies the Jews, then, by my life, one could accept your teaching that we changed (*ghayyara*) [them] and substituted (*baddala*) [words].[1016]

This is an obvious reference to the qurʾānic injunction against the Jews for what it considers them to have done – twisting the words of the Torah in order to reject the prophethood of Muḥammad.[1017] What is important to note however, is that Abū Rāʾiṭah considers this charge to be leveled against "the books" rather than the interpretation of them. Interestingly, he only focuses here on the charges against the Torah and the Books of the Prophets' corruption, although this is likely because Abū Rāʾiṭah only quotes from the Torah and Prophets and not the Gospels. Regardless, he considers their accusation to be one regarding the text rather than the interpretation.

[1015] Toenies Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth"*, 200-207.

[1016] Ibid., Ar. on 206-208, Eng. on 207-209.

[1017] Cf. Qurʾān 4:46, 5:13, 5:41, and 2:75.

10.5 ʿAMMĀR AL-BAṢRĪ

ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, a theologian of the Church of the East, penned his *Kitāb al-burhān* in the first half of the 9th century.[1018] This text is the earliest known Christian apology written in Arabic for the express purpose of providing defenses to common arguments raised by Muslim polemics against Christian beliefs. The arguments it addresses are as follows: (1) proofs for the existence of God; (2) criteria for determining the true religion; (3) a defense of the truth of Christianity; (4) the authenticity of Christian scripture; (5) the Trinity; (6) the union of divinity and humanity in Christ; (7) the Incarnation; (8) the crucifixion; (9) baptism; (10) the Eucharist; (11) the symbol of the cross; and (12) eating and drinking in the afterlife.

The headings for the text provided above are not original to the text, but come from a synopsis of the work by Mark Beaumont.[1019] While the headings provide a general synopsis of their contents, Michel Hayek's wording for section four of the *Kitāb al-burhān* is more apropos of its content. Hayek titles it "*dafʿat shubhat al-taḥrīf*" (refutation of the charge of falsification),[1020] which better encapsulates ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's purpose in this section. He is not simply building a case for the authenticity of the Christian scriptures; rather, he is responding to and providing arguments to refute Muslim arguments for the corruption of both the revealed text (*tanzīl*) and its interpretation.

[1018] This text along with the another by ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī were edited and translated into French in al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān*. A study of the *Kitāb al-burhān* and an English translation can be found in Wageeh Y.F. Mikhail, "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Burhān*: A Topical and Theological Analysis of Arabic Christian Theology in the Ninth Century" (Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 2013). All translations from ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-burhān* in this dissertation are my own unless otherwise stated.

[1019] Mark Beaumont, s.v. "ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī," in *CMR1*, 607-608.

[1020] al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān*, 41.

ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī begins this section on refuting the charge of *taḥrīf* by noting that

the Gospel, having been confirmed by miracles (a point he argued earlier in his text),

requires that the whole world accept and believe in it. [1021] He states that he does not

consider it even necessary to refute what slander has been leveled against the Gospels by

the Muslims, but such a statement is really just a literary device as he spends a

considerable number of pages to do just what he said was unnecessary. His first argument

against the corruption of the Gospels is that it would have required miracles to corrupt it,

since it was confirmed by miracles. He notes immediately the absurdity of this statement,

since "miracles do not occur by the hands of the corrupters of the books of God."[1022] It is

thus impossible that the Gospels could have been corrupted after being confirmed by

miracles. The validity of the argument is immaterial; what is important is that he is

responding to arguments against the textual corruption of the Christian scriptures, not just

their interpretation.

ʿAmmār's next argument is that the collusion that would be necessary for such

widespread corruption as is alleged is simply not feasible. As noted previously,

Christianity as divided into a number of different ecclesiastical communities and their

inability to unite with one another on a number of theological issues simply would not

have allowed the collusion required for the corruption that is supposed to have occurred.

In fact, ʿAmmār argues that the differing opinions demonstrate the impossibility of the

Gospels' textual corruption. He writes, "If they were being compelled to agree on one

matter in regard to the corruption of the revealed text or something other than it, then

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[1021] Ibid.

[1022] Ibid., 42.

they also would have agreed on one matter regarding its interpretation."[1023] Interesting

here is the emphasis ʿAmmār places on the argument against the textual corruption of the

revealed text (*al-tanzīl*). There is no doubt that he is referring to textual corruption rather

than misinterpretation here.

As further evidence that he is concerned with refuting charges of textual

corruption, he also juxtaposes them to arguments for the misinterpretation of the Bible.

He writes: "If one of the people of 'sight' says, 'We claim that it was not possible to

corrupt the revealed text (*al-tanzīl*); rather, they corrupted the text away from its purpose

and its meaning; they have not corrupted the visible text itself.'"[1024] Thus, ʿAmmār al-

Baṣrī is not solely concerned with arguments that the text has been corrupted, but is also

responding to arguments that Christians have misinterpreted their texts.

ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī finishes his section on *taḥrīf* noting that, "it has become clear

that the Gospel has never been corrupted nor altered, either in its revealed text (*tanzīl*) or

in its meaning (*maʿnā*), from that which Christians agreed upon."[1025] The fact that he

considers it necessary to respond to arguments against both the text itself as well as its

interpretation is important.

10.6 ʿABD AL-MASĪḤ B. ISḤĀQ AL-KINDĪ

There is a work known as the *Risālah* of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī

(referred to as ʿAbd al-Masīḥ to differentiate him from the more well-known al-Kindī)

that was likely written during the ninth century. Nothing is known of the author's

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[1023] Ibid.

[1024] Ibid., 44.

[1025] Ibid., 45.

biography, and even the name is a pseudonym. There is even uncertainty regarding the particular confession to which ʿAbd al-Masīḥ is supposed to have subscribed. Bottini notes,

> In the eyes of the majority of modern scholars, he would have belonged to the Church of the East, but others believe he was a Syrian Orthodox, a Melkite, an East-Syrian who converted to the Chalcedonian faith, or even a 'Catholic'. Other scholars have concluded that it is impossible to determine his confessional identity.[1026]

Despite a lack of biographical information, and the first mention of the text being in al-Birūnī's (d. 1048) *Kitāb al-āthār al-bāqīya*, there seems to be good reason to consider it to have been written in the ninth century.[1027] Bottini notes, "On the basis of internal historical references, a majority of scholars, however, situate the text in the era of the Caliph al-Maʾmūn."[1028] If an early ninth-century date is correct for the text, it has direct bearing on understanding the milieu in which al-Qāsim was writing, and at the latest, al-Birūnī's mention of the text requires it to have a *terminus ante quem* of the early eleventh century. Absent further evidence that demonstrates more conclusively the text is from a later date, I consider the text in this chapter assuming it is from the ninth century. It must be noted, however, that the argument of this present study does not depend on an early provenance for ʿAbd al-Masīḥ's *Risālah*. There is sufficient evidence in the other texts (both Muslim and Christian) that have more certain provenance and dates that testify to a

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[1026] Laura Bottini, s.v. "The Apology of al-Kindī," in *CMR1*, 585.

[1027] Bottini notes that Muir, Casanova, Sendino, Tartar, and Samir all consider it to be from the early ninth century, although the differ on the precise year to which it should be dated. Laura Bottini, s.v. "The Apology of al-Kindī," in *CMR1*, 587-588.

[1028] Ibid., 587.

charge of the Bible's textual corruption by Muslim polemicists in the first ʿAbbāsid century.

There is no need to examine the entirety of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ's *Risālah*, and only a small section dealing with *taḥrīf* is examined here. After providing evidence from the Old Testament for Jesus' divine sonship, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ raises a Muslim objection with which he is familiar regarding the falsification (*taḥrīf*) of the Bible and that "we [the Christians] corrupted (*ḥarrafa*) the word from its place and altered (*baddala*) the book (*kitāb*)."[1029] ʿAbd al-Masīḥ considers this particular argument regarding the falsification (*taḥrīf*) and alteration (*tabdīl*) of the Bible to be among the most difficult to dislodge. Like others, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ notes that it would have required collusion between the Christians and Jews to have been corrupted. Rather, without collusion (*tawāṭuʾ*) between the Jews and Christians it was revealed (*munzal*) by God and has no corruption (*taḥrīf*) or alteration (*tabdīl*). Nothing has been added or taken from it.[1030]

Although ʿAbd al-Masīḥ does not make a clear distinction between textual corruption and misinterpretation, the particular wording he uses demonstrates that he considers textual corruption to be a more important charge that needs to be addressed. He writes, "You say that we corrupted (*ḥarrafnā*) the book (*kitāb*) and we altered (*baddalnā*) the revelation of God (*tanzīl allāh*) and we changed (*ghayyarnā*) its words (*kalām*)."[1031] Thus, it is the revealed book (*tanzīl*) that has been altered and changed. ʿAbd al-Masīḥ

[1029] Anton Tien, ed. *Risālat ʿAbdallāh ibn Ismāʿīl al-Hāshimī ilā ʿAbd al-Masīḥ ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī yadʿūhu bihā ilā l-Islām wa-risālat al-Kindī ilā l-Hāshimī yaruddu bihā ʿalayhi wa-yadʿūhu ilā l-Nasrāniyya* (London: Turkish Mission Aid Society, 1880), 138.

[1030] Ibid.

[1031] Ibid., 139.

does not concern himself with the charge of misinterpretation, although his focus on refuting the charge of textual corruption is understandable. ʿAbd al-Masīḥ (and Christians generally) would have considered the authenticity of the biblical text of considerably more importance than accusations of misinterpretation.

In addition, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ also demonstrates his familiarity with the Qurʾān and uses it to his advantage in response to Muslim claims of the Bible's corruption. In many ways this is the Christian equivalent of using proof texts from the other's scripture to prove the validity of one's own religion. ʿAbd al-Masīḥ states "your book bears witness of the truth of what is in our hands."[1032] He then provides two qurʾānic references[1033] – 10:94, "If you are in doubt about what We have sent down to you, ask those who have been reciting the Book before you. The truth has come down to you from your Lord, so do not be one of the doubters." And 2:121, "Those to whom We have given the Book recite it as it should be recited. Those (people) believe in it. But whoever disbelieves in it – those (people) – they are the losers." In quoting these references, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ notes that even the Qurʾān testifies to the authority and authenticity of the Bible.[1034] Thus, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ considers that Muslim charges of *taḥrīf* and *tabdīl*, when they are used to refute

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[1032] Ibid., 138.

[1033] There is a discrepancy between the Arabic edition and Tien's translation. The Arabic only includes the two references quoted here, while Tien's translation includes 10:94, 5:46, 5:66, and 5:69 and leaves off 2:121. The tenor of all the references is similar, and it is possible that the extra references are a gloss that was added as some point. Tien's translation was produced from a manuscript he left unifished and unpublished as his death. It was later found, edited slightly, and published by N.A. Newman as part of a collection of Muslim-Christian disputational literature. Cf. ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī, "The Apology of al-Kindi," in *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Centuries (632-900 A.D.) Translations with Commentary*, ed. N.A. Newman, trans. Anton Tien (Hatfield: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993), 498-499; Tien, *The Apology of al-Kindī*, 139.

[1034] Tien, *The Apology of al-Kindī*, 138-139.

the authenticity of the Bible, contradict the Qur'ān's own assessment of the Bible, particularly as it is in the hands of the Christians.

10.7 ABRAHAM OF TIBERIAS

The *Disputation of the Monk Abraham of Tiberias* is a literary dialogue set in the court of the emir ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī in early ninth-century Jerusalem. It is possible that the disputation stems from an actual historical event, but it is highly fictionalized and the provenance is uncertain. It was transmitted anonymously, and it does not seem to have actually been written by Abraham of Tiberias.[1035] Szilágy notes that the author was an Arabic-speaking Christian and based on the nature of his presentation of Christian doctrine, ascribed to Chalcedonian Christology.[1036] Internal evidence points to it being written in Palestine between 815 and 840, although a later author could have fabricated these details.[1037] While the entirety of the debate and the supposed date of its composition could have been created, Szilágy aptly notes that had it been a completely contrived debate, the author would have likely chosen a much more well-known antagonist than an unknown Monk and a protagonist with more enduring

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[1035] Krisztina Szilágyi, "The Disputation of the Monk Abraham of Tiberias," in *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700-1700: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. Samuel Noble and Alexander Treiger (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014), 91.

[1036] Ibid.

[1037] Ibid.

fame than ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī.[1038] The text, however, was popular and circulated widely among Arabic-speaking Christian communities.[1039]

In regard to the contents of the text, the protagonist, Abraham, is one of a number of Christian and Jewish[1040] scholars called to testify regarding the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation in particular, but their discussion covers the crucifixion, Christian veneration of the cross, and the Christian scriptures, albeit briefly.[1041] As Abraham is asked to begin building his case for Christian beliefs, he states that it must have a foundation. With this leading statement, the Muslim interlocutor asks Abraham what the foundation is, and Abraham replies, "The books of the Prophets and the Apostles." After the Jewish disputant states that he does not accept the New Testament, the Muslim interlocutor states, "We accept nothing from either the Old [Testament] or from the New [Testament], because we do not recognize them (*naʿrifuhā*)."[1042] The challenge here to the authenticity and authority of the Bible is unlike the other dialogues. Rather than question the interpretation or state that the text has been altered in some way, the Muslim interlocutor candidly acknowledges that he does not accept the texts, although he does not provide an immediate reason for rejecting them.

[1038] Ibid. The popularity of the text led to it being recast later with the interlocutors exchanged for more well-known figures: the emir becomes the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685-705) and Abraham is traded for Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. after 816), "thus turning a provincial affair into a royal one and presenting us with a discussion between a seventh-century Muslim and a ninth-century Christian." Ibid., 92.

[1039] Mark Swanson, s.v. "The Disputation of the monk Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī," in *CMR1*, 879.

[1040] The Jewish scholars are invited solely to catch Christians in their exaggerations, but end up affirming Christian statements.

[1041] Swanson, s.v. "The Disputation of the monk Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarānī," in *CMR1*, 878.

[1042] Giacinto Būlus Marcuzzo, *Le Dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade avec ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī à Jérusalem vers 820* (Rome: 1986), 343.

The most important section of the dialogue for the purposes of this study is the third section, which concerns the claim of the Bible's falsification.[1043] The Muslim interlocutor begins:

> This teaching which you said, it is only in your falsified Gospel (*injīlikum al-muḥarraf*) and your falsified books (*kutubikum al-muḥarrafah*). But the first Gospel, it is with us. We received it from our prophet, because John and his companions lost the Gospel after the ascension of Christ to heaven and they wrote down what they pleased. Our prophet, Muḥammad informed us of this.[1044]

This particular version of the accusation is atypical to the stated arguments in both the Muslim and Christian disputational literature. While such a position, in which the original is lost and the Gospel writers are charged with making up a new one, might have been the mechanism by which the other Muslims considered the Gospel to have been falsified, they do not mention it. In Abraham's dialogue, falsification is not simply a corruption of the original Gospel text; rather, it is the complete creation of a new text after the original version was lost. Furthermore, he considers the Gospel writers to have been disingenuous in their attempts to reformulate the *Injīl* by accusing them of only writing down what pleased them. Thus, the Gospel in the hands of the Christians is not considered to be a faithful recreation of the *Injīl*. This position further clarifies the earlier statement of the emir that he does not accept either the Old or New Testaments because they simply are not authentic. This position is consistent with a Muslim understanding of scripture; if the *Injīl* was supposed to have been revealed to Jesus as a single text, and the four Gospels differ in their content, the Muslim charge of falsification is the logical outcome.

[1043] Ibid., 395-405.

[1044] Ibid., 395.

Abraham's response to the Muslim's accusation demonstrates that the textual

authenticity of the Christian scriptures is in question rather than simply its

misinterpretation. He replies: "If the matter is just as you say, bring the true *Injīl* and

Books which you bring in opposition to our books, in order that their falsification would

be known and made clear. We will take the true and invalidate the falsified."[1045] There

are clearly two different texts that are being brought into the question. One is the Bible as

it was then in the hands of the Christians, and the other is a supposed original.

Furthermore, Abraham challenges that the other text be brought forth, not that the emir

offer another interpretation of the scriptural references Abraham had previously utilized.

It is also worth mentioning that Abraham proceeds to outline his case for the authenticity

of the Christian version of the scriptures, first questioning how they claim their prophet

said such things regarding the falsification of the Bible, "when he testified of them [the

apostles] that they are followers of God and that God inspired them."[1046] He is not

referring to the interpretation of those scriptures, but the very words and books.

10.8 LEO III'S LETTER TO ʿUMAR II

Sometime between 717 and 720, the Byzantine Emperor Leo III (r. 717-741) and

the caliph ʿUmar II (r. 717-720) supposedly engaged in an exchange of letters dealing

with questions of faith.[1047] The authenticity of the correspondence is questionable. ʿUmar

II's part of the exchange as contained in Ghewond's *Armenian History* is likely a

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[1045] Ibid., 397.

[1046] Ibid.

[1047] For an introduction and English translation, see Jeffery, "Correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III." Gaudeul concludes that the Armenian version of ʿUmar's letter is likely a forgery by the Armenian historian attempting to recreate it based on replies in Leo's letter. See Gaudeul, "The Correspondence between Leo and ʿUmar," 114.

reconstruction based on quotations and paraphrases from Leo III's letter to ʿUmar II,[1048] while Leo III's letter to ʿUmar II holds the possibility of being genuine.[1049] Scholars who consider the letter to be genuine find evidence that the letter appears to have been originally written in Greek,[1050] although it only survived in Armenian translation (and conversely, those who doubt its authenticity find evidence that it was originally written in Armenian). More recently, Cecilia Palombo has argued that "all the extant versions of the 'correspondence' ultimately derive from an original Arabic Christian apologetic work, composed probably in mid-eighth century, in the monastic circles of Syria-Palestine."[1051] Regardless of the exact date of its provenance, there is scholarly consensus that it was written by the end of the ninth century at the latest and potentially as early as the beginning half of the eighth century and, either way, falls within the general period of this study.

Leo III's letter addresses many of the same topics that can be found in the pages of other disputational literature of the early ʿAbbāsid period, although only issues pertaining to the authenticity of the Bible will be examined here. Early in his letter, Leo III broaches the topic of scripture falsification, although it is Leo III that is accusing ʿUmar II. He writes,

> Just so, you advance that our Lord has said in the Gospel – 'We came into this world naked, and we shall quit it in the same state,' whereas we do not find in the

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[1048] Gaudeul, "The Correspondence between Leo and ʿUmar," 113-114.

[1049] For the reasoning behind its possible authenticity and a bibliography related to this letter, see Tim Greenwood, s.v. "Correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III," in *CMR1*, 203-208.

[1050] See Jean-Pierre Mahé, "Le problème de l'authenticité et de la valeur de la chronique de Łewond," in *L'Arménie et Byzance* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), 119-126.

[1051] Cecilia Palombo, "The "Correspondence" of Leo III and ʿUmar II: Traces of an Early Christian Arabic Apologetic Work," *Millenium Yearbook* 12, no. 1 (2015): 231.

Gospels any such statement coming from our Lord, though He does counsel us often to meditate upon death. On the contrary it was the just Job, who said, after having been tempted by Satan, 'Naked was I born, and so shall I die. The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job I, 21). It is thus that you are wont to elude and mutilate the evidence of Holy Scriptures that you have not read, and will not read.[1052]

Leo III's statement draws attention to the fact that he does not consider Muslims to be appropriately understanding Christian scripture, primarily due to the fact that he does not think Muslims have or will read it. It is possible this contention arises from Muslim arguments that the original scriptures had been lost and later rewritten, which he addresses later and is also evident in *The Disputation of Abraham of Tiberias*.[1053]

Another contention Leo III addresses concerns the authenticity of the Old Testament. Leo III writes, "You ask how we can depend on the book of the Jews, the Old Testament, as you maintain that we believe that this book was several times written and lost, until after long years come individuals undertook to recompose it after their own ideas."[1054] This particular accusation goes into greater detail about the manner in which the Old Testament's corruption was supposed to have occurred, although he does not note that same accusation in regard the New Testament as is found in *The Disputation of Abraham of Tiberias*.

Leo III also argues that since the time of the Qur'ān – which he considers to have been composed by ʿUmar, Abū Turāb (i.e., ʿAlī), and Salmān the Persian – Muslims have claimed that "since that time there have been introduced into the Gospel alterations,

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[1052] Jeffery, "Correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III," 283.

[1053] Marcuzzo, *Le Dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade*, 395.

[1054] Jeffery, "Correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III," 286. There is a more recent edition and translation into French that I was unable to access before finishing this study. See Lewond Vardapet, "La Correspondance d'Omar et de Léon," in *Discours Historique*, ed. Alexan Hakobian, trans. Jean-Pierre Mahé (Paris: ACHCByz, 2015), 345-452.

whether by us or by others."[1055] He seems to be referring here to the text of the Gospel

rather than simply the manner in which it has been interpreted. Jeffery notes that this is

probably referring to the common argument raised by Muslims that mentions of

Muḥammad have been removed from the Bible in order to deny claims of Muḥammad's

prophethood.[1056] Interestingly, this places the accusation of textual corruption quite late

and is supposed to be an intentional action done to subvert Islamic claims about

Muḥammad's prophethood derived from biblical proof-texts.

 Perhaps the most interesting feature of Leo III's letter and the clearest evidence

that he considers Muslims to be advancing charges of textual corruption relates to what I

have previously noted al-Qāsim and Ibn Isḥāq did in their respective biblical quotations.

Leo III writes,

> One thing about you, indeed, astonishes me more than a little. It is that after you
> have shown such disdain with regard to the Gospel of our Saviour, and the books
> of the Prophets, regarding them as falsified and as recomposed by men according
> to their ideas, you nevertheless, in order to support your own inconstant opinions,
> cease not to draw citations therefrom, which you twist and modify at will.
> Whenever, for example, you come across the word *Father*, you replace it by *Lord*,
> or sometimes by *God*. If you are making your researches in the interests of truth,
> you ought to respect the Scriptures before citing them. Or, if you disdain them as
> corrupt, you ought not to use them for citation, and if you do cite them, it is an
> obligation on you to cite them such as you find them in the books, without
> modifying them in the way you do.[1057]

The alteration of specific familial language in reference to God was common in Muslim

apologetic and polemical literature against Christianity and features prominently in al-

Qāsim's *al-Radd*. One can infer that the writer of this particular work was familiar with

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[1055] Jeffery, "Correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III," 293.

[1056] Ibid., 293, fn. 41.

[1057] Ibid., 299.

such treatises. There are a number of other issues that Leo III raises in this quotation that concern the falsification of the Bible that will be addressed in turn.

First, he states that Muslims regard the Gospel and the Books of the Prophets as falsified. He does not argue that Muslims consider Christian interpretations as false, but rather, it is the books themselves. Second, he notes that Muslims themselves are guilty of altering the words of the Biblical text, changing "Father" to "Lord" or "God," in order to bring it into alignment with Muslim conceptions of God. This is common throughout the Muslim disputational literature in quotations from the Gospels that are used to argue for the validity of qur'ānic and Islamic principles of God's monotheism and against the divine sonship of Jesus.[1058] Third, he questions Muslim use of the Bible for their own ends if they consider it to be corrupt. This is an explicit reference that the text is being called into question by Muslims and not just Christian interpretations. If it were interpretation that were the accusation being leveled, Leo III would not be able to raise objections about Muslim use of the biblical text for their purposes. Rather, he notes the hypocrisy inherent in quoting a text deemed corrupt. He contends that if they are considered corrupt, they should not be used. Conversely, if Muslims do not actually consider them corrupt, they should quote them correctly and not introduce their own interpretations of God's character into the text. In essence, Leo III is turning the accusation Muslims are advancing of textual corruption back at them, noting that they are in fact the ones guilty of corrupting scripture for their own ends.

[1058] For examples, see Chapters 8.2 and 9.4.

In the eighth and ninth century, Christians and Muslims were regularly entering into situations where they would discuss and debate matters of faith. The result of these inter-religious debates was a genre of disputational literature that further elaborated on the points of disagreement between the two religions. In a brief survey of some of the Christian disputational literature from this period, this chapter demonstrated that, in regard to Scripture, Christians were expressly concerned with countering Muslim claims that the biblical text itself had been corrupted. Regardless of the specific ecclesiastical community with which the Christian disputants were affiliated, they considered Muslims to be advancing charges of the textual corruption of the Bible.

It seems that there are three ways to consider the Christian response to Muslim charges of the textual corruption of the Bible in early ʿAbbāsid disputation literature: (1) Christian authors were inventing and then responding to charges of textual corruption; (2) Christians were misunderstanding Muslim arguments and confuse/conflate accusations of scriptural misinterpretation as arguments for textual scriptural corruption; or (3) they were responding to actual Muslim accusations of the textual corruption of the Bible. Each of the options will be considered in turn.

Regarding the first option, it is perhaps possible that Christians were inventing a scenario in which Muslims are making accusation of the Bible's textual corruption, but this position is not defensible. Responding to made-up accusations would likely have struck their audience as strange. And further, considering their texts were often written to serve as instructive texts for how to respond to Muslim objections, making up arguments would not have achieved that aim. Further, the preponderance of other Christian sources

354

that are similarly concerned with refuting charges of textual corruption would require impressive collusion among the Christians between ecclesiastical communities who were invested in refuting each other. While polemicists from these difference ecclesiastical communities did read each other's works refuting Islam and copy from them for their own purposes, it seems reasonable to rule out the possibility that Christians in the eighth and ninth centuries were fabricating Muslim claims in order to refute them. The likelihood that such an argument would have been invented by Christians completely absent Muslim advances is highly implausible.

Regarding the second option, that Christians were confusing Muslim accusations of the misinterpretation of the Christian scriptures for accusations of its textual corruption; this seems even less likely than the first option. Many of the authors under consideration in this chapter recognize and respond in their respective texts to accusations of both the misinterpretation and the corruption of the revealed text (Gospel and Torah) and use language that specifically refers to either a book or a revealed text, often in juxtaposition to the accusation that Christians misinterpret their scriptures. In fact, the extent to which they focus on refuting the charge of textual corruption might lead one to consider the possibility that accusations of textual corruption were of more concern to the Church than were accusations of the Bible's misinterpretation.

One is left with the third option, that Christians included responses to charges of the Bible's textual corruption because they were actually encountering this argument in some form of disputational situation (whether text or debate). This position seems the most likely scenario as it is able to account for the available evidence much more simply than the other options. It is important to note, however, that none of the texts discussed in

this chapter were written as direct responses to any of the works of the Muslim polemicists considered previously in this dissertation. And further, none of the Muslim polemical works discussed previously were written as direct responses to Christian works being discussed. While there were such direct exchanges within the genre of Muslim-Christian disputational literature, it was often the case that these polemics and apologetics were written with an audience of one's own faithful in mind. Regardless of the nature of the exchange, Christian disputational literature provides further evidence that, in addition to charges of misinterpretation, Muslims were advancing charges of the Bible's textual corruption by the ninth, and likely as early as the eighth, century.

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Chapter 11
CONCLUSION

The eighth and ninth centuries were a productive period in the history of Muslim-Christian disputational literature. Boundaries between the religious traditions began to be more clearly understood and defined as Muslims sought to situate their beliefs in contrast to the traditions of Judaism and Christianity while simultaneously asserting their place as the final inheritors of that tradition. As Muslims and Christians sought to understand and refute the other tradition's beliefs, their disputational literature reveals that the central issues were the nature of God, the person of Jesus, and the authority and authenticity of each community's respective scriptures. The primary concern of this study was an attempt to understand the nature of that last point of contention. More specifically, how did Muslims in the eighth and ninth centuries view the Bible? The predominant answer by scholars has been that Muslims in the period in question advanced charges of the Bible's misinterpretation while accepting the text itself as sound. As the study of scripture falsification progressed in the twentieth century, a dichotomy between misinterpretation (*taḥrīf al-maʿnā*) and textual corruption (*taḥrīf al-naṣṣ*) was established in the scholarly consensus. This dichotomy was eventually sharpened so that misinterpretation was characterized as an early charge, while textual corruption was characterized as a later charge. According to this dichotomization, al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's

357

al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā was characterized as the prime exemplar of early Muslim views on the Bible and was thus considered to be advancing charges of a sound biblical text that has simply been misinterpreted by Christians. Al-Qāsim's treatise attained this status as the standard-bearer of early Muslim views on the Bible due to its chronological primacy and extensive biblical quotations.

A close examination of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd* demonstrated that the manner in which it has been characterized is incorrect. Rather than being the exemplar of a charge of misinterpretation, this study demonstrated that al-Qāsim's treatise argued for both misinterpretation *and* textual corruption. His accusations of textual corruption were explicit and implicit. His explicit charge was that the transmitters of the Bible were untrustworthy, thus calling into question the authenticity of the text due to a faulty *isnād*. His implicit charge was derived from an examination of the manner in which he altered an extended quotation from Matthew to bring it into alignment with principles he established in the first section of his treatise. These included: exclusion or alteration of familial language in relation to God; the putative reasoning behind his exclusion of specific sections; the qur'ānicization of Jesus through the specific designators by which he is referred to; and an emphasis on his humanity while limiting any actions Christians associate with his divinity. Al-Qāsim's alterations to the Bible provided evidence that he assumed it to have been textually corrupted rather than just misinterpreted and that he reworked it to reflect the qur'ānic portrayal of God and Jesus with which he began his treatise.

Because al-Qāsim's views on the Bible did not align with what was to be expected from a text falling within the early period of Muslim polemical literature, this

study expanded its scope to determine whether the conclusions reached regarding al-Qāsim's *al-Radd* were limited to that text alone or could be widened to include Muslim polemicists who were contemporaries or near-contemporaries. To that end, this study's examination of the works of Ibn al-Layth (d. ca. 819), ʿAlī al-Ṭabarī (d. ca. 860), al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868f), and Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), demonstrated that these too did not conform to how early Muslim views on the Bible have been characterized. Rather, according to their respective purposes, they advanced accusations of both the Bible's misinterpretation *and* its textual corruption. While the explicit charges of textual corruption were limited, the manner in which these authors used and altered biblical material to fit their apologetic and polemical purposes assumed that it was inconsistent with the original *Injīl* that was supposed to have been revealed to Jesus. Furthermore, their references to only a small number of biblical verses that they considered authentic cannot be extended to infer that they considered the entirety of the Bible to be sound.

Examination of the disputational literature by, ascribed to or describing the disputational encounters (real or imagined) of the Byzantine emperor Leo III (d. 741), Theodore Abū Qurrah (d. after 816) Timothy I (d. 823) Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rāʾiṭah (d. ca. 835), ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī (d. mid-9th cent.), ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (likely d. 9th cent.), and Abraham of Tiberias (d. ca. late-9th cent.) demonstrated that Christians of the eighth and ninth centuries perceived Muslims to be advancing not only accusations of the Bible's misinterpretation, but also its textual corruption. In fact, Christian disputational literature was far more direct than Muslim literature in its appraisal of the situation, and some clarified that it was the revealed text (*tanzīl*) against which Muslims were bringing accusations of corruption. That is not to say that they were uninterested in

refuting charges of misinterpretation; but rather that the charge of textual corruption seemed a much more pressing concern.

Based on the evidence from both Muslim and Christian sources that fall within the so-called "early" period, the categorization of *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* as an early accusation and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* as a later accusation was demonstrated to be based on a false dichotomy. Instead, Muslim polemicists from the early period were shown to have advanced charges of misinterpretation *and* textual corruption. As a result, Muslim polemicists of the eighth and ninth centuries could more correctly be considered to have viewed the Bible through a qur'ānic filter. That is, the Qur'ān served as the arbiter of scriptural accuracy and what should or should not be contained in the Bible. Accusations of the Bible's misinterpretation and textual corruption were used complementarily by Muslim polemicists without any evidence that they self-imposed the restrictions of adhering to either *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* or *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* while excluding the other. Rather, they cited the Bible when it aligned with qur'ānic principles or could be used to support their apologetic purposes, while considering any biblical material contravening qur'ānic principles to have been corrupted. These purported corruptions to the text could then be excised or ignored when unsalvageable or, alternatively, altered to bring them into alignment with the Qur'ān. Thus, the Qur'ān's primacy as the arbiter of scriptural truth became the standard by which Muslims determined the authenticity of Christian scripture. This particular framework for assessing Muslim views on the Bible is, I think, promising. While it may not yield the tidy categories that the previous framework does, it may eventually provide better results because it considers the importance of the Qur'ān as the key by which Muslims evaluated the authenticity of material from the Bible.

360

In the process of answering the question of how Muslims viewed the Bible, this study raised questions that were unable to be answered satisfactorily. This was sometimes due to the limited nature of the evidence and because the necessary attention to offering a satisfactory answer would have required an unnecessary excursion that detracted from answering the primary question that framed the study. Some of these include:

1) What was the source of al-Qāsim's understanding of Christianity? While this study demonstrated extensive similarities between his work and a number of other Christian sources, there was no conclusive evidence that he was citing a specific work.

2) What was the source of al-Qāsim's biblical material? This study presented evidence of the likelihood that he had a translation of the Bible in Arabic, but a more careful and systematic cataloguing of his biblical citations will be necessary before definite conclusions may be drawn regarding his source.

3) Was al-Qāsim an imam during his lifetime? While al-Qāsim's status as an imam is unquestioned in the Zaydī biographical literature, it remains unclear whether the disparity between al-Qāsim's lack of rising up (*khurūj*) against the unjust ruler and the qualifications of an imam were due to later Zaydīs projecting the status of an imam on to him, or from modern scholars projecting later Zaydī ideals about *khurūj* onto early Zaydism.

Other unanswered questions were the result of the self-imposed limitations necessary to focus this study. These include questions raised regarding the understanding of Muslim views on the Bible that fell outside the bounds of this study's focus on disputational literature of the eighth and ninth centuries. There are obviously a number of other genres as well as centuries of scholarship before and after those considered in this study that remain to be examined in attempting to development a more adequate framework for understanding Muslim views on the Bible. Furthermore, it remains to be determined whether the proposed framework of the Qur'ān's primacy is sufficient to transcend boundaries of genre and chronology. But, until further work is done on these fields and

361

epochs separately, the ability to discern larger trends and themes and synthesize them into a comprehensive framework for how Muslims view the Bible will be difficult.

An English translation of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd* remains to be completed. This is a project I have begun, but not finished. While al-Qāsim's treatise may not have been as influential on the wider Muslim or Christian world as other polemical literature of this period, it is an important piece to better understanding the nature of Muslim-Christian relations during the early ninth century and should be made accessible to a wider audience.

In conclusion, this study offered two contributions to the field of historical Muslim-Christian relations, particularly in relation to Muslim views on the Bible. Regarding the first contribution, al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm's (d. 860) *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* was contextualized and examined in detail. In doing so, this study demonstrated that his view on the Bible's authority and authenticity has been mischaracterized. Due to the importance of al-Qāsim's *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā* in scholarship as the example *par excellence* of early Muslim views on the Bible and the position it holds as the earliest extant sustained refutation of Christian doctrine by a Muslim, the conclusions reached about his text had wider ramifications and led to the second contribution of this study. These findings necessitated a re-examination of the dichotomy established between *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* (misinterpretation) and *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* (textual corruption) as it relates to Muslim views on the Bible. The examination of other eighth- and ninth-century Muslim and Christian disputational literature further supported the conclusions this study came to regarding al-Qāsim's text. That is, the evidence demonstrates that Muslims were advancing accusations of the Bible's misinterpretation *and* textual corruption in the

earliest extant disputational literature and thus, the dichotomy prevalent in previous scholarship between early and later Muslim views on the Bible is erroneous.

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Appendix A

CONTENTS OF CODICES CONTAINING AL-QĀSIM'S *AL-RADD ʿALĀ AL-NAṢĀRĀ*

I have provided two tables that contain the same information, presented in two different ways. The first arranges the information based on the codex. The second arranges the information based on the text, using the order of the Berlin codex as a rubric. These tables do not include all codices containing works by al-Qāsim; rather, they include only codices known to contain his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*.

1. Arranged by Codex

	Berlin, Glaser – 101, Ahlwardt – 4876 (1149)	Ambrosiana, Milan – C186 (1253)	Ambrosiana, Milan – D468 (14th cent.) *Damaged*	Ambrosiana, Milan – F61 (1672)	Ambrosiana, Milan – C131 (1681)
1	*al-Dalīl al-kabīr*	*al-Dalīl al-kabīr*	*al-Dalīl al-kabīr*	*al-Dalīl al-kabīr*	*al-Dalīl al-kabīr*
2	*al-Maknūn*	*al-Dalīl al-ṣaghīr*	*al-ʿAdl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-tashbīh*	*al-Maknūn*	*al-Maknūn*
3	***al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā***	*Uṣūl al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-jabr wa-l-tashbīh*	*al-Maknūn*	*Tathbīt al-imāma*	*Tathbīt al-imāma*
4	*al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq al-laʿīn Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*	*al-Radd ʿala al-rawāfiḍ min aṣḥāb al-ghulūw*	*Tathbīt al-imāma*	*al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq (al-laʿīn Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ)*	*Iḥtijāj fī-l-imāma*
5	*Masʾalat al-Ṭabarīyyīn*	*al-Radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍa*	*al-Radd ʿalā al-mulḥid*	***al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā***	*al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq (al-laʿīn Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ)*
6	*K. al-Imāma*	*Tathbīt al-imāma*	*Uṣūl al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-jabr wa-l-tashbīh*	*al-Mustarshid*	*al-ʿAdl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-tashbīh*
7	*al-Radd ʿalā al-mulḥid*	*Iḥtijāj fī-l-imāma*	***al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā***	*al-Radd ʿalā al-mulḥid*	*al-Dalīl al-ṣaghīr*
8	*Uṣūl al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-jabr wa-l-tashbīh*	*Ṣifat al-ʿarsh wa-l-kursī wa-tafsīruhumā*	*al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq al-laʿīn Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*	*Jawāb masʾalat al-Ṭabariyayn*	*Jawāb masʾalat li-rajul min ahl Ṭabaristān*
9	*al-Madīḥ al-kabīr*	*Risāla ilā baʿḍ banī ʿammihi*	*K. al-Hijra*	*al-Radd ʿala al-rawāfiḍ min aṣḥāb al-ghulūw*	*al-Radd ʿalā al-rawāfiḍ*
10	*al-Madīḥ al-ṣaghīr*	*al-Mustarshid*	*Masʾalat al-Ṭabarīyayn*	*al-Radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍa*	*al-Radd ʿala al-rawāfiḍ min aṣḥāb al-ghulūw*

11	al-Mustarshid	al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq al-laʿīn Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ		Ṣifat al-ʿarsh wa-l-kursī	**al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā**
12	Tathbīt al-imāma	**al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā**		al-ʿAdl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-tashbīh	K. al-Hijra li-l-ẓalimīn
13	Siyāsat al-nafs	Masāʾil al-mulḥid wa-l-jawāb ʿalayhā (al-Radd ʿalā al-mulḥid)		al-Radd ʿalā al-mujabbira	al-Radd ʿalā al-mulḥid
14	Ṣifat al-ʿarsh wa-l-kursī wa-tafsīruhumā	al-Qatl wa-l-qitāl		al-Qatl wa-l-qitāl	al-Khamsa al-uṣūl (al-Uṣūl al-khamsa)
15	al-Qatl wa-l-qitāl	al-Hijra		al-Madīḥ al-ṣaghīr)	al-Mustarshid
16	al-Radd ʿala al-rawāfiḍ min aṣḥāb al-ghulūw	Ṣalāt yawm wa-layla		K. al-Imāma	Siyāsat al-nafs
17	al-Radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍah	al-Maknūn		3 Mauʿiẓa	Ṣifat al-ʿarsh wa-l-kursī wa-tafsīruhumā
18	al-Hijra	Siyāsat al-nafs		Risāla ilā baʿḍ banī ʿammihi	al-Qatl wa-l-qitāl
19	al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh	al-Uṣūl al-khamsa (al-Khamsa al-uṣūl)		No Title	Madīḥ al-Qurʾān al-kabīr
20	K. al-Dalīl al-ṣaghīr	Faṣl akhar min kalāmihi		Uṣūl al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-jabr wa-l-tashbīh	Min kalāmihi ʿalayhi al-salām bismi llāh al-ḥamd lillāh alladhī jaʿala al-hudā fīnā (i.e., al-Madīḥ al-ṣaghīr)
21	K. al-ʿAdl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-tashbīh	Works by other authors		Saʾaltum yā waladī	al-Radd ʿalā al-mujabbira
22				Excerpts min kalāmihi	Risāla ilā baʿḍ banī ʿammihi
23				Siyāsat al-nafs	Uṣūl al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-jabr wa-l-tashbīh
24				K. al-Hijra li-l-ẓalimīn	Mauʿiẓa
25				Excerpts min kalāmihi	K. al-Imāma
26				Waṣiya to his sons	Fragments
27				Sayings attributed to ʿAlī	

2. Arranged by text. Numbers represent the order in the codex.

Text	Berlin	C186	D468	F61	C131
al-Dalīl al-kabīr	1	1	1	1	1
al-Maknūn	2	17	3	2	2
al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā	3	12	7	5	11
al-Radd ʿalā al-zindīq (al-laʿīn Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ)	4	11	8	4	5
Masʾalat al-Ṭabarīyyīn	5		10	8	8
al-Imāma	6			16	25
al-Radd ʿalā al-mulḥid	7	13	5	7	
Uṣūl al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-jabr wa-l-tashbīh	8	3	6	20	23
al-Madīḥ al-kabīr	9				18
al-Madīḥ al-ṣaghīr	10			15	19
al-Mustarshid	11	10		6	14
Tathbīt al-imāma	12	6	4	3	3
Siyāsat al-nafs	13	18		23	15
Ṣifat al-ʿarsh wa-l-kursī wa-tafsīruhumā	14	8		11	16
al-Qatl wa-l-qitāl	15	14		14	17
al-Radd ʿala al-rawāfiḍ min aṣḥāb al-ghulūw	16	4		9	10
al-Radd ʿalā al-rāfiḍah (rawāfiḍ)	17	5		10	9
al-Hijra (li-l-ẓalimīn)	18	15	9	24	12
al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh	19				
al-Dalīl al-ṣaghīr	20	2			7
al-ʿAdl wa-l-tawḥīd wa-nafy al-tashbīh	21		2	12	6
Iḥtijāj fī-l-imāma		7			4
al-Uṣūl al-khamsa (al-Khamsa al-uṣūl)		19			13
al-Radd ʿalā al-mujabbira				13	21
Risāla ilā baʿḍ banī ʿammihi		9		18	22
Mauʿiẓa				17	24
Fragments				19	26
Saʾaltum yā waladī				21	
Excerpts min kalāmihi				22	
Excerpts min kalāmihi				25	
Waṣiya to his sons				26	
Sayings Attributed to ʿAlī				27	
Ṣalāt yawm wa-layla		16			
Faṣl akhar min kalāmihi		20			
Works by other authors		21			

390

Appendix B
QURʾĀN REFERENCES IN AL-QĀSIM'S *AL-RADD ʿALĀ AL-NAṢĀRĀ*

Q. Ref.	Text (Droge's translation)	Loc. in Di Matteo's ed.
5:116	(Remember) when God said, 'Jesus son of Mary! Did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as two gods, instead of God (alone)"?' He said, 'Glory to You! It is not for me to say what I have no right (to say). If I had said it, you would have known it. You know what is within me, but I do not know what is within You. Surely You – You are the Knower of the unseen.	306.8-11
5:117	I only said to them what You commanded me: "Serve God, my Lord and your Lord!" And I was a witness over them as long as I was among them. But when you took me, You became the Watcher over them. You are a Witness over everything.	306.13-15
43:81	Say: 'If the Merciful had a son, I (would be) the first of the ones who served (him).'	306.23-24
5:75	The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a Messenger. Messengers have passed away before him. His mother was a truthful woman. They both ate food. See how We make clear the signs to them; then see how deluded they are.	308.4-5
23:33b-34	'This is nothing but a human being like you. He eats from what you eat from and drinks from what you drink. If indeed you obey a human being like you, surely then you will be the losers indeed.	308.7-9
112:1-2	Say: 'He is God. One! God the Eternal!	310.1-2
19:65	Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them. So serve Him and be patient in His service! Do you know (another) name for Him?	310.5-6
42:11b	There is nothing like Him. He is the Hearing, the Seeing.	310.7-8
6:103	Sight does not reach Him, but He reaches sight. He is the Gentle, the Aware.	310.8

112:3-4	'He has not begotten and was not begotten,' and He has no equal. None!'	310.9-10
2:116-17	They say, 'God has taken a son.' Glory to Him! No! Whatever is in the heavens and the earth (belongs) to Him. All are obedient before Him – Originator of the heavens and the earth. When he decrees something, He simply says to it, 'Be!' and it is.	310.18-21
6:100-103	They make the jinn associates with God, when he created them, and they assign to Him sons and daughters without any knowledge. Glory to Him! He is exalted above what they allege. Originator of the heavens and the earth, how can He have a son when He has no consort, (and) when He created everything and has knowledge of everything? That is God, your Lord. (There is no God but Him, Creator of everything. So serve Him! He is guardian over everything. Sight does not reach Him, but He reaches sight. He is the Gentle, the Aware.	310.22- 311.1
30:26	To Him (belongs) whoever is in the heavens and the earth: all are obedient before Him.	311.18
43:82-83	Glory to the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Lord of the throne, above what they allege!' So leave them! Let them banter and jest, until they meet their Day which they are promised.	312.14-15
34:40-41	On the day when He gathers them all together, He will say to the angels, '(Was it) you these were serving?' And they will say, 'Glory to You! You are our ally, not they. No! They used to serve the jinn – most of them believed in them.'	312.15-16
19:89-95	Certainly you have put forth something abhorrent! The heavens are nearly torn apart because of it, and the earth split open, and the mountains collapse in pieces – that they should attribute to the Merciful a son, when it is not fitting for the Merciful to take a son. (There is) no one in the heavens and the earth who comes to the Merciful except as a servant. Certainly He has counted them and numbered them exactly. Each one of them will come to Him on the Day or Resurrection alone.	312.19-22
18:4-6	And to warn those who have said, 'God has taken a son'; they have no knowledge about it, nor did their fathers. Monstrous is the word (that) comes out of their mouths! They say nothing but a lie. Perhaps you are going to destroy yourself by following after them, if they do not believe in this proclamation.	313.14-16
42:11b	There is nothing like Him. He is the Hearing, the Seeing.	314:5-6

42:16a	Those who (still) argue about God	314.12
22:19	These two disputants dispute about their Lord.	314.13
16:125	Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute with them by means of what is better. Surely your Lord – He knows who goes astray from His way, and He knows the ones who are (rightly) guided.	314.19-21
51:8-11	Surely you differ indeed in what you say! Whoever is deluded about it is (really) deluded. May the guessers perish, those who are in a flood (of confusion), heedless.	319.18-19
5:65	Had the People of the Book believes and guarded (themselves), We would indeed have absolved them of their evil deeds, and caused them to enter Gardens of Bliss.	320.12-14
9:34	You who believe! Surely many of the teachers and the monks consume the wealth of the people by means of falsehood, and keep (people) from the way of God. Those who hoard the gold and the silver and do not spend it in the way of God – give them news of a painful punishment.	320.21-23
2:143b	Surely God is indeed kind (and) compassionate with the people.	323.18-19

Appendix C
BIBLICAL REFERENCES IN AL-QĀSIM'S *AL-RADD ʿALĀ AL-NAṢĀRĀ*

Bible Ref.	Al-Qāsim's Version (My translation)	Loc. in Di Matteo's ed.
Mt. 1:1	This is the birth of Jesus (Yasuᶜ) Christ, son of David.	321.17-18
Jn. 1:45	He is the one whom Moses mentioned in the Torah, […], Yasūʿ son of Joseph.	322.2
Jn. 1:12-13, 16	Truly, these are those who received his words and submitted to him in regard to what they heard of him. They were not born from flesh and blood, nor from the mixture of bile and phlegm, but they claim to have been born from God, and to have been given, from the generosity of God, things which they approved and praised.	322.5-7
Lk. 1:31a	You will give birth to a son.	322.12
Lk. 1:31b-32	He will be called Yasūʿ, and he will be greatly exalted by God, and He will inherit the throne of his father David.	322.13
Mt. 1:19-21	Likewise, the Angel said to Joseph, [who] you claim was her husband, when he wanted to repudiate her and to let her go her way when it was apparent about her pregnancy, 'Oh Joseph, son of David, do not let free from the way of your wife [do not let her go]. Truly, he who is in her is from the Spirit of God, and he will be called Jesus, and by him God will revive his people from their sins, with the permission of God.'	322.16-18
Mt. 3:17	This is my beloved and pure son.	322.20
Mt. 16:16	You are truly the Son of God.	322.21
Mt. 6:11	They said, 'Our Father, make food descend from your heavens for us.'	323.10-11
Mt. 6:9-10	Our Father let your name be glorified. May your kingdom and your justice [reign] descend on the earth.	323.11-12

Jn. 8:37-44 (paraphrased and reordered)	I came to you from [being] with my father and that which I heard from him, it is what I say to you. You, if you were from him, than you would receive what I have come with to you, concerning his command. But you are from Satan and you are his sons and for that reason you receive his words, you do not oppose him. You are only sons of sin and Satan is its [sins'] father. You are subject to your obedience to him [Satan], as are its [sins'] sons. They said, 'We are the sons of Ibrāhīm' and they hurled at him a great accusation. He said, 'You are not the offspring of Ibrāhīm, nor are you his sons. If you were his offspring, then you would act in accordance with what he approves. But, you are the sons of Satan and sin. Inform me, is there one among you who can remain silent [before] God on account of his disobedience? I know full well that you desire my killing. Why do you not receive my words? If you acted in obedience to God, then you would be sons of God.'	323.23-324.7
Mt. 4:1-3a		324.13-15
Mt. 4:8-10		324.15-18
Mt. 4:3-4	**See Appendix D**	324.19-22
Mt. 2:13-15a		324.23-25
Mt. 2:15b		325.2-3
Mt. 2:19-21		325.3-5
Mt. 2:22-23		325.6-10
Mt. 3:11-12		325.13-17
Mt. 3:13-15		325.18-23
Mt. 4:12-14		325.23-326.1
Mt. 4:23-25		326.2-7
Mt. 5:1-12		326.7-21
Mt. 5:13-16		326.21-327.1
Mt. 5:17-20		327.1-10
Mt. 5:21-24		327.10-15
Mt. 5:33-37		327.15-20
Mt. 5:42		327.20-21
Mt. 5:43-46		327.21-328.3
Mt. 6:1-8		328.3-10
Mt. 6:9-15		328.11-16
Mt. 6:16-18		328.16-18
Mt. 6:19-21		328.18-23
Mt. 6:22-23		328.23-26
Mt. 6:24		328.26-329.2
Mt. 6:25-26		329.3-329.8

Mt. 6:28-34		329.8-21
Mt. 7:1-6		329.21-330.4
Mt. 7:7-11		330.4-10
Mt. 7:12-14		330.10-17
Mt. 7:15-20		330.17-23
Mt. 7:21-23		330.24-331.2
Mt. 7:24-29		331.3-11
Mt. 8:11-12		331.11-15
Mt. 8:19-20		331.15-18
Mt. 8:21-22		331.18-20

Appendix D
Q-Matthew

I have included here my translation of al-Qāsim's extended, reworked version of Matthew from the end of his *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā*. Apart from a section from Matthew ch. 4 which he placed first, and portions excluded for reasons mentioned in the body of this study, the entirety of Matthew chs. 2-8 is included in the same sequential order as the canonical text. I have not removed or re-ordered anything in the translation below, although I have divided it into paragraphs and added corresponding chapter and verses in bold at the beginning of each paragraph. The page and line number where it can be found in Di Matteo's edition of al-Qāsim's treatise is noted in the right margin.

4:1-4, 8-10 – Christ went forth from the villages and he withdrew into the 324.13 desert forty days, fasting. He did not eat any food in them and he did not drink anything in them. Then Iblīs came to him during his fasting and his retreat, and he laid before him all the splendors of the world and showed them to him. When Christ saw all of that, Iblīs asked him to prostrate before him one prostration, on account of which he would give him all that he saw. Christ cursed him and dishonored him, saying: 'Prostration to anyone other than God is not permissible. Far be it from you, O enemy of God!' They claim Iblīs said to him, among the words that passed between them: "Today is day forty for you. You have not drunk a drink and you have not eaten any food. Call to God, if you are beloved to him, and ask him to make these stones as silver and gold for you." He said to him: "Do you not know, O Accursed One, that the words of God are sufficient as a

397

replacement for all food and drink for those who love God?" Among the words of God which he mentioned (Blessings of God be upon him), there are things of which there is no equal in any book.

2:13-15 – They claim in their Gospels that God revealed to Joseph, the 324.23 husband of Mary, after she gave birth to Christ, something that God made known: "Leave with the boy and his mother to Egypt and remain in it, you and Mary and her son (*ibn*), until I make the death of Herod evident to you. He was a king of *al-Rūm,* a ruler over the sons of Israel. He wanted the death and destruction of ʿĪsā, so Joseph left with Mary and her son (*ibn*) at night. They claim God completed with all of that, some of what he revealed to him in some of the books of his messengers, when he said (Praise be to him), 'From Egypt I called my pure one'."

2:19-23 – They said in their Gospel: "When Herod died, God revealed to 325.3 Joseph that he had died, so he departed with ʿĪsā and his mother to the land of Israel.*"* They claim that all of this could be found with them in what was in their hands, that is, the Gospel, that, "When Joseph arrived with both of them, he heard that Claudius became king of the Jews after his father, as his father had ruled. So he was afraid for ʿĪsā and worried about him. God, the blessed and exalted, revealed to him to go to the mountain of Galilee and stay there. He departed until he descended from it to a city called *Nāṣira*, confirming what God revealed previously in one of his books, and concerning what he mentioned in regard to ʿĪsā and the matter, in that he would be and be called a *Nāṣirī.* For that reason, it is related that everyone who becomes a Christian is called *Naṣrānī.*

3:11-12 – When ʿĪsā grew, he appeared in the days of Yaḥyā, and Yaḥyā 325.10 (Blessings of God be upon both of them) was among those who responded positively to

398

him. He came to him and ordered him to purify him and wash him in the Jordan River. That was a cleansing from sin for those who repent and believe. According to what they claim in their Gospel, he said, "I cleanse you all, just as you see, in the water, and the one who is coming to you after me; he is more honorable to God than I. He is the one in whose hand God put the winnowing fork. He does not put anything in his treasure store except the good and pure grain, and that which remained after that was sifted and chaff. That which did not possess value and is not precious is burned in the fire which does not cease, where the burning remains and lasts forever."

3:13-15 – When ʿĪsā heard the reports about Yaḥyā {Blessings of God be 325.17 upon both of them and all the prophets) and what he was doing – his cleansing of the believers – he came to Yaḥyā from the mountains of Galilee in order that he would baptize him in the water and purify him. Yaḥyā (Peace be upon him) disliked his arrival and his command to do that and Yaḥyā (Peace be upon him) said: ʿI am in need of you, yet you are coming to me seeking cleansing?' ʿĪsā (Blessings of God be upon him and his brother Yaḥyā) said: ʿLeave this aside for now. Is it is necessary for us that we achieve all of the qualities of the pious, or all that which we are able to from them.' So Yaḥyā let him do it at that time. He washed and accomplished from that what he intended to accomplish.

4:12-13 – When he heard that the Jews had killed Yaḥyā, he fled to the land 325.23 of Galilee. He dwelt in Kafranāḥūm Yatfīyyā [Napthali] near the border of Zabūlūn. They claim God revealed to Shuʿayb the prophet (Blessings of God be upon him) the place to which ʿĪsā would go, which is Zabūlūn.

399

4:23-25 – As he went and resided there, he was frequently roaming around,

traveling about in the tribe, healing every sickness and pain among the *Banū Isrāʾīl,*

until his deeds, his preaching and his teaching were heard in every area and region. All

those who had pain or sickness from among the lepers, the demon-possessed, the blind,

and the crippled came. He healed them, if God willed, from their various horrible

sicknesses. A great many from every tribe of the land of Galilee and from the ten cities

and the people of *Bait al-Maqdis* and from across the Jordan were set free by his touch.

5:1-12 –When ʿĪsā {Blessings of God be upon him} saw those crowds, and

those that had gathered to him, he climbed a high mountain. He ascended it in order

that his words would be heard by all of those who had gathered. When he had ascended,

he sat down. Then he drew his disciples near to him and, he said: Blessed in the spirit by

God on a future day are the poor who possess piety. How much more will their reward be

in the kingdom of God, and the place of rest and dwelling! Blessed are those who are

contrite over their sin in this world. How much more will God forgive their sin on a

future day! Blessed are the humble before God, how much more will they inherit the

earth from God! Blessed are the hungry and thirsty for God with reverence. How much

more will they be satisfied with food and their thirst quenched on the Day of Resurrection

and Assembly! Blessed are the merciful in God. How much more will they attain mercy

of God! Blessed are those who are pure in their hearts when they see their Lord. How

much more profitable will he make their future and benefit them! Blessed are those who

work for the peace of God. Surely they will be called the sincere friends of God! Blessed

are those who are rejected for deeds of piety. How much more will they rule in the

kingdom of heaven till the end of the age! Then he said (Blessings of God be upon him)

to those who responded positively to him and to his disciples: "Blessed are you when you are abused and rejected concerning me and on account of me, when words of evil and lies are said to you on account of me from them. May your joy be great, because God will make your light great in heaven and preserve your rewards in the hereafter. Truly you will be ill-treated, just as the messengers and prophets before you were ill-treated. Or lies will be told about you, just as lies and forgeries were said about God before you."

5:13-16 – "You are the salt of the earth. When the salt becomes putrid, with 326.21 what will you season with salt? At that time it is not good except to be thrown out and discarded. It is something to be trampled underfoot as dust in the intersections of the roads. You are the light of the world, which should not be hidden to those who look and see. Are you able to hide or conceal a city, visible on a hill? Is a lamp lit, then carried under covers? No. Rather, it is carried on a high lamp stand in order to shed light and it illuminates and makes visible–it is not hidden. Likewise, you are lights to men with your light shining in order that they may see, looking to your good work, that they praise God, your Lord, who purified you and bestowed blessings upon you, which he gave."

5:17-20 – No one should believe that I came in order to refute the Torah and 327.1 the Gospel [*al-Injīl*] and the Prophets, nor to destroy anything of all the things that came from God. Rather, I came to complete all of those things, and for the confirmation of all the matters of God concerning him and his messengers. Even more, I tell you a true saying, and announce news to you, so understand it as true, that not one of the verses of God will undergo alteration or change, until the heavens and earth are changed and pass away. One who destroys one of the verses of God, or alters the most minor of his commandments, having taught these alterations and deviations to one of the people,

whether the verse was little or big, will be considered vile and deficient in the kingdom of God. But the one who teaches them just as they were sent down, will be complete and pure in the end. In truth I say to you, if you were not among the pious, and your piety greater than the piety of the scribes and religious authorities, you will not enter on a future day into the kingdom of God, the Much-Forgiving."

5:21-24 – "Indeed, you have heard that it was said in the Torah not to kill the forbidden soul and the one who killed them deserved painful punishment in this world. Truly I say to you, that the one who said to his brother a vile word, wronging him, deserves punishment unless God brings forth repentance from them. One who said to his brother, in order to insult him, 'you uncircumcised fool', he deserves the fires of Jahannam in the last day. Rather, the one among you who presents his sacrifice on the altar, approaching it in order to offer it up, then remembers that his brother was upset with him–let him cast away his sacrifice and go to his brother in order to make peace with him." 327.10

5:33-37 – "Indeed it was said in the Torah, 'Do not lie when you make oaths, but speak the truth when you swear by God and take an oath.' Truly I say to you, do not swear by anything. Do not swear obedience with an oath, nor put to the test, nor make oaths by heaven, which is the place of the throne of God and in it are the angels of God, nor by the earth, which is the dwelling of the mercy of God and his signs, nor by any living thing, nor by the head of a human. On the contrary, let it be that your words are 'yes' and 'no' and 'certainly not' in regard to what you say. Indeed, that which is other than that is from evil and scorn." 327.15

402

5:42-47 – "One who asked anything of one of you, let him present it, even if $\qquad$ 327.20

it was expensive and costly. Truly you have heard that it was said: 'Love your

friends and hate those people who are your enemies.' I say to you, love in God your

enemies and invoke a blessing on those who curse you and harm you. Do good to those

who hate you. Pray for those who cause pain to you in order that you will be among the

good friends of God, and in order that you will win the mark of honor and approval from

God who makes his sun come up on the godly and the impudent and sends down his rain

on the unjust and the pious. If you only love those who love you, what kind of reward

will there be at that time for you? Or, is that not the custom and ten-fold like that

concerning what they are doing between them?"

6:1-4 – "Do not let people perceive charity and alms (*zakāt*), nor your prayers $\qquad$ 328.3

to God. Your works done in hypocrisy will be of no avail to God, and you will

receive the reward of them in full in this world. But let your charity to God, concerning

what is between you and between God be hidden and in secret. Truly God your Lord,

who sees your secrets will attribute them to you openly and publicly."

6:5-8 – "When you are in prayer or submission to God, do not stand in that $\qquad$ 328.6

way in the roads and assemblies like the hypocrites, which they do on account of

their status. In truth I say to you, they have taken their reward for their deeds. When you

pray, do not raise your voice and your supplication out of hypocrisy. Truly God knows

before you ask him what things you are in need of from him. But if you pray, pray to God

alone, and when you judge on his earth, judge with justice."

6:9-15 – "And say: 'Our Lord who is in heaven, may your name and your $\qquad$ 328.10

403

wisdom be sanctified, and your kingdom and your power be made great. Reveal your judgment on your earth, just as it proclaims you in your heaven. Provide us food in our days of poverty and forgive us our previous crimes, just as we forgive those who wrong us. Forgive us by your mercy even if we have committed a crime, do not submit us, our Lord, to temptation. Save us from the Evil One's cunning. Truly, to you is the kingdom and the power and from you is judgment and forgiveness, for all eternity and unto the ages of ages. Know that you, if you forgive people what is between them and you, surely God (May He be praised) will forgive you."

6:16-18 – "When you fast, do not alter your faces. Wash your faces and anoint your heads so that people do not learn of your fasting. Truly God, for whom you are fasting in secret, will repay you for your fasting in public openly." ^{328.16}

6:19-21 – "Do not store up your treasures nor put your treasures on the earth. Truly the moth will destroy what is on the earth and the termites will eat it. It will be subject to pests and the thief will take it. But store up your treasures and put your savings in the high heavens, where nothing is corrupted, nor vanishes by theft, nor is there a pest. It is not given as food for a worm nor a termite. In truth I say to you that where your treasure and your savings are, there are your hearts and minds." ^{328.18}

6:22-23 – "Know that the lamp of the body is the eye. If the eye is filled with bright light, then the body is filled with bright light. But if the eye is blind and dark, the body is in blind darkness. If the light which is in you is in darkness, then it does not see and does not perceive. With you, you, your senses see darkness and how much more are your hearts blinder and darker?" ^{328.23}

wisdom be sanctified, and your kingdom and your power be made great. Reveal your judgment on your earth, just as it proclaims you in your heaven. Provide us food in our days of poverty and forgive us our previous crimes, just as we forgive those who wrong us. Forgive us by your mercy even if we have committed a crime, do not submit us, our Lord, to temptation. Save us from the Evil One's cunning. Truly, to you is the kingdom and the power and from you is judgment and forgiveness, for all eternity and unto the ages of ages. Know that you, if you forgive people what is between them and you, surely God (May He be praised) will forgive you."

6:16-18 – "When you fast, do not alter your faces. Wash your faces and anoint your heads so that people do not learn of your fasting. Truly God, for whom you are fasting in secret, will repay you for your fasting in public openly." [328.16]

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6:24 – "Know that God did not put two hearts inside of anyone and that one of you is not able to serve two lords. It is inevitable for him that if he exalts one of them and honors him, he will neglect the other from favor and ignore him. Or, he will despise one of them and honor the other and exalt him. Likewise, you are not able to serve God and exalt him when you strive for wealth, joining it together and multiplying it."

6:28-34 – "For the sake of that, truly I say to you, do not be concerned with what you will eat or with what you will drink, or with what you will wear. Are not the limbs of the body and bodies which God created for you nobler, greater, and bigger than food and drink? Or, are not the souls which God created for you more preferred by God than clothing and dress? Look to the birds of the earth and heavens, and the animals of the water that God created, which do not plant a seed, or harvest it, or store it on a whim, or pile it up. God your Lord, who is in heaven, provides subsistence for them every day what is suitable for them in regard to nourishment. Look to the plant of the field which does not weave and does not spin, and is not concerned with anything, and did not work and how God, in his time, clothes every species, beautifying its adornments or in loveliness or in blossoms. Truly I say to you that Solomon son of David, in all his sovereignty and power, was not equal to the adornment in clothing of a single plant of its kind that God clothed. The grass possesses adornment and blossoms at the time of its flowering, then after a little while and after some time, it will be made into fuel for the fire, still God (His name is Sublime and Exalted) clothes it with splendor and blossoms, as he has not clothed you. You, it is necessary for you, O people of little faith, not to be anxious, occupying yourself. Do not increase the sayings to yourselves, or to others,

saying: 'What will we eat?' and 'What will we drink?' and 'What will we wear?' and 'Where will we go?,' as if you would not believe in what I have said. All of these people, whom you see, strive for these things. Do not strive for what they strive. Truly, your Lord who is in heaven knows what is necessary for you before you ask it of him. But seek obedience to God and his consent for what you mentioned of all those things, and he will give it to you. He gives it to those who are not concerned with it. Do not be occupied with tomorrow and what is after it and its affairs. Let tomorrow rest with the worries it possesses. Your day is sufficient in regard to the number of its troubles without that which is in tomorrow."

7:1-6 – "Do not treat anyone unjustly with inequity, for surely just as you judged, you will be judged, and the measure by which you measure, you will be measured. Why is that one of you sees the speck in the eye of his brother, and does not see the tall column in his eye? Or how does he say to his brother, 'Let me extract the speck from your eye,' while the tall column which is in his eye he does not see? O sycophant, cheat, and deceiver of others in secret, remove the tall column from your eye first, then only afterward extract it from eye of someone other than you. Hear me, and understand what I say, do not cast the holy true things before the bark of the dogs. Do not throw your brilliant pearls among the pubic hair of the pigs. They would exceed in desecrating it and putrefy what you threw among them."

329.21

7:7-11 – "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. Every petition will be given and aspiration granted what is necessary, and each one who seeks assistance, it will be opened to him. Which man among you, when his beloved or his son (*ibn*) asks him for wheat of bread gives him a

330.4

406

stone in place of what he asked for? Or, when he asks him for a fish, gives him a deadly viper? If you–and you yourselves are deficient and inferior, and among all of you is injustice and wickedness– give your sons proper gifts, and grant gifts when asked for and requested, how will you see it when it comes to God? If the matter is like that in regard to the increase among you concerning it, then [so too will be] that which you asked of him and desired from him.

7:12-14 – Observe, just as you would like people to do to you, do it to them. 330.10 Just as you want justice from people toward you, likewise be just toward them. Truly these are the *sunnah* of the Messengers and the Prophets, and a just balance of God." "Enter on account of God and in God is the narrow and dangerous door. Truly, the safe and wide door is for the disobeyers of God, and leads to destruction and damages. Many are those who enter it and choose it. Some see that, and others do not see it. How narrow is the entrance and the door; the path and causes which are necessary for worshippers to reach life and bring salvation to people are obliterated! Few are those who find it and to whom it is easy to enter."

7:15-20 – "Guard against the lies of these satans [*shayāṭīn*] who the people 330.17 see in the disguise of lambs. They are, nevertheless, violent wolves. Their hearts are arrogant and disobedient. Do not be deluded by the appearance of their state. But be aware of them on account of their actions. Does a grape issue from a thorn, or a date from a colocynth? No, that is never the case. It never exists like that. But, good fruit issues from every good tree, and bad fruit issues from every bad tree. You only know the bad tree on account of the badness of its fruit, and when it is bad like that, the fire is kindled with it and likewise are the deeds, when they are something erroneous. The owner of it is

nothing but a sinner in error.

7:21-23 – Not all of those who say, 'My Lord, my Lord, O my Resting Place,' 330.24
and supplicate, will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven on the Day or Resurrection,
unless he is among those who practiced what God commanded in regard to piety. There
will be many in that Day who will say, 'Our Lord, in your name we healed and we
worked, and in your name we exorcised satans. In your name we did many wondrous
matters.' Then God will say to them in that Day, 'Get away from me with your deceitful
actions.'

7:24-27 – He (Blessings of God be upon him) said: 'Know that one who 331.2
heard my words and then acts in accordance with what he heard and accepts it from
me, his likeness is similar to the likeness of a man who possessed understanding and
wisdom. He built his house on a firmly fixed stone foundation. When the rains came and
poured down, and the rivers became great, and the great winds became violent, and began
hitting every wall, his house did not fall down or collapse. Instead, those who hear my
words without submitting or accepting them is like a man who possessed foolishness and
ignorance. He is misled; he built his house on a collapsing edge or on much shifting sand.
When the rains came and the rivers swelled and were agitated, pouring forth, and the
winds blew violently, his house came down on its foundation. It fell down with a terrible
and frightening crash.'

7:28-29 – They said: 'When he had finished all of these words, there was 331.9
astonishment among those in his presence on account of his wisdom in regard to it
and his sayings. In particular, the scribes and religious leaders were amazed by him.'

8:11-12 – In their Gospels, he (Peace be upon him) said: 'Truly I say to you,
O people and scribes and religious leaders, that many from the East and the West
will come in the Day of the Resurrection and Recompense, to recline with Ibrāhīm and
Isḥāq and Yaʿqūb in the Kingdom of Heaven. Many from among those who claim to be a
son to them will be separated from them with darkness in the fire. Then they will abide
forever, with crying and gnashing of the teeth.'

8:19-20 – In their Gospels: 'A man from the scribes came to him. He said,
'Truly, I desire to follow you and be with you where you are.' He (Peace be upon
him) said: 'The foxes of the desolate places have a cave, and the birds of the heavens
have nests, but I do not have a home, or a place to dwell when these two dwell. Every has
a home, but I do not have a home to dwell in.'

8:21-22 – In their Gospels: 'A man from his disciples said to him: 'O, my
teacher, permit me to go so I can bury my father.' So he said to him: 'Come, follow
me. Be with me and in my footsteps. Leave the dead to bury their dead. There are enough
of them for their burial.''

It is completed. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, and the blessings of
God be upon Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets, and upon his excellent family, –
and peace be upon them all.