Oxford Handbooks Online

Origins of Kalām

Alexander Treiger

Online Publication Date: Apr 2014
Subject: Religion, Islam, Theology and Philosophy of Religion
DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696703.013.001

Abstract and Keywords

This article investigates the origins of *Kalām* in the debate culture of Late Antiquity. Following Michael Cook and Jack Tannous, it argues that *Kalām*-style argumentation has its origin in Christological debates and was then absorbed into Muslim practice through the mediation of the Arab Christian milieu in Syria and Iraq. The second part of the article considers the origins of the *Qadar* debate (human free will versus divine predestination). Finally, the third part discusses three Muslim texts on *Qadar*, falsely attributed to Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. It offers a critical appraisal of Josef van Ess's reconstruction of the 'beginnings' of *Kalām*.

Keywords: Origins of Kalām, Christological debates, Arab Christians, qadar, free will, predestination

Islamic theology emerged in a multi-religious environment in which a Muslim ruling minority was struggling to assert itself, politically as well as religiously, amidst the indigenous populations of the Middle East. These populations spoke a variety of languages—Aramaic/Syriac, Greek, Middle Persian, Coptic, Armenian, and Arabic, among others—and followed a variety of religions.[1] Christians formed the majority or a significant minority in Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and North Africa, Zoroastrians were prominent in Iraq and Iran, Mandeans were well represented in Iraq, Buddhists were influential in Afghanistan and Central Asia, and Jewish, Manichean, and Pagan communities maintained a significant presence throughout the Middle East (for Iraq see Morony 1984). All these communities had, to varying extents, assimilated and carried forth the Hellenic philosophical and scientific legacy and were engaged in centuries-long inter-religious and intra-religious debates (Lim 1995; Walker 2006: 164–205).[2] It was only natural that Muslim settlers came in close contact with these populations and that their nascent religious beliefs were being articulated and took shape in an atmosphere of debate and polemic with them.

Unravelling the sources of Islamic theology has proved to be an intricate task, complicated by the fact that we have diverse, yet far from complete information on the indigenous populations' religious beliefs and social life, imperfect understanding of the interactions between non-Muslims and Muslims in the early Islamic period, no established history of conversions to Islam, and fairly sketchy information, often of questionable reliability, on the earliest (first/seventh-century) development of Islamic theology itself. Disciplinary divisions within the modern academia between Islamicists in the strict sense on the one hand and scholars of Late Antiquity, Hellenic philosophy, Greek, Syriac, and Arab Christianity, Sasanian Iran, Rabbinic Judaism, and Manichaeism (with their differing linguistic expertise) on the other have exacerbated the problem, making it difficult to arrive at a holistic account of the early development of Muslim doctrine.

The present account of the origins of Islamic theology must begin with its foremost researcher Josef van Ess, who stated his view, back in the 1970s, succinctly as follows:

> Theology in Islam did not start as polemics against unbelievers. Even the *kalām* style was not developed or taken over in order to refute non-Muslims, especially the Manicheans, as one tended to believe when one saw the origin of *kalām* in the missionary activities of the Muʿtazila. Theology started as an inner-Islamic discussion when, mainly through political development, the self-confident naïvité of the early days was gradually eroded.
>
> (van Ess 1975a: 101)

Especially in his early publications, van Ess's view can thus be characterized as 'internalist' (but see van Ess 1970: 24). While certainly conscious of the non-Muslim context and referencing it when appropriate, van Ess's treatment of it nevertheless remains minimal: Islamic theology is presented as having developed more or less independently of foreign influences and as addressing concerns internal to the early Muslim community itself. In a series of publications from the 1970s and 1980s, van Ess embarked on a quest for the 'beginnings' ('Anfänge') of Islamic theology, i.e. the earliest theological documents from the first Islamic century. As part of his search, he unravelled and published two anti-Qadarite texts (directed against the doctrine of *qadar*, human free will) that he considered to be documents of pre-Muʿtazilite *Kalām* (van Ess 1977). These texts are attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's grandson Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya (d. between 99/718 and 101/720) and the Umayyad caliph ʿUmar II b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 99/717–101/720). In addition, van Ess drew on another supposedly very early source, the *Qadarite Epistle to Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān* attributed to the famous early Muslim traditionist al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and written *in support of* human free will. If these texts are authentic and were indeed written in the first Islamic century, as van Ess initially argued, this would make them the earliest Muslim theological texts extant; however, his argumentation was subsequently subjected to harsh criticism (Cook 1981: 107–58; Zimmermann 1984), causing van Ess to modify his original position and admit that these texts are possibly inauthentic or at least that their authenticity cannot be proved (van Ess 1991–7: i. 47, 134–5; ii. 47). As will be discussed herein, these three texts are now generally considered to be pseudepigrapha, compiled later than their claimed date.

The term *kalām* (literally, 'speech'), mentioned several times above, has two distinct meanings which ought to be clearly differentiated. First, it is a particular style of theological argumentation which, to quote van Ess once again, 'talks (*kallama*) with the opponent by asking questions and reducing his position to meaningless alternatives' (van Ess 1975a: 89; cf. van Ess 1976; van Ess 1982: 109; Frank 1992). Second (capitalized as '*Kalām*' in what follows), it is the kind of Islamic theology—in Arabic: *ʿilm al-Kalām*—that habitually employs this style of argumentation, or at least is within the tradition that does so. (It is a major task of the present volume to trace the historical development of this tradition.) Though the term is often used generically for 'Islamic theology' *tout court*, this usage might be misleading, because there are Islamic theologies (discourses about the divine) distinct from, and in some cases critical of, *Kalām* (e.g. Ḥanbalite theology, Ismāʿīlī theology, Ṣūfī theology, Philosophical theology—i.e. the theological part of metaphysics, often called 'the divine science', *al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*—and so on) and, moreover, because *Kalām* covers both theological and non-theological areas of inquiry (e.g. epistemology and physics).

The question of 'origins', discussed in this chapter, is, therefore, to a large extent the question of the provenance of this particular type of argumentation, its extra-Islamic models (if any), and its emergence and early use in an Islamic context. Secondly, it is also the question of the origins of *ʿilm al-Kalām*, i.e. the particular type of Islamic theology that habitually employs *kalām* in the first sense, and of its most prominent themes (e.g. human free will, *qadar*, vs. divine determinism, *jabr*).

The present chapter will accordingly contain three sections. The first section will discuss the origins of *kalām*-style argumentation and of the term *kalām*. The second will touch on the vexed question of the possible origins of *Kalām* theology (this time from the point of view of its *content*, rather than argumentative technique), focusing on the origins of the *qadar* debate (on which see also the next chapter). Finally, the third section will briefly review the three texts, attributed to first/seventh and early eighth-century authorities and used, as mentioned above, in van Ess's reconstruction of the beginnings of *Kalām* in the 1970s and 1980s, yet now generally believed to be later fabrications.

I. The Origins of *kalām*-Style Argumentation and of the Term *kalām*

It is undeniable that *kalām*-style argumentation has its deep roots in the religious debate culture of the Middle East in the period prior to and shortly after the Muslim conquests. The Middle East's extraordinary religious diversity—with members of all religions vying for ideological space and with the Christians divided, following the Councils of Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), and Constantinople (681), into a number of rival factions (Griffith 2008: 129–40)—fomented debate as a primary means of gaining ideological influence, vindicating one's own beliefs, and refuting those of one's rivals.

Muslims were drawn into these debates shortly after the conquests (Bertaina 2011), while the Muslim tradition itself knows of even earlier examples, such as the religious discussion reportedly held by a group of émigré Muslims with the Abyssianian emperor (the Negus) or the disputation of the Prophet Muḥammad with a delegation of the Christians of Najrān (Mourad 2009: 63–6; Bertaina 2011: 115–20). Van Ess's contention that until the end of the Umayyad period 'Muslims were still living among a Christian majority, but in spite of this the religious contacts seem to have been weak' (van Ess 1975a: 100) neglects the evidence for such interactions, surviving especially in Syriac (Cook 1980: 41–2; Tannous 2008: 710–12; and more generally Hoyland 1997; Thomas and Roggema 2009).

Though debate culture was ubiquitous in the Middle East in the period under discussion (the Manicheans, for instance, were feared as formidable debaters; Lim 1995: 70–108; Pedersen 2004), it seems possible to define the avenues by which it was assimilated by early Muslim theologians somewhat more precisely. This requires focusing on some specific features of the *kalām* style of argumentation and then tracing these features in the Syriac disputation literature of the time. Much of this groundwork has been undertaken by Michael Cook and Jack Tannous (Cook 1980; Tannous 2008), yielding interesting results.

Cook pointed out that characteristic features of *kalām* argumentation are present in seventh-century Syriac Christological disputations, notably in a Monothelite ('Maronite') document (MS British Library, Add. 7192), containing two sets of Christological queries, addressed to Dyothelite ('Melkite') opponents and dating to the second half of the seventh century, thus excluding the possibility that these Syriac texts were themselves influenced by Muslim *Kalām*.[3]

These Christological queries, which, as Cook shows, have some parallels in anti-Chalcedonian Syriac material as well, invariably begin with a disjunctive question ('Do you believe X, yes or no?' or 'Do you believe X or Y'?) and then proceed methodically to discuss each of the possibilities ('If they say X, they should be asked …; if they say Y, they should be asked … '), either refuting the opponent's response or showing that it in fact agrees with the questioner's own position. As Cook shows, all this is strikingly similar to the kind of argumentation characteristic of early *Kalām* texts, where patterns of the same type (e.g. *in qāla… fa-yuqāl lahu…*, 'If he says X, it should be replied… ') are standard.

In view of these striking structural parallels, Cook concluded that '[the *kalām*] *genre* has the look of a product of the period of Christological schism.… [I]t presupposes in general a situation in which almost everything is agreed and schism turns on the energetic exploitation of doctrinal diacritics [as in Christological controversies]. … What is more, the *genre* could well be a rather late and specialized product of the continuing process of Christological schism that characterizes sixth- and seventh-century Syria' (Cook 1980: 40).[4] Cook further suggested that these patterns could have been adopted by the Muslim community either as a result of Muslims participating in debates with Christians and learning these disputation techniques from them or as a result of Christians, skilled in these disputation techniques, converting to Islam—the two options being, in fact, compatible rather than mutually exclusive (Cook 1980: 40–1).[5]

In an important recent article, Tannous has refined Cook's findings by focusing on the figure of George, the anti-Chalcedonian ('Jacobite') bishop of the Arab tribes (d. 105/724). George's first three Syriac letters, analysed by Tannous, are examples of Jacobite polemic against the Chalcedonians. George's letters similarly challenge Chalcedonian positions with series of disjunctive questions ('if you say X then …; but if not, then … '), presenting the opponent with choices each of which is then shown to be either unsatisfactory or identical to the questioner's own view. Tannous also shows how George's arguments are modelled on, and in several cases repeat verbatim, Syriac versions of Greek Christological *aporiai* (the so-called *epaporēmata*) from the sixth and seventh centuries (Tannous 2008: 685–707). Thus, while Cook identified only a handful of Syriac documents featuring '*kalām*-style' argumentation, Tannous (drawing on Uthemann 1981 and Grillmeier 1987: 82–7) was able to contextualize them further as representative examples of a genre of intra-Christian disputation characteristic of sixth- and seventh-century Syria, which moreover is well attested not only in Syriac, but also in Greek.

Tannous's findings are significant for yet another reason. George was bishop over Arab Christian tribes. The tribes in question were, in Syriac terminology, the ʿAqōlāyē (i.e. Arab Christians originally from ʿAqōlā, the region of Kūfa in Iraq, but present in Syria), the Ṭūʿāyē (a confederacy of pastoral Arabs, which, according to Morony, probably included the tribes of Bakr, ʿIjl, Namir, and Taghlib), and the Tanūḵāyē (the Arabic Banū Tanūkh), all converted to Christianity by the Jacobite bishop Aḥūḏemmeh in the sixth century (Morony 1984: 374, 379; Tannous 2008: 709–12). As Tannous notes, it is precisely these three Arab Christian tribes that are said to have attended one of the earliest Christian–Muslim debates on record: the debate between the Jacobite Patriarch John Sedra and the Hagarene (i.e. Muslim) emir in Syria (probably the governer of Homs ʿUmayr ibn Saʿd al-Anṣārī), which reportedly took place on Sunday, 9 May 644 (Hoyland 1997: 459–65; Penn 2008; Roggema 2009; Bertaina 2011: 87–94; the text of the debate was probably written in the early second/eighth century, see Griffith 2008: 36, 77). Moreover, it is significant that even though the *Disputation of Patriarch John and the Emir* does not use *kalām*-style argumentation, the author calls it a 'conversation' (*mamllā*), a Syriac term exactly equivalent to the Arabic term *kalām*.

Tannous therefore puts forward what may be termed an 'Arab Christian hypothesis'. He argues that the Arab Christian (more specifically, it seems, Jacobite) milieu in Syria and Iraq is the most plausible conduit for the transmission of the *kalām*-style disputation technique to the Muslim community, and more generally for 'for the assimilation of Christian traditions, such as they were, into early Islam' (Tannous 2008: 715). Just as in George of the Arab Tribes one can observe *kalām*-style disputational patterns 'moving' from Greek Christological *aporiai* into Syriac, so also these same patterns could have been easily transferred, via the Arab Christian tribes under George's (and his predecessors') ecclesiastical authority, from Syriac into Christian Arabic and then Muslim Arabic dialectical arsenal, gaining new prominence in what was soon to emerge as Muslim *Kalām*. Tannous's argument thus partially resolves the problem that Michael Morony identified with Cook's article, namely that while providing Christian parallels for *kalām* techniques, it 'does not explain the circumstances that led some Muslims to use such methods also' (Morony 1984: 646). Studying the origins of *kalām* would thus be coextensive with studying the history of Arab Christianity in the first/seventh century—an area of research still insufficiently investigated by scholars, yet no doubt germane to the study of early Islam.

The term *kalām* corresponds, originally, to the Syriac *mamllā*, meaning 'speech', and more specifically 'conversation' or 'disputation' (as in the heading of the *Disputation of Patriarch John and the Emir*) and ultimately to the Greek terms *dialexis, dialektos*, or *dialektikē*, all meaning 'disputation' (van Ess 1966: 57–9; Cook 1980: 42; van Ess 1991–7: i. 53; but cf. Pietruschka 2003: 198–9).

It is a moot question how the term came to be identified with theological inquiry as a field, i.e. *ʿilm al-Kalām*, or, to put it another way, how theological inquiry in Islam received a name that originally means 'speech' or 'disputation'. It is clear that though etymologically related, the Greek terms *dialexis* and *theologia* are quite distinct. The situation is different in Syriac, where the Greek stem *leg-/log-* (meaning 'to speak') was habitually translated using forms of the equivalent Syriac root *m-l-l*. Hence 'logic', for instance, was always translated as *mᵉlīlūṯā*, and the compound noun *theologia* had to be translated periphrastically as *mᵉmallᵉlūṯ alāhūṯā* ('speech [regarding] divinity') or, less commonly, *mamllā alāhāyā* ('divine speech') (for the latter expression see Cook 1980: 42 n. 82; another example in Payne Smith 1879–1901: 197). Similarly, *theologos* was translated as *mᵉmallēl alāhāyāṯā, mᵉmallēl ʿal alāhā*, or *mᵉmallēl alāhāʾīṯ* ('one who speaks divine things', 'one who speaks about God', or 'one who speaks divinely').[6] Thus in Syriac (as opposed to Greek) *dialexis* and *theologia* already look quite similar: the former is translated as *mamllā*, the latter (at least occasionally) as *mamllā alāhāyā* (the same noun, with the adjective 'divine' added as a qualifier). Still, the fact is that we have no evidence that the term *mamllā*, in and of itself, without the qualifier *alāhāyā*, was ever used in Syriac in the sense of 'theology'; nor was the participle *mᵉmallēl* (or the corresponding agent noun *mᵉmallᵉlānā*), *on its own*, used in the sense of 'theologian'. Thus for the Syriac mind, a translation of the Greek *theologia* would seem to have always required a complement, corresponding to the Greek *theo-*. Consequently, we have no evidence that *dialexis* and *theologia* were conflated in Syriac. So, if not in Syriac, how and where did this conflation, evident in the Muslim term *kalām*, take place?

Building on Tannous's Arab Christian hypothesis, one might propose the following. It seems plausible that the simplification of terminology and the resulting conflation of *dialexis* and *theologia* could have initially occurred in first/seventh-century Christian Arabic discourse. Indeed, from the perspective of Arab Christian onlookers—the ʿAqōlāyē, Ṭūʿāyē, and Tanūḵāyē, attending interreligious debates with Muslims such as the *mamllā* (disputation) between the Jacobite Patriarch and the Hagarene emir—theology was done primarily by 'spokesmen' (to put it in Arabic, *mutakallimūn*; cf. van Ess 1991–7: i. 50) of the disputing parties. These spokesmen (Christian bishops and monks on the one hand and Muslim officials on the other) acted as both disputants and theologians, these two functions being inextricably linked. Here, for the first time, we have a plausible milieu where the Arabic term *kalām* could have been used simultaneously for disputation and theology, i.e. as a calque for the Syriac *mamllā* both with and without the qualifier *alāhāyā*. This terminology would presumably have been used during the debates themselves by *all* Arabic-speakers in attendance, both Christians and Muslims. Such debates therefore provide the perfect environment where the term *kalām*, with its newly acquired dual meaning, could have been assimilated into Muslim discourse—ultimately to stay there for good.[7]

Despite its heuristic value and intrinsic verisimilitude, Tannous's Arab Christian hypothesis is in need of further testing and corroboration, given that the evidence presently supporting it is mostly circumstantial and comes from somewhat later (early second/eighth-century rather than first/seventh-century) sources—George of the Arab Tribes and the *Disputation of Patriarch John and the Emir*. Though highly suggestive, the philological considerations outlined above are also ultimately inconclusive. Our knowledge of the Arabic idiom of the Arab Christian tribes in the first/seventh-century Syria and Iraq is scarce, and so it is impossible to ascertain whether, as suggested here, they were the ones who began using the term *kalām* (without a qualifier) in the dual sense of disputation and theology.[8] Unfortunately, we cannot even be sure that debates of the kind described in the *Disputation of Patriarch John and the Emir* were actually taking place as early as the first Islamic century, and if they were, that Arab Christians would have regularly been in attendance. Given that the actual text of the *Disputation* was probably written in the early second/eighth century, it is far from obvious that it can be trusted to accurately reflect first/seventh-century social situation (Penn 2008; but see Tannous 2008: 711–12).

This section must therefore end on an inconclusive note. Further research is needed to verify or disprove the Arab Christian hypothesis. Regardless of the actual outcome of this research for the specific question of the origins of *kalām*, the role of Arabic-speaking Christians in Christian–Muslim interactions in the first Islamic century (as well as later) deserves careful consideration, and may produce important results for the study of early Islam.

II. Origins of the *Qadar* Debate

The question of the origins of *Kalām* as a discipline—from the perspective of its content rather than disputational form—is even more vexed than the question of the origins of *kalām*-style argumentation. Here much of the older scholarship (beginning with von Kremer 1873: 7–9) argued in favour of the Christian origin of the earliest controversy in the history of *Kalām*: the *qadar* debate. (Other issues, such as the origins of *Kalām* atomism, would have to be left outside the scope of this chapter.)

This argument is based on a number of considerations. First, free will is a fundamental tenet of Christianity (e.g. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, ch. 44), while the predestinarian Muslims, it is assumed, inherited the fatalistic outlook of pre-Islamic Pagan Arabs (on which see Ringgren 1955). Second, Muslim biographical sources allege that Qadarī leaders (Maʿbad al-Juhanī and Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, on whom see the next chapter) had ties to Christianity (van Ess 1974: 61–7; Rubin 1999: 177–80). Thus, the eminent legal scholar (and a persecutor of the Qadarīs) al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774) claimed that Maʿbad learned the Qadarī creed from a Christian named Sawsar or Sūsan, who converted to Islam and then reverted to Christianity (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, 48: 192 and 49: 319).[9] In yet another report, going back to Muslim ibn Yasār (d. 101/719) and his students, Maʿbad was said to 'follow Christian teachings' (*yaqūlu bi-qawl al-naṣārā*, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, 59: 322). Ghaylān al-Dimashqī is occasionally given the *nisba* al-Qibṭī, which indicates that he was a *mawlā* (a non-Arab affiliate of an Arab tribe) of Coptic Christian origin. Some anti-Qadarite *ḥadīth*s also allege that Qadarī ideas are of Christian provenance (e.g. Becker 1912: 186).[10] Third, the *Disputation between a Saracen and a Christian*, written in Greek and attributed to the famous Christian theologian John of Damascus, a contemporary of Ghaylān and a fellow Damascene, discusses the issue of human free will versus divine predestination (Sahas 1972: 103–12, 142–9).[11] The 'Saracen' (Muslim) disputant in the dialogue argues for complete divine predestination, including of human sins. Since the predestinarian position is identified as being characteristic of Islam, it follows that the anti-predestinarian (Qadarī) view must have been imported from an outside source, i.e. presumably from the Christian tradition. It is also assumed that the *Disputation* is a testimony to Christian–Muslim disputations in the Umayyad period on the subject of free will and predestination, and moreover that these disputations (which might have pre-dated John of Damascus) influenced the Qadarī position and triggered the *qadar* controversy within Islam (Becker 1912: 183–6).

Several problems with this argument have been identified. Similarities between Christian and Qadarī positions on free will and related subjects (e.g. that God is not the cause of evil) do not, of course, prove dependence of the latter upon the former. The isolated reports tying Maʿbad and Ghaylān to Christianity are unverifiable and perhaps too anecdotal in nature to prove anything. Moreover, they display an obvious agenda of discrediting the Qadarī position by portraying it as alien to Islam and may thus be untrustworthy.[12] Finally, it is unlikely that the *Disputation between a Saracen and a Christian* is a work of John of Damascus. It was probably authored by (or at least reflects the ideas of) the early third/ninth-century Arabic-writing Christian theologian Theodore Abū Qurra, who is known to have criticized Muslim (and Manichean) predestinarian views in his other works (Griffith 1987a). Rather than triggering the *qadar* controversy within Islam, the *Disputation* already reflects an advanced stage of that controversy. Moreover, its author seems to have consciously appropriated Qadarī arguments and terminology to refute Muslim predestinarian beliefs. Thus, any similarities between the *Disputation* and the Qadariyya are due to Qadarī influence on the *Disputation* rather than the other way round (Griffith 1987a: 82–91). It is, moreover, striking that the subject of free will is relatively infrequently attested in Christian–Muslim disputations and Christian polemical treatises in Syriac and Arabic directed against Islam (for some exceptions see Griffith 1987a; Griffith 1987b; Griffith 1990). Thus, while it still remains a possibility that Christian ideas could have influenced the Qadariyya (possibly, through Christian converts to Islam 'naively solving the theological problem posed by the ambiguity of the [Qurʾān] with [Christian] categories familiar to themselves'—van Ess 1978: 371b), this cannot at present be positively proved.

Finally, something needs to be said regarding Cook's intriguing suggestion that Muslim predestinarianism 'may represent a doctrinal fixation of… a thoroughly determinist mood', characteristic of Late Antique and early Islamic Middle East (Cook 1981: 150–2, 156; cf. Morony 1984: 392–3, 424–9, 633–4; Tannous 2008: 713–15).[13] This observation raises the possibility that the *qadar* debate within Islam is, essentially, an Islamization of older debates between champions of free will (Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians) and proponents of various forms of determinism—e.g. astral fatalism, characteristic of Sasanian Iraq and hence often called 'Chaldeanism' (Syr. *kaldāyūṯā*), the alleged Manichean determinism (Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988; Pedersen 2004: 171–6), or the widespread belief, found in Christian circles, that every individual's lifespan and moment of death are predetermined by God (Cook 1981: 145–7; Munitiz 2001). The Manichean challenge to early Islam may have been especially significant in both triggering and shaping the 'structure' of the *qadar* debate (Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988: 51–8).

The Qurʾānic emphasis on God's all-pervasive determinative power provides a theistic antidote to the non-theistic fatalism of pre-Islamic Pagan Arabs, which might itself have been influenced by Sasanian 'Chaldeanism' (Morony 1984: 393, 427, 481, 483). In providing this antidote, however, the Qurʾān effectively replaces one type of determinism by another, thus inviting the same kind of anti-predestinarian reaction in an Islamic milieu. Similarly, by insisting that God is the creator of all things, the Qurʾān implicitly raises the perennial monotheistic problem of whether God is also responsible for evil (on the Christian response, heavily influenced by the Platonic tradition and forged, in part, in the course of anti-Manichean polemic, see e.g. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, ch. 92, 'On that God is not the cause of evils'). It is precisely this question that was the bone of contention in the polemic between the Qadarīs and the predestinarians: the former refused to acknowledge God's responsibility for evil (particularly human sinful actions), while the latter insisted that God is responsible for all things, evil included.

If Cook's theory is correct, one can expect that both Muslim Qadarīs and Muslim predestinarians would have used arguments originally employed in the older polemic over determinism. There are some indications that this might indeed be the case. For example, as Cook shows, the anti-Chalcedonian ('Jacobite') theologian Jacob of Edessa (d. 89/708), writing in Syriac, cites a number of verses, employed by his (presumably Christian) determinist adversaries in support of their position. One of these verses is Psalm 58: 3, 'The wicked are estranged from the womb (Syr. *men karsā*); they go astray from the womb (Syr. *men marbʿ ᵉā*), speaking lies.' Jacob's opponents presumably interpreted this verse as meaning that one's destiny in the afterlife is fixed (predetermined) already in the mother's womb (Cook 1981: 146).[14] Similarly, in the *Qadarite Epistle to Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān* (discussed in Section III), (Pseudo)-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī accuses his predestinarian adversaries of misinterpreting the Qurʾānic verse 'Among them there are the damned and the felicitous' (*fa-minhum shaqī wa-saʿīd*, Qurʾān 11: 105) as teaching that one's destiny in the afterlife is fixed in the mother's womb (*fī buṭūn ummahātihim*, ed. Mourad 2006: 291 / trans. Rippin and Knappert 1986: 120–1; cf. Ibn Masʿūd's saying 'Damned is he who was damned in his mother's womb,' on which see van Ess 1975b: 20–30). Significantly, however, unlike the biblical prooftext, the Qurʾānic verse does not mention womb at all, and the context patently speaks about the Day of Judgement rather than the development of a foetus. The predestinarian exegesis of the Qurʾānic verse is therefore forced, and this, in Cook's view, betrays the influence of the biblical context, originally employed by Christian predestinarians and subsequently rather mechanically transferred onto the Qurʾānic verse in question (Cook 1981: 148).

Then there is the well-known predestinarian *ḥadīth*, also transmitted on the authority of Ibn Masʿūd but distinct from the saying cited above. According to this *ḥadīth*, while the foetus is in the womb, an angel records its future source of livelihood (*rizq*), lifespan (*ajal*), activity (*ʿamal*), and whether the person will be 'damned or felicitous' (*shaqī aw saʿīd*) in the afterlife (van Ess 1977b: 1–20). As shown by Goldziher (1878: 353–4 n. 6) and Ringgren (1955: 119–20), this *ḥadīth* has a fairly close Talmudic parallel (Niddāh 16b), where Laylāh, 'the angel in charge of conception,' takes a drop (i.e. of semen; cf. the Qurʾānic *nuṭfa*) and places it before God, and God declares its future, specifically whether the person will be 'mighty or weak, wise or foolish, rich or poor'. The Talmudic story emphasizes, however, that God does not pre-determine whether the person will be righteous or unrighteous, for as Rabbi Ḥanīnā bar Ḥammā (early third century ce) put it, 'everything is in the power of Heaven [i.e. pre-determined by God] except fear of Heaven' (van Ess 1977b: 16; Cook 1981: 148). Here we have an example where the Muslim predestinarian camp draws on an earlier tradition, attested in a Jewish source, which however specifically rejects predestination of human actions.

To conclude: while there seems to be little evidence that Christian polemic against Islam directly influenced the *qadar* controversy, as was suggested by older scholarship (e.g. Becker 1912), the *qadar* controversy can be plausibly linked to (and seen as a continuation of) older debates over various forms of determinism, current in the Late Antique and early Islamic Middle East and often crossing religious boundaries, with Christians and Manicheans being the most significant players. A comprehensive analysis of all types of polemic over determinism in the Late Antique and early Islamic Middle East in comparison to the *qadar* controversy is still an important desideratum, which may shed light on the emergence of this controversy within Islam.

III. Three 'Early' Texts on *Qadar*, Attributed to Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

Finally, we need to consider the three documents drawn upon extensively by van Ess in his reconstruction of the 'beginnings' of Islamic theology. Two of the three—(Pseudo)-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya's *Questions against the Qadarites* (to use the convenient title proposed by Cook 1980: 32) and (Pseudo)-ʿUmar b. al-ʿAzīz's *Epistle*—are rare examples of predestinarian *Kalām* (cf. Cook 1981: 141–3), though only the former uses the characteristic *kalām* disputation technique ('Tell us about …; if they say X, say to them …; if they say Y, say to them … '). These two documents are preserved in later compilations—a refutation by the Zaydī imam al-Hādī ilā l-ḥaqq (d. 298/911) and Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 430/1038) *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ* respectively—and are edited, translated, and commented upon by van Ess (1977).

Van Ess considered both documents to be authentic and mounted arguments in favour of their authenticity. He dated the *Questions against the Qadarites* to between 72/691 and 80/699, based on his analysis of Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya's life and the assumption that the *Questions* must pre-date the third document under discussion—the *Qadarite Epistle* attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī—since the author of the *Questions* appears to be 'not yet familiar' with the latter's ideas (van Ess 1977: 17–18). For (Pseudo-)ʿUmar's *Epistle*, van Ess dismisses as 'rather unlikely' the possibility that it might have been composed before ʿUmar's accession to the caliphal throne. This leaves him with the two and a half years of ʿUmar's reign (99/717–101/720). The most plausible date, according to van Ess, is 101/720, because of the possibility that a 'vague recollection' of the *Epistle* survives in the legendary reports indicating that after interrogating Ghaylān al-Dimashqī and shortly before his own death, ʿUmar dictated a letter on *qadar* to the military provinces (*ajnād*), which, because of his death, was never sent out (van Ess 1977: 131–2, 188, 199; cf. van Ess 1971–2). Van Ess's arguments for the early dating and authenticity of both documents were criticized and largely discredited by Cook and Zimmermann (Cook 1981: 124–44; Zimmermann 1984). Cook concedes that though inauthentic, the *Questions* is still an archaic text (no later than the mid-second/eighth century —Cook 1980: 32–3), possibly originating from the Murjiʾite milieu in Kūfa (Cook 1981: 144). (Pseudo)-ʿUmar's *Epistle*, likewise inauthentic and containing interpolations of secondary material (Cook 1981: 124–9, 136), probably also originated in the second/eighth century and might likewise 'at one time have been in Murjiʾite hands' (Cook 1981: 129–30, 144). By contrast, Zimmermann suggests 'late second-century Baṣra' as the place where the search for the real author and addressees of the two texts should begin (because of the concept of *nafādh*, 'inescapable implementation' of God's foreknowledge, common to both—Zimmermann 1984: 441). Thus, though both Cook and Zimmermann reject van Ess's arguments for the two documents' authenticity, they do not agree on the likely milieu where they might have been produced. The question therefore is in need of further study.

From the perspective of their content, both documents seek to discredit the Qadarite worldview. The *Questions* does this by setting up a series of challenges to the Qadarite opponents. These challenges are typically based on specific Qurʾānic verses that speak about God determining human actions, leading some people to guidance and others to perdition (as well as to Hell and Paradise), inspiring faith in some and hardening the hearts of others, foretelling (and consequently determining) future events, and so on (cf. 'Verzeichnis der Koranverse' in van Ess 1977: 259–63). (Pseudo)-ʿUmar's *Epistle* presents the Qadarites as putting forward the claim that in virtue of their free will human beings are able to act contrary to what God foreknows to be the case, thus 'falsifying' (*radd*, following the translation in Cook 1981: 126) and 'going beyond' (*khurūj*) God's knowledge. By refuting this claim, the author of the *Epistle* seeks to discredit his opponents' initial thesis that human beings have free will.

Let us now move on to the third document under consideration, the *Qadarite Epistle to Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān*, attributed to the famous early Muslim traditionist al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728). Unlike the two texts just discussed, it is written in support of human free will and, were it authentic, would be the only surviving Qadarite document. It is preserved in three seventh/fourteenth–eighth/fifteenth-century manuscripts, two of them in Istanbul and one in Tehran,[15] and in excerpts in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's (d. 415/1024) *Faḍl al-iʿtizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-muʿtazila* and some later sources dependent on the latter. As shown by Mourad (2006: 186–7, 238–9), none of these sources represents the original version of the *Qadarite Epistle*, which must have been longer than any of the surviving witnesses. Significantly, the excerpts in ʿAbd al-Jabbār only partially overlap with the manuscripts and include material not preserved in any of them. Of the three manuscripts, the Tehran copy, conveniently edited by Mourad along with ʿAbd al-Jabbār's excerpts (Mourad 2006: 284–302), seems to stand closest to the original version. It therefore merits special attention.

Van Ess argued for the *Qadarite Epistle*'s authenticity and attempted to date it to between 75/694 (when al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, at whose request it was allegedly written, became governor of Iraq) and 80/699 (the date of Ibn al-Ashʿath's revolt) (van Ess 1977: 18, 27–9). This early dating was discredited by Cook and Zimmermann, both of whom also offered arguments against the document's authenticity (Cook 1981: 117–23; Zimmermann 1984). Notably, van Ess's contention that the *Qadarite Epistle* must be early and authentic because it does not quote predestinarian *ḥadīth* and hence pre-dates the period of genesis of such *ḥadīth* is refuted by Cook, who points out that the *Qadarite Epistle* deliberately refrains from relying on *ḥadīth* rather than pre-dates its genesis and that, moreover, one of the excerpts preserved by ʿAbd al-Jabbār does in fact quote a predestinarian *ḥadīth* and identifies it as such (Cook 1981: 121; cf. Mourad 2006: 200–1, 300–1).[16] It should also be noted that the Tehran manuscript (unavailable to both van Ess and Cook) includes an important polemical passage against the 'innovators' who have introduced new teachings and perverted the religion (ed. Mourad 2006: 284–5). It seems likely that these 'innovators' (*muḥdithūn*)—one of the many terms used for the author's opponents—are the predestinarian *ḥadīth* transmitters (*muḥaddithūn*), and that the author might be deliberately exploiting the fact that the two words are indistinguishable in the unvocalized Arabic script.

While accepting that al-Ḥasan was a firm believer in free will throughout his life, Mourad argues conclusively that the *Qadarite Epistle* is a later forgery (Mourad 2006: 172, 175, 194–239). It includes several obvious anachronisms, such as the use of the term *al-salaf* ('predecessors'), developed in the late second/eighth and third/ninth centuries as a collective designation of the first three generations of Muslims. Given the remarkable similarities between the *Qadarite Epistle* and the third/ninth-century Zaydī theology pointed out by Mourad (especially al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's *Refutation of the Predestinarians*), it seems unavoidable that there is a connection between the two. Mourad argues plausibly that it is the *Qadarite Epistle* that is influenced by Zaydī theology rather than the other way round. He suggests that the *Qadarite Epistle* was forged by a Muʿtazilī theologian in the late fourth/tenth century, influenced by Zaydī theology and possibly a member of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's circle (Mourad 2006: 236–8).

Mourad's late dating has the distinct advantage of explaining why there is no trace of references to the *Qadarite Epistle* before the late fourth/tenth century. Nonetheless, an earlier, third/ninth-century date contemporary with, or slightly later than, al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm would also seem consistent with the evidence at hand and perhaps, in other respects, more plausible than the late fourth/tenth-century one. In his review of Mourad's book, Madelung argued that the *Qadarite Epistle* reflects the 'asymmetrical view' on *qadar*, attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (and the Qadariyya in general) by early authorities—namely the position that only human sins, but not their praiseworthy actions, are excluded from divine predestination. This view, Madelung claims, must have become obsolete by the time when Mourad claims the *Qadarite Epistle* was forged (Madelung 2007: 159–60; cf. van Ess 1977: 28). Nevertheless, al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's *Refutation* also reflects this 'asymmetrical view', as duly noted by Mourad (2006: 232), and so does (Theodore Abū Qurra's?) *Disputation between a Saracen and a Christian*, discussed in Section II (Sahas 1972: 103–4, 142–3). This implies that this asymmetrical view had not yet become obsolete, at least in some circles, in the third/ninth century, and hence that this is a plausible date for when the *Qadarite Epistle* was forged. The considerable parallelism between this document and the *Disputation between a Saracen and a Christian* (Griffith 1987a: 90) is another argument in favour of an earlier, third/ninth-century dating of the *Qadarite Epistle*.[17] This issue is not taken up in Mourad's book and deserves to be explored further.

If all three texts are later forgeries, as seems highly probable, the unavoidable conclusion is that we simply do not have *Kalām* documents from the first Islamic century. The ever so elusive 'Anfänge' of Islamic theology recede into the 'darkness of unknowing' from which they once seemed to have emerged.

Bibliography

Becker, C. H. (1912). 'Christliche Polemik und islamische Dogmenbildung'. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 26: 175–95

[reprinted in C. H. Becker (1924–32). *Islamstudien: Vom Werden und Wesen der islamischen Welt*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, i. 432–49;

English trans.: C. H. Becker (2004). 'Christian Polemic and the Formation of Islamic Dogma'. In R. Hoyland (ed.), *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*. Aldershot: Variorum, 241–57].

Bertaina, D. (2011). *Christian and Muslim Dialogues: The Religious Uses of a Literary Form in the Early Islamic Middle East*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias.

Cook, M. A. (1980). 'The Origins of Kalām'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43: 32–43

[reprinted in M. Cook (2004). *Studies in the Origins of Early Islamic Culture and Tradition*. Ashgate: Variorum].

Cook, M. A. (1981). *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

al-Firyābī (*Qadar*). *Kitāb al-Qadar*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥamad al-Manṣūr. al-Riyāḍ: Aḍwāʾ al-salaf, 1997.

Frank, R. M. (1992). 'The Science of Kalām'. *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 2: 7–37.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid (*Iḥyāʾ*). *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. 5 vols. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-tawfīqiyya, n.d.

Goldziher, I. (1887). 'Ueber muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-Kitâb'. *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 32: 341–87.

Griffith, S. H. (1987a). 'Free Will in Christian *kalām*: The Doctrine of Theodore Abū Qurrah'. *Parole de l'Orient* 14: 79–107

[reprinted in S. H. Griffith (1992). *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine*. Aldershot: Variorum].

Griffith, S. H. (1987b). 'Free Will in Christian *kalām*: Moshe bar Kepha against the Teachings of the Muslims'. *Le Muséon* 100: 143–59.

Griffith, S. H. (1990). 'Free Will in Christian *kalām*: Chapter XVIII of the *Summa Theologiae Arabica*'. In R. Schulz and M. Görg (eds.), *Lingua restituta orientalis: Festgabe für Julius Assfalg*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 129–34.

Griffith, S. H. (2008). *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Grillmeier, A. (1987). *Christ in Christian Tradition*. Vol. ii/1. English translation by P. Allen and J. Cawte. London and Oxford: Mowbray.

Hoyland, R. G. (1997). *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton: Darwin Press.

Ibn ʿAsākir (*Tārīkh*). *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*. 80 vols. Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1995–2001.

Ibn Saʿd (*Ṭabaqāt*). *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar. 10 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001.

Justi, F. (1895). *Iranisches Namenbuch*. Marburg: N. G. Elwert.

Lim, R. (1995). *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Madelung, W. (2007). [Review of Mourad 2006]. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70: 157–60.

Morony, M. (1984). *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*. Princeton: Princeton University Press [reprint: Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2005].

Mourad, S. A. (2006). *Early Islam between Myth and History: Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship*. Leiden: Brill.

Mourad, S. A. (2009). 'Christians and Christianity in the *Sīra* of Muḥammad'. In Thomas and Roggema 2009: 57–71.

Munitiz, J. A. (2001). 'The Predetermination of Death: The Contribution of Anastasios of Sinai and Nikephoros Blemmydes to a Perennial Byzantine Problem'. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55: 9–20.

Payne Smith, R. (1879–1901). *Thesaurus Syriacus*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Pedersen, N. A. (2004). *Demonstrative Proof in Defence of God: A Study of Titus of Bostra's Contra Manichaeos: The Work's Sources, Aims and Relation to its Contemporary Theology*. Leiden: Brill.

Penn, M. P. (2008). '*John and the Emir*: A New Introduction, Edition and Translation'. *Le Muséon* 121/1–2: 65–91.

Pietruschka, U. (2003). 'Zu den Begriffen *kalām* und *mutakallim* in christlichem Kontext'. In W. Beltz, U. Pietruschka, and J. Tubach (eds.), *Sprache und Geist: Peter Nagel zum 65. Geburtstag*. Halle (Saale): Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 185–99.

Pines, S. (1971). 'A Note on an Early Meaning of the Term *mutakallim*'. *Israel Oriental Studies* 1: 224–40 [reprinted in S. Pines (1996). *Studies in the History of Arabic Philosophy (The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, vol. iii), ed. S. Stroumsa. Jerusalem: Magnes].

Ringgren, H. (1955). *Studies in Arabian Fatalism*. Uppsala: Lundequistska bokhandeln.

Rippin, A., and J. Knappert (1986). *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Roggema, B. (2009). '*The Disputation of John and the Emir*'. In Thomas and Roggema 2009: 782–5.

Rubin, U. (1999). *Between Bible and Qurʾān: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image*. Princeton: Darwin Press.

Sahas, D. J. (1972). *John of Damascus on Islam: The 'Heresy of the Ishmaelites'*. Leiden: Brill.

Stroumsa, S., and G. G. Stroumsa (1988). 'Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics in Late Antiquity and under Early Islam'. *Harvard Theological Review* 81: 37–58.

Tannous, J. (2008). 'Between Christology and Kalām? The Life and Letters of George, Bishop of the Arab Tribes'. In G. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 671–716.

Tannous, J. (2010). *Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak*. PhD diss., Princeton University.

Thomas, D., and B. Roggema (eds.) (2009). *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. i (600–900). Leiden: Brill.

Uthemann, K.-H. (1981). 'Syllogistik im Dienst der Orthodoxie: Zwei unedierte Texte byzantinischer Kontroverstheologie des 6. Jahrhunderts'. *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 30: 103–12.

van Ess, J. (1966). *Die Erkenntnislehre des ʿAḍudaddīn al-Īcī: Übersetzung und Kommentar des 1. Buches seiner Mawāqif*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

van Ess, J. (1970). 'The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology'. In G. E. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*. Wiesbaden:

Harrassowitz, 21–50.

van Ess, J. (1971–2). ‘Umar II and his Epistle against the Qadarīya’. *Abr Nahrain* 12: 19–26.

van Ess, J. (1974). ‘Maʿbad al-Ǧuhanī’. In R. Gramlich (ed.), *Islamwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen: Fritz Meier zum 60. Geburtstag*. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 49–77.

van Ess, J. (1975a). ‘The Beginnings of Islamic Theology’. In J. E. Murdoch and E. D. Sylla (eds.), *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*. Dordrecht and Boston: Reidel, 87–111.

van Ess, J. (1975b). *Zwischen Ḥadīṯ und Theologie: Studien zum Entstehen prädestinatianischer Überlieferung*. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

van Ess, J. (1976). ‘Disputationspraxis in der islamischen Theologie: Eine vorläufige Skizze’. *Revue des études islamiques* 44: 23–60.

van Ess, J. (1977). *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie: Zwei antiqadaritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Hiğra*. Beirut and Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner.

van Ess, J. (1978) [originally published in an encyclopedia fascicle in 1974]. art. ‘Ḳadariyya’. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*[2]. Leiden: Brill. Vol. iv, 368a–372a.

van Ess, J. (1982). ‘The Early Development of Kalām’. In G. H. A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 109–23, 230–41.

van Ess, J. (1991–7). *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*. 6 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter.

von Kremer, A. (1873). *Culturgeschichtliche Streifzüge auf dem Gebiete des Islams*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus.

Walker, J. T. (2006). *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Zakeri, M. (1995). *Sāsānid Soldiers in Early Muslim Society: The Origins of ʿAyyārān and Futuwwa*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Zimmermann, F. W. (1984). [Review of van Ess 1977]. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16/3: 437–41.

Notes:

([1]) At the time of the Muslim conquests, Aramaic, with its most widely used dialect, Syriac, was the *lingua franca* of the Middle East. Arabic was widely used outside the Arabian Peninsula, by both urbanized Arabs (e.g. in al-Ḥīra on the Euphrates) and Arab tribal populations—many of them Christian—in Syria, Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq.

([2]) I am grateful to Professor Patricia Crone for referring me to Lim’s book and for other helpful suggestions.

([3]) The Chalcedonian camp split into Monothelites/Maronites and Dyothelites/Melkites in the seventh century, after the monothelite compromise, initially promoted by the Byzantine emperors with the aim of reconciling the Chalcedonian and the anti-Chalcedonian camps, failed, and the Council of Constantinople in 681, mentioned above, ruled in favour of the Dyothelite position.

([4]) For a much older example of the *kalām*-style technique (in the second-century CE Marcionite author Apelles) see Pedersen 2004: 222. I am grateful to Patricia Crone for bringing this passage to my attention. The roots of this technique are thus considerably older than the Christological schism.

([5]) Conversion would seem to be the more likely route (cf. van Ess 1970: 24). This is because no *actual* debate would have proceeded according to the pattern ‘If X, then…; if not, then … ’ (as in any *actual* debate the opponent would have chosen only one of the two alternative responses), and hence opportunities to learn the disjunctive argumentation technique merely from attending debates would have been limited.

([6]) All these expressions are particularly common as an honorary epithet of Gregory of Nazianzus, the ‘Theologian’.

([7]) If the argument here put forward is sound, it would lend support to Shlomo Pines’s suggestion that the term *mutakallimūn* originally referred to professional disputants, charged with the task of defending Islam from arguments of non-Muslims, as well as heretical interpretations of Islam itself (Pines 1971; but cf. van Ess 1975a: 104 n. 64; van Ess 1991–7: i. 49–50).

([8]) *Later* Christian Arabic sources are of little help, because when they use the terms *kalām* and *mutakallim* (without a qualifier) for ‘theology’ and ‘theologian’ they do so under Muslim influence, and moreover usually refer specifically to *Muslim* theologians (Pietruschka 2003). For Christian theologians, a qualifier is typically used: thus, Gregory of Nazianzus is called in Christian Arabic sources *al-mutakallim ʿalā l-lāhūt* (cf. Syr. *mᵉmallēl ʿal alāhā*), *al-nāṭiq bi-l-ilāhiyyāt*, or *nāṭiq al-ilāhiyyāt* (cf. Syr. *mᵉmallēl alāhāyāṯā*), etc. Some Muslim sources also use *al-mutakallim ʿalā l-lāhūt* as an epithet of Gregory of Nazianzus: see, e.g., the relevant chapters of Mubashshir ibn Fātik’s *Mukhtār al-ḥikam* and al-Shahrazūrī’s *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ*, dependent on the latter.

([9]) Instead of Sūsan, other sources mention a certain Sasnōye (or Sastōye) ibn Yūnus (or Abū Yūnus) al-Uswārī from Baṣra, who is *not* said to be a former Christian. See al-Firyābī, *Qadar*, 205 [No. 347] and 226 [No. 408]); Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqat*, 9: 264, who adds that this Sasnōye / Sastōye was the husband of Umm Mūsā (cf. van Ess 1978: 371b); and Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh*, 59: 318–19, who adds that he was a greengrocer (*baqqāl*). The *nisba* al-Uswārī indicates that he was one the *asvārān / asāwira*, who were Sasanian cavalrymen and their descendants in the Islamic period, see van Ess 1991–7: ii. 78–84; Zakeri 1995. On this Sasnōye / Sastōye see further van Ess 1974: 61–4; Zakeri 1995: 325–6. As Kevin van Bladel informs me, Sūsan is probably the Middle Persian name Sōšan(s), derived from the Avestan Saošyant (Justi 1895: 284a), the name of the future Zoroastrian saviour. It is therefore somewhat unexpected to find a Christian bearing this name. On the name Sasnōye see Justi 1895: 291b. It is perhaps not altogether impossible that Sasnōye and Sūsan are one and the same individual.

([10]) But cf. the famous *ḥadīth* which compares the Qadariyya to the 'Magians of this community' (van Ess 1975b: 137–48; cf. Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988: 54–5).

([11]) The Greek term for free will, *to autexousion*, is better translated as 'sovereignty over oneself', i.e. the power to determine one's own actions. In Syriac, this term is sometimes rendered as *mᵉshallᵉṭūṯ* (or *shallīṭūṯ*) *b-yāṯā* (thus in Jacob of Edessa, see Cook 1981: 149 and 217 n. 49). Cf. al-Ghazālī's expression *lā ḥukm lahu fī nafsihi* (al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, Book 35, *shaṭr* 1, *bayān* 2, 4: 345), which is used precisely in the sense of 'having no sovereignty over oneself,' i.e. having no free will.

([12]) On the other hand, the biased nature of these reports does not necessarily make them factually untrue. See also Tannous 2010: 555 n. 1344, who points out that it is, in fact, quite unusual for Islamic heresiographers to characterize a teaching as being Christian in origin; Tannous thus tends to regard these reports as credible.

([13]) Tannous cites evidence that George of the Arab Tribes engaged in a debate with Pagan Arabs who were adherents of astral determinism. He calls these Arabs *ḥanpē* (Pagans), a term used by Syriac Christian authors from the first/seventh century on also for the Muslims. The Syriac practice of referring to Muslims as *ḥanpē* is not fully accounted for by the Muslim self-designation *ḥanīf*; after all, one also needs to explain *why* Syriac-speakers associated Muslims with Pagans. Could it be that from the Syriac Christian perspective, Muslims were *ḥanpē* (Pagans), among other things, on account of their predestinarian views?

([14]) Interestingly, the same verse is cited in the *Disputation between a Saracen and a Christian*, yet its author (Theodore Abū Qurra?) takes the predestinarian sting out by claiming that the 'womb' is the womb of baptism (Sahas 1972: 146–7)!

([15]) Sabine Schmidtke kindly informs me that a fourth manuscript of the *Qadarite Epistle* has now been discovered in a private library in Yemen.

([16]) Another possible allusion to a *ḥadīth* is the phrase *jarat* (or *jaffat*) *al-aqlām bi-mā anā lāqⁱⁿ* (ed. Mourad 2006: 291); cf. the *ḥadīth* recorded in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-nikāḥ: yā Abā Hurayra, jaffa l-qalam bi-mā anta lāqⁱⁿ*.

([17]) Compare the way both texts treat the issue of the child of adultery (Mourad 2006: 234–5 and Sahas 1972: 144–5).

Alexander Treiger
Alexander Treiger, Department of Classics, Dalhousie University, Canada